



Actions for Transportation: Overview

Rhode Island is a small state, but most of us still have to get from place to place: to see family, keep appointments, and earn our livings. Some of us take a lot of pride in our cars—the kind of car we can afford or display makes us feel good. Some of us also appreciate driving as a way to feel powerful and fast, get time alone, or even enjoy the landscape.

Transportation—cars, trucks, buses, boats, planes, trains and farm equipment—is also the source of about 40% of Rhode Island’s greenhouse gas emissions. Transportation also contains many opportunities for us to make and demand change, using a combination of new technologies, time-tested strategies, and changes in our own habits.

The infrastructure that supports transportation (roads, bridges, parking lots and parking garages) also causes and/or requires greenhouse gas emissions. The land-use policies that favor private vehicles feed commercial and residential suburban sprawl and create unsafe roadways, and in addition to their greenhouse gas emissions, gasoline- and diesel-burning vehicles emit pollution that damages our lung and cardiac health—especially for children.

This section provides information on how to use transportation with the lowest possible greenhouse gas emissions, and how to demand and support public initiatives that make low-emissions use easier and more common.



Biking and Walking: At Home in Our World

Nine ways for Rhode Islanders to get around without polluting



- Look for times in your day and week when you can walk or bike instead of driving
- When you do drive, make room for pedestrians and bikers
- Ask your city and town councillors for better walking, wheeling and biking infrastructure
- Start a “walking school bus” for children in your neighborhood or town
- Start or contribute to a city/town bikeshare program
- If you’re an employer, institute a Bike to Work Day
- Weigh in on Rhode Island’s Bicycle Mobility Plan
- Support city/town ordinances that reduce racial profiling of pedestrians and cyclists
- Ask your auto insurance provider about pay-per-mile car insurance

Biking and walking have almost no greenhouse gas emissions. Both options also

benefit our physical and mental health and our acquaintance with other people.

Household action: Replace recreational activities that you must drive to with activities that you can walk or bike to. You may be able to give up your gym membership, if you have one, and be outside more often. See the [“Exercise and Exploration” section](#) for ideas.

Rhode Island has a history of walkable cities and towns, and we can renew that walkability for our own century. City improvements that serve pedestrians also often serve people with disabilities and elderly people. Both groups are highly vulnerable to the shortages and interrupted services that climate change may cause, so working with them now is important. If racial profiling is prohibited in your town, residents of color will feel more comfortable walking or biking. Rhode Island’s [Bicycle Mobility Plan](#) also offers a chance to make your voice heard.

Community action: Pay-per-mile auto insurance means that whenever you walk or bike instead of driving, you save money. Sign up if your provider offers it: here’s [a site where you can check](#). Bring this option up next time you and a friend or co-worker are griping about your car insurance—and if your company isn’t on that list, write and ask about this service.



Bus Transportation and Infrastructure

Six ways to use—and improve—our state's public transportation system



- Make RIPTA rides part of your routine, and give RIPTA feedback on their service
- Use RIPTA's Park and Ride lots to shorten your car commute
- Comment on Rhode Island's Long-Term Transportation Plan, now in development
- Ask your employer for public transit incentives—or be the employer who offers them
- Encourage large institutions and businesses to adopt a bus route as a community service
- Demand better snow clearance of bus stops and sidewalks from your town or city

Taking the bus allows us to avoid the stress of driving, to extend the useful life of our vehicles, and to minimize wear and tear on roads and bridges. It reduces traffic by reducing the number of cars on the road. The less time we spend isolated in our cars, the more we reduce emissions and have opportunities to know our fellow Rhode Islanders.

Household: Use [RIPTA's trip planner](#) to plot out bus routes for the trips you make most often. If you use a smartphone, [Transit](#) tells you when the next RIPTA bus is

coming to your stop. RIPTA takes cash: a full adult fare is \$2.00, and a transfer to another route is \$1.00. You can also buy bus tickets and passes ahead of time [online](#). See if there's a [Park and Ride](#) served by RIPTA near you. RIPTA offers some free/low-cost options for seniors and people with disabilities: <https://www.ripta.com/seniors>.

As you ride, pay attention to what would make your experience—or those of your fellow-passengers—easier and better. Take advantage of [RIPTA's Customer Service](#) page to offer feedback.

Community action: Rhode Island is currently working on its Long-Range Transportation Plan. Write to the planners to tell them how urgently we need to reduce fossil fuel emissions and how important good public transportation is to that reduction: <http://www.planri.com/getinvolved.asp>. Some ideas: a comprehensive statewide transportation plan focused on reducing wasteful traffic while building community; stable funding for public transportation from a gas tax indexed to inflation, user fees (tolls), a “vehicle miles traveled” (VMT) fee, and taxes on vehicles that do not meet fuel efficiency standards).



Taking the Train: Connecting With

our Neighboring States

Four ways to make the most of the MBTA and support rail in RI



- Commute on the T, if you commute to Boston, with a monthly pass
- Invest in a 10-ride pass if you take the train fairly often
- Take the T to T.F. Green when you fly and never pay for airport parking again
- Support rail initiatives that could make travel between towns, cities and states easier

Whether you go to Boston every day for work or every so often to visit the city, taking the MBTA can save wear and tear on your nerves as well as on your car. If you take the T, you need only drive as far as the parking lot and then use your train ride to rest, read, or talk with your traveling companions. You can [check the rates from your closest station](#). Children 11 and under ride for free, and people with disabilities and seniors ride for half price. The Wickford station has free parking—and the less time we spend in our cars, the more our state’s greenhouse gas emissions fall.

Household action: If you go to Boston, take the T; if you go often, buy a pass. If you commute to Boston, commute with the T instead of by car.

Rhode Island’s Long-Range Transportation Plan also includes rail travel, and our relationships and interactions with nearby states could become swifter and easier by

adding commuter rail tracks alongside the ones that already exist between Rhode Island and New York. Running the MBTA on electricity, as Amtrak already runs its trains, could reduce not only car travel and traffic but fossil-fuel-powered bus travel. Other visions include working with the [Northeast Corridor Future Project](#) to develop a New Haven-Hartford-Providence-Boston high speed rail corridor, reestablishing commuter rail from Woonsocket to Westerly.

Community action: [Write to the Division of Planning](#) about including some of these rail options in the Long-Range Transportation Plan.



Electric Vehicles: Burn Less, Save More

Six ways to phase gasoline out and electric in



- Price electric vehicles—and purchase one if it's time for a new car
- Watch the auto industry for developments in fuel cells and their support infrastructure

- Ask nearby dealerships about electric cars to show there's interest and demand
- Ask car sharing services, if you use them, about electric options
- Substitute electric for your company car or fleet
- Ask your elected officials how they are planning to support electric vehicles in RI

Electric cars are more effective and efficient every year. One full charge powers over 240 miles of travel, and public charging stations are becoming more common. Where electricity can be generated with renewable resources, switching to an electric vehicle is a good investment in a low-emissions future.

Household action: If it's time for you to buy a new car or soon will be, price an electric vehicle, including the setup for charging it at your home. If you switch to a renewable energy plan for your home electricity, or have enough renewable power on your property to handle the extra requirements (see the ["Rhode Island Programs..." section](#)), you can run your car at greatly reduced cost and with no damaging emissions.

Asking dealerships about electric cars when you can't afford one may seem silly, but it lets them know there's a demand—and might give the company an incentive to bring down the price. The same is true for car-sharing services, if you use them.

Community action: Advocate with your elected representatives for a "cash for clunkers" exchange program where cars and trucks with low gas mileage could be traded in towards electric vehicles. (See the ["Further Resources" section](#) for models in other states.)



Maintenance and Ride-sharing: Efficient Use of Your Car or Truck

Six ways to burn less climate-warming gasoline



- Carpool with people in your community and/or use Park and Ride lots
- Get regular oil and filter changes, maintain tire pressure, and keep up with emissions checks
- Avoid idling when you're waiting in your vehicle
- Start driving right away—even in the cold
- Ask your school district about a “no idling” policy for school buses
- Put the above in place as policy for your business or agency if you have a fleet

If you can't currently replace your car with a combination of public transit, walking, biking and/or an electric vehicle, you can still get your vehicle to use fuel more efficiently and keep its emissions as low as possible. Most of these actions will also save you money on gas.

Household action: Maintain your car according to its manual—the manuals of most cars are online if you don't still have your copy. This will reduce the gas your car needs to burn in order to run.

We can reduce stress and build community by riding together. Most trips to work in RI are in single-occupancy cars, which increase both traffic and greenhouse gas emissions. Carpooling can cut a community's car-based emissions by a half or two-thirds, depending on how many people are regularly riding together instead of driving alone. It also allows riders to split the cost of gas, and in some cases of a parking spot.

Community action: Carpool and share rides. If possible, take turns so that no one person is using their car all the time. This can be especially effective for commuting to work, if you live near any of your co-workers, and for going to community events like religious services or kids' sports events. This can also be a good service for a younger person to do for an elderly person who no longer drives or finds driving difficult. For other carpool options, here's a link to RI's Park and Ride lots: http://www.dot.ri.gov/travel/park_and_ride.php