July 26, 2019

The Honorable Gina M. Raimondo
Governor
State of Rhode Island
State House
Providence, RI  02903

Re: Proposed Amendment #19 to State Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)

Dear Governor Raimondo,

The Grow Smart RI Board met on Wednesday and discussed RIDOT’s proposed Amendment #19 that we understand would reduce by approximately $37M funds currently programmed in the 10-year TIP to support the mobility and safety of pedestrians and bicyclists.

While we fully appreciate and support your Administration’s overriding priority to bring 90% of Rhode Island’s bridges into a state of good repair by 2026, we believe it would be a mistake to reduce the already very small percentage of programmed investment to improve the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists – especially in light of the infusion of approximately $358M since February of this year to support the bridge program.

Pedestrian safety remains a serious challenge for Rhode Island. Between 2008 and 2017, a total of 127 people were struck and killed walking in Rhode Island. In addition, we believe that these projects are important catalysts for economic development, community revitalization, talent recruitment, tourism and public health. Moreover, bike and pedestrian facilities are indeed part of a comprehensive transportation network.

At your initiation, Rhode Island voters twice approved bond funding to expand and enhance Rhode Island’s bikepath network (2016 and 2018). We and others committed significant effort to promote passage of these bond measures which passed with strong voter support. The investment amount approved by voters, however, was never intended to supplant funds that were already programmed for this purpose in the 10-year TIP, but rather to supplement them. We believe the proposed amendment would undermine voter confidence in future bond proposals.

Finally, you may recall a similar Amendment was proposed in February of this year and later withdrawn following significant public opposition. We urge you to direct RIDOT to further amend Amendment #19 by restoring the $37M for bike and pedestrian projects before public hearings take place on August 13th and August 15th.

Respectfully,

Scott Wolf
Executive Director

Cc:  Peter Alviti, Director, RIDOT
      Brett Smiley, Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor
      Nicole Verdi, Esq., Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor