



more, better & safer bicycling

## **COMMENTS on Draft STIP 2026-2035**

**Submitted by Bike Newport / July 30, 2025**

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### Rhode Island State Law

In June 2012, Rhode Island enacted a Complete Streets law (S 2131) to integrate multiple transit options into the design and construction of state transportation projects. The law mandates that federal- and state-funded road projects consider the needs of all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit users, during planning and construction. Compliance is achieved through the implementation of "complete streets" design features, which may include sidewalks, paved shoulders, bicycle lanes, and other measures to enhance safety and accessibility for all travelers. Road projects that do not address all road users must meet the stated exemptions, and the state is required to report on project adherence. This document addresses projects on Aquidneck Island that should feature bicycle infrastructure additions or improvements.

<https://webserver.rilegislature.gov/BillText12/SenateText12/S2131.pdf>

### Rhode Island Bicycle Mobility Plan

Additionally, we recommend a sub-section highlighting the priority of implementing the state-approved 'Bicycle Mobility Plan' (BMP), adopted in 2020, under 'STIP Investment Framework and Program Descriptions', beginning on p1-19 'RIDOT Programs', 'Active Transportation.' We understand from the ongoing update of the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) that the BMP is 1.7% implemented as of 06/25. While less than 5% of RIDOT's budget is allotted for Active Transportation projects in the fiscally constrained years, incorporation of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in the STIP will advance the vital goal of a more balanced mobility system.

### Highway Safety

Regarding pedestrian and bicyclist safety: Starting on page 1-30, the "Performance Assessment: Highway Safety" section and subsequent notable line items describe inadequate actions to address safety of pedestrians and bicyclists. The subsection, "Intersection and Crosswalk Safety Improvements" describes pedestrians and bicyclists accounting for up to 33% of fatalities and serious injuries in Rhode Island, while only 2.3% of Rhode Islanders walk to work and 0.4% bike to work. Though this fatality percentage does not reflect commuting only, it is an insight into the disproportionate harm these road users face. With this context, it is disappointing to see the only objectives to reduce deaths and serious injuries within the "Intersection and Crosswalk Safety Improvements" section are "Reduce pedestrian exposure to vehicular traffic" and "Reduce vulnerable user crashes at intersections, along the roadway, and at mid-block crossings".

### Multimodal Options and Proven Safety Countermeasures

In order to adhere to the STIP Priority Areas laid out on page 1-6, specifically, "Multimodal Transportation Safety" and "Expanding Transportation Options", more thoughtful and proven countermeasures should be included to reduce fatalities and serious injuries – not just for bicyclists and

pedestrians, but for all road users. It is well documented that by planning for and safeguarding pedestrians and cyclists, especially at intersections, *all* road users see better safety outcomes. Dedicating safe facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians will also encourage people, who are able, to switch from driving to more sustainable, healthy, and safer modes of transportation.

The document should reference FHWA's Proven Safety Countermeasures, such as "Bicycle Lanes", "Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons", "Road Diets", and "Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons" as safety measures in all STIP projects to reduce deaths and serious injuries, to advance Complete Streets designs, and to move toward zero roadway deaths.

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## Responses to Aquidneck Island Projects in the Draft STIP

### Regarding STIP ID 5107:

Active Transportation Program	5107	Bellevue Avenue ADA Sidewalk/Access Improvements (Kay St. to Ocean Ave)	This project will make sidewalk improvements to address ADA accessibility deficiencies through the installation of ADA curb access ramps and replacement of chip stone sealed sidewalks	<b>\$0.50 million for 2028</b> <b>\$5.50 million for 2030</b> \$5.50 million for 2031 \$20 million for 2032 Total \$31.50 million
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Bellevue Avenue is a primary route for bicyclists, and this project does not include bicycle improvements. This corridor - with connections to tourist destinations, businesses, parks, beaches, historical sites, Salve Regina University, and residential neighborhoods - is identified as a priority segment of the bike network in Newport in the Newport Transportation Plan and Ride Island Bicycle Plan, enhancing connectivity to people and places, and connecting the Memorial Boulevard bicycle lanes to the popular coastal bicycling routes known as Ocean Drive, or "The Ocean Loop". Please refer to S12, page 89 of Newport's Transportation Master Plan, "Keep Newport Moving" for additional discussion and strategies, and to the section beginning on page 62 of the Ride Island Bicycle Plan also adopted by the City for Newport as a guiding document. Furthermore, the planned bike lanes on Narragansett Avenue and shared lane markings on Ruggles Avenue connect to Bellevue Avenue, elevating the need for consistent bicycle infrastructure along this key North to South route.

Bellevue Avenue is one of the widest streets in Newport. The absence of travel lane striping for cars results in inconsistent positioning and dangerous conditions for bicycles on the same road. South of Memorial Boulevard, Bellevue Avenue is wide enough for bike lanes.

On-street parking on Bellevue Avenue between Casino Terrace and Kay Street can be reconfigured to improve sight lines for traffic entering Bellevue from intersecting streets - reducing risks for pedestrians, cyclists, and other cars.

Please refer to S10, page 88 of Newport's Master Transportation Plan, "Keep Newport Moving" for additional discussion and strategies.

Figures referenced from Keep Newport Moving:

#### S10: Touro Street and Bellevue Avenue (Thames Street to Narragansett Avenue)



##### Action

Touro Street and Bellevue Avenue are major roadways that pass through Newport's historic core and serve all modes of travel.

To provide bicycle facilities on Bellevue Avenue, evaluate the need for on-street vehicle parking given nearby available off-street vehicle parking. South of East Bowery, reduce width of travel lanes to accommodate dedicated bike facilities. The intersection of Bellevue Avenue and Memorial Boulevard is confusing and has a history of frequent crashes. With the installation of the bikeway, retine the traffic signal and make the intersection easier to cross.

Work with RIPTA in their effort to enhance transit service along Broadway including increasing the

frequency of Route 67 during peak service hours. Install floating bus stops and shelters with real-time arrival information.

Continue the connection north on Touro Street by installing traffic calming elements and shared lane markings.

##### Partners

Planning and Economic Development, Public Services, RIPTA, City Council, Discover Newport, Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce

##### Funding

Capital Improvement Program

#### S12: Ocean Loop (Wellington Avenue, Halidon Avenue, Brenton Road, Beacon Hill Road, Harrison Avenue, Ridge Road, Castle Hill Avenue, Ocean Avenue)



##### Action

Create a scenic and iconic multimodal route along Newport's "Ten-Mile Drive" by adding traffic calming features throughout the route, shared lane markings, bike lanes, designated pull-offs and places to enjoy the scenery, bike repair stations, benches, drinking water, and restrooms. As the main entrance to Fort Adams, these streets have significant walking and biking activity without dedicated space. Measure speeds and monitor operations at key intersections and locations to understand specific speeding issues. Consider more intense bikeway treatments at major intersections

Also provide programming for this ride by making maps available, publishing the ride, and coordinating events at popular stops during peak season. This effort will add to the bike culture in Newport and establish Newport as a bike tourist destination.

##### Partners

Planning and Economic Development, Public Services, City Council, Discover Newport, Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce, Bike Newport

##### Funding

Federal and State Grants (RAISE, SS4A, CRP, CMAQ, HISP, STBG). See Funding Strategy Appendix for details.

#### Regarding STIP ID 5300:

Active Transportation Program	5300	America's Cup/ Memorial Boulevard Resiliency and Multi Modal Improvements	This project will create better accommodations and connections to adjacent completed projects in the realm of improved multimodal access and resiliency of the corridor	\$0.50 million for 2031 \$3.50 million for 2032 \$0.25 million for 2033 \$0.25 million for 2034 Total \$4.50 million
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This focus on multimodal improvements to America's Cup and Memorial Boulevard requires specificity regarding access for bicycles, pedestrians, transit, and ferry. Note that this busy area is the historic center of the City of Newport. The current configuration of Americas' Cup Avenue prioritizes motor vehicles over all modes and the proposed multimodal improvements will improve access and safety for the variety of transportation modes.

The full length of America's Cup requires improvements as addressed in the Transportation Master Plan and the Ride Island Bicycle Plan. On this priority bike route, there is no transition from the end of the new shared use path to the start of the bike lane, and the current bike lane is dangerously narrow with no buffer.

The intersection of America's Cup and Lower Thames Street lacks consideration for bicyclists is a conflict point for cars, cyclists, and pedestrians. The intersections of Memorial Boulevard with Spring and Bellevue host high counts of bicyclists, pedestrian, and motor vehicles with no managing infrastructure. On-street parking on Memorial Boulevard between Thomas Street and Annandale Road should be studied to improve cyclist safety along this popular corridor. Please refer to S8, pages 84-85 of Newport's Master Transportation Plan, "Keep Newport Moving" and pages 71-72 of the Ride Island Bicycle Plan for designs and recommendations.

Figures referenced from Keep Newport Moving:

#### S8: Memorial Boulevard (Thames Street to Rhode Island Avenue)



#### Action

Memorial Boulevard provides an important connection linking downtown Newport with the Bellevue Avenue business district, the Cliff Walk, Easton's Beach, and Newport's neighbor, Middletown. Today, Memorial Boulevard varies with bike lanes that start and stop, patchy vehicle parking areas, and a different number of travel lanes in each direction.

Complete this section of the Ride to the Beach by installing a quick-build, separated bike facility from Thames Street to Rhode Island Avenue using impermanent materials such as paint, planters, and plastic flexposts. House the amount of car traffic on Memorial Boulevard in fewer travel lanes and install a separated bikeway in the remaining space. Along with the bikeway, provide frequent, comfortable, and safer crossings for people walking or biking, and manage curbside conflicts through signage, pick-up/drop-off zones, and enforcement. The intersection of Bellevue Avenue and Memorial Boulevard is confusing and has a history of frequent crashes. With the installation of the bikeway, retune the traffic signal and make the intersection easier to cross.

In a future phase, upgrade this bikeway with permanent separation, such as raising the bikeway to the level of the sidewalk or installing curbs separating the bikeway from vehicle traffic, such as shown on the concept to the left. At this time, install trees, benches, and landscaping to create a welcoming corridor.

With these changes, tourism bus operations will not be affected.

From Old Beach Road to the parking lot entrance for Easton's Beach, create a "flexspace" that can accommodate a variety of uses depending on the need by day or time of day (uses may include overflow parking, bus stops, pick-up/drop-off, or food trucks).

The tree-lined median will be retained as tree preservation is one of Newport's top priorities.

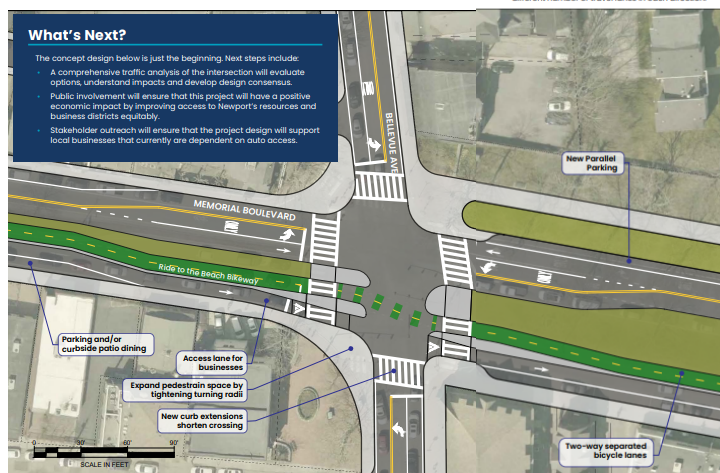
#### Partners

Planning and Economic Development, Public Services, Newport Recreation Department, City Council, Discover Newport, Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce, RDOT

#### Funding

Capital Improvement Program

S8: Memorial Boulevard and Bellevue Avenue Intersection Concept



[Regarding STIP ID 1359:](#)

Active Transportation Program	1359	RI-214, Valley Rd. (RI-138A Aquidneck Ave to RI-138 East Main Rd	This line item involves resurfacing of the roadway from Green End Avenue to RI-138 East Main Road. Sidewalk and handicapped ramp replacement will be performed for the entirety of this route, from Aquidneck Avenue to East Main Rd.	\$0.10 million for 2032 \$0.25 million for 2033 \$1.60 million for 2034 \$1.70 million for 2035 Total \$3.65 million
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This entire length of Valley Road is a priority corridor for people biking, walking, and using transit to priority destinations that include the local high school, middle school, Child & Family Services, Newport County Mental Health, numerous businesses and markets, houses of worship, the YMCA, health care providers, nursing homes, and much more. The entire length of the corridor has more than adequate room to dramatically improve safety for all road users. Adding bicycle infrastructure on Valley Road can easily connect with the shared use path on Connell Highway at the north end and with the Memorial Blvd bike lane at the south end - resulting in a full circle loop of Newport and Middletown - connecting residential neighborhoods with innumerable priority destinations and dramatically improving access and connectivity for people biking and walking on Aquidneck Island. Valley Road is addressed as a priority by the Town of Middletown, and in the Ride Island Bicycle Plan, see pages 40-41.

[Regarding STIP ID 5070:](#)

Active Transportation Program	5070	RI-138A, Aquidneck Avenue (Purgatory Rd. to Green End Ave.)	This line item involves resurfacing of the roadway from Purgatory Road to Reservoir Avenue. Sidewalk and handicapped ramp replacement will be performed for the entirety of the route, from Purgatory Road to Green End Avenue.	<b>\$0.10 million for 2028</b> <b>\$0.10 million for 2029</b> <b>\$0.20 million for 2030</b> \$1.00 million for 2031 \$1.75 million for 2032 \$0.10 million for 2033 Total \$3.25 million
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As per the Ride Island Bicycle Plan, this project should be modified to include separated bicycle lanes or a shared use path. With the new bike lane completed on Aquidneck Avenue from Green End Ave to East Main Road, and the planned extension of the Memorial Boulevard bike lanes through the Atlantic Beach district, bike lanes will contribute to the connected network and support north and south travel to businesses, schools, and residential areas.