

# news

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## CONTACT

Hugh Ryan  
Barrington, Rhode Island  
(401) 246-2300  
[hryan@ryanwellnitz.com](mailto:hryan@ryanwellnitz.com)

### Vote 'Approve' Nov.2 R.I. Ballot Question 3 for Transportation Bonds

Bonds offer only practical way to obtain \$338 million of Federal aid

Question 3 on the November 2 Rhode Island election ballot gives voters the opportunity to approve \$84.7 of Transportation Bonds that would be used to provide the matching money needed to qualify for \$338 million of additional Federal funds over the next two fiscal years.

Approval of the Transportation Bonds is the only practical way to fund necessary highway and bridge projects, as well as provide new and rehabilitated buses for the RIPTA fleet. Additional popular Park 'n Ride lots for RIPTA would also be financed out of the highway and bridge program.

Federal aid would make up 80% of an overall \$423.5 million transportation improvement program. The 20% State match would include \$80 million from the bond issue for highway and bridge projects, matching \$320 million of Federal transportation aid. Also included is \$4.7 million from the bond proposal that would enable RIPTA to take advantage of \$18.8 of Federal aid for buses.

These infrastructure projects will support more than 5,000 jobs in construction and related fields, according to job-support formulas provided by the Federal Highway Administration. The State will also retrieve some of the bond issue costs through income and sales taxes paid by those whose jobs are supported by the program.

In 2008, voters approved a similar transportation bond measure by 77% to 23%, and the resulting improvements and new projects are visible across the State. Recent major projects supported in whole or part by the Rhode Island Department of Transportation program include the I-195 relocation in Providence, the Route 403 relocation in North Kingstown, the Sakonnet Bridge replacement in Tiverton and the Warwick intermodal station.

RIDOT faces a continuing challenge in maintaining its 647 bridges and nearly 3,000 lane-miles of roadway. According to the 2008 National Bridge Survey by the Federal Highway Administration, Rhode Island's decaying bridges are in the worst shape in the nation, with 22.3% structurally deficient and 31.3% functionally obsolete. RIDOT also reports that six percent of state-maintained roads are in poor condition and 18 percent are in mediocre conditions.