Transportation

Introduction

Bristol's transportation system is central to the Town's economic vitality, public safety, environmental sustainability, and quality of life. As a historic coastal community located on a peninsula, Bristol depends on a limited number of regional corridors, including Routes 114 and 136 and the Mount Hope Bridge, to connect residents, businesses, and visitors to neighboring communities and the highway network. These geographic constraints, together with a compact historic street pattern and scenic roadway designations, require a transportation approach that supports safety and mobility while preserving community character.

Transportation infrastructure in Bristol is increasingly affected by coastal hazards and climate change. Flooding, sea level rise, and extreme weather events pose risks to low-lying roadways and regional connections. While vulnerability assessments and adaptation strategies for transportation assets are addressed more fully in the Natural Hazards and Climate Change Element, this Transportation Element recognizes the need to coordinate mobility planning with long-term resilience efforts to maintain reliable access for residents, businesses, emergency services, and regional travel.

This Transportation Element builds upon prior corridor planning efforts, the Town's Safety Action Plan, and townwide Bicycle Network Plan and incorporates public input gathered during the Comprehensive Plan update. It establishes coordinated goals, policies, and implementation actions to advance a safe, connected, and resilient multimodal transportation system that improves access, strengthens regional connectivity, and enhances neighborhood livability.

2016 Comprehensive Plan Implementation Progress

- **Metacom Avenue Corridor Improvements:** RIDOT i~~i~~mplemented key recommendations from the 2007 Metacom Corridor Management Plan, including a speed study, left-turn lanes, crosswalks at key intersections, and a continuous center turn lane, resulting in improved traffic safety and operations along Metacom Avenue.
- **Bristol Bicycle Network Planning:** Completed the Bristol Bicycle Network planning effort, funded through the RIDEM Bikeways Program, to improve bicycle and pedestrian connectivity. The study focused on Downtown but included some townwide analysis. ~~townwide~~. The effort included alternatives analysis, public engagement, and concept designs for enhanced bicycle facilities and shared-street treatments.
- **Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program:** Implemented a resident request-based traffic calming program to reduce vehicle speeds and enhance neighborhood safety.
- **Safety Action Plan Prepared and Adopted:** Completed and locally adopted a municipal Safety Action Plan under the federal Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program, identifying high-risk intersections and priority safety countermeasures for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists through a data-driven and a several month-long community-engagement~~d~~ process.
- **Town-Wide Wayfinding System:** Implemented a coordinated wayfinding program featuring a consistent red, white, and blue design theme that improves navigation and reinforces Bristol's civic identity, drawing inspiration from the community's annual Fourth of July Celebration.

- **Gooding Avenue Pedestrian Improvements:** Completed sidewalk and ADA accessibility upgrades along Gooding Avenue, including reconstruction of access serving adjacent commercial parking areas, improving walkability and safety along the corridor. Also, an improved RIPTA bus stop at Hope Street serving the area was completed.
- **Ferry Road Sidewalk Extension:** The Town received two grants to plan bicycle and pedestrian improvements, including conceptual designs for extending sidewalks from the Constitution and Wood Streets area to Metacom Avenue to improve pedestrian connectivity to Roger Williams University and surrounding neighborhoods. This project has been included in the State Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), is currently in design, may extend to Old Ferry Road, and is anticipated to be completed in 2028.~~Extended sidewalks from the Constitution and Wood Streets area to Metacom Avenue, improving pedestrian connectivity to Roger Williams University and surrounding neighborhoods.~~
- ~~**Downtown Bus Pull-Off Areas:** Installed designated bus pull-off areas ("bus boxes") in downtown Bristol to allow buses to safely exit the travel lane for passenger boarding, and improving traffic flow and safety along state routes.~~
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Goal 1: Provide a safe, accessible, and connected multimodal transportation system for all users.

A. Implement a Complete Streets approach that accommodates pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, motorists, and people of all ages and abilities.

B. Incorporate green infrastructure and stormwater management practices into roadway and streetscape projects where feasible to improve resilience and environmental performance.

C. Support complete streets principles by promoting bicycle and pedestrian facilities that improve access and safety throughout Bristol's downtown and neighborhood corridors, reinforcing connections to the East Bay Bike Path, waterfront destinations, and major community nodes.

D. Expand and improve pedestrian and bicycle networks connecting neighborhoods, schools, parks, downtown, waterfront areas, and regional paths, including the East Bay Bike Path and Colt State Park.

E. Promote the safe and predictable use of shared-use paths and bicycle facilities through design, maintenance, signage, education, and coordination with enforcement, with specific attention to speed differentials and emerging mobility technologies such as electric bicycles, consistent with state regulations and best practices.

F. Close critical sidewalk, crossing, and accessibility gaps, with priority on Hope Street, Ferry Road, Metacom Avenue, and other key corridors.

G. Require and encourage physical connections between neighborhoods and key destinations, including schools, commercial areas, employment centers, and recreational facilities, through a connected network of public roads, sidewalks, off-street paths, and bicycle facilities.

H. Support neighborhood street connections that improve emergency access, local service delivery, and resident mobility, while preventing cut-through traffic and preserving neighborhood character.

Goal 2: Reduce congestion and transportation-related environmental impacts while improving local and regional connectivity.

A. Promote land use and development patterns that reduce reliance on the automobile by supporting walking, bicycling, and other alternative modes of transportation.

B. Encourage alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle travel, including public transit, ridesharing and vanpools, walking, and bicycling.

C. Coordinate with RIPTA to improve bus stop safety, accessibility, visibility, and amenities, including shelters where appropriate.

D. Identify opportunities for park-and-ride facilities and supporting multimodal connections to reduce congestion on regional corridors.

E. Implement adopted transportation and corridor study recommendations, including the Metacom Avenue Corridor Management Plan, through development review and capital planning.

F. Manage access along major roadways by limiting curb cuts, consolidating driveways, and improving intersection operations.

G. Coordinate with RIDOT and neighboring communities to pursue regional transportation strategies that reduce cut-through traffic and congestion.

H. Reduce air and water pollution by supporting low-emission and non-motorized transportation options and incorporating green infrastructure where feasible.

Goal 3: Maintain safe, efficient, and well-managed transportation access for downtown, neighborhood, and waterfront areas, including the movement of people, goods, and services.

A. Maintain safe and efficient circulation in downtown, waterfront, and commercial areas to support businesses, institutions, and tourism.

B. Promote “park-once” behavior through coordinated parking management, pedestrian connections, and wayfinding that encourage walking between destinations.

C. Expand bicycle parking and visitor-supportive facilities at downtown, waterfront, park, and cultural destinations.

D. Explore seasonal or local mobility options, such as shuttles or trolley-style service and institutional partnerships, that reduce parking pressure and enhance visitor access.

E. Implement coordinated gateway and streetscape improvements that reinforce community identity and improve navigation.

F. Support efficient goods movement and deliveries through curb management and design strategies that minimize conflicts with pedestrians and bicyclists.

G. Maintain the Town's prohibition on the creation of new private roads to promote a connected public street network, ensure long-term public access, and avoid fragmented roadway ownership and maintenance.

H. Maintain the Town's policy of allowing on-street parking on all non-arterial roadways to support neighborhood access, local activity, and shared use of the public right-of-way.

Transportation Context

Bristol's location on a peninsula strongly shapes local and regional circulation patterns. Vehicular access into and out of Town is limited to Routes 114 and 136, including the Mount Hope Bridge connection to Aquidneck Island. Approximately 120 miles of roadway are maintained by the Town of Bristol. Key corridors, including Metacom Avenue (Route 136), Hope Street and Ferry Road (Route 114), along with ~~and select downtown streets~~Gooding Avenue and a portion of Poppasquash Road, are under state jurisdiction.

Bristol's historic development pattern has resulted in a compact street network with narrow rights-of-way and limited opportunities for roadway expansion. Transportation improvements must therefore balance safety, mobility, and accessibility with preservation of the Town's historic character. Route 114 (Hope Street and Ferry Road) and High Street are designated Scenic Roadways under the State Scenic Roadway Program. This designation requires review of roadway changes to protect scenic and historic character and influences transportation design, maintenance, and streetscape decisions. Route 114 is also a designated evacuation route and a low-lying roadway vulnerable to storm inundation and future sea level rise.

Map TR-1 illustrates Federal Highway Administration roadway classifications within Bristol, demonstrating the concentration of regional traffic along Routes 114 and 136 and the extensive network of local and collector streets that support neighborhood access.

Neighborhood Circulation and Connectivity

Several Bristol neighborhoods, particularly those located along Metacom Avenue and Hope Street, lack internal street connections and rely on a limited number of access points to ~~major corridors~~arterial roads. This pattern can concentrate traffic at a small number of intersections, increase reliance on Metacom Avenue for short local trips, and create congestion challenges for emergency response and municipal services.

Bristol's approach to neighborhood circulation emphasizes improving internal connectivity while maintaining appropriate access management along Metacom Avenue. Where appropriate, neighborhood circulation should direct traffic to existing signalized intersections rather than creating new direct access points along the corridor. Evaluation of new or improved neighborhood connections should incorporate neighborhood input and preserve safety and character.

Metacom Avenue (Route 136)

Long-term circulation strategies identified in the Metacom Avenue Corridor Management Plan (2007) remain relevant, including recommendations related to roadway safety, access management, pedestrian and bicycle accommodations, transit operations, landscaping, signage, and site design. Many of the recommendations have been incorporated into the Town's zoning and land use regulations. The Town will continue to refer to this plan when evaluating development proposals and coordinating incremental improvements along the corridor.

These strategies include improving internal connections between commercial areas and adjacent neighborhoods to reduce reliance on Metacom Avenue and the parallel local street network (including Hope Street) for short local trips. Incremental implementation of shared access connections and service road segments has demonstrated benefits and should continue where feasible in order to improve safety and circulation while minimizing additional curb cuts and turning conflicts along the corridor.

Transportation Safety

Safe Streets and Roads for All Safety Action Plan

~~Bristol prepared and adopted a~~ A municipal Safety Action Plan (as part of the statewide Safe Streets and Roads for All initiative funded through a 2022 United States Department of Transportation grant) was prepared for Bristol and was locally adopted. The plan applies a Safe Systems approach to improve safety for all roadway users and reflects a data-driven and community-informed process that included crash analysis, identification of the High Injury Network, and public engagement.

The Safety Action Plan establishes priority safety needs and recommended improvements for both Town-maintained and State-maintained roadways. It positions Bristol to pursue future implementation funding and provides a framework for advancing targeted safety projects that align with local, regional, and state transportation planning efforts.

Priority Improvement Locations

The Safety Action Plan identifies priority locations based on crash data, roadway characteristics, and community input.

On Town-controlled streets, recommended improvements include the following:

- Bay View Avenue. This corridor presents opportunities for traffic calming, lane adjustments, enhanced pedestrian infrastructure, and bicycle accommodations consistent with Complete Streets principles.
- Sherry Avenue and Perry Street. These streets function as neighborhood cut-through routes and serve as important walking paths for students traveling to and from the high school. Recommended actions include intersection safety treatments, improved signage, sidewalk and crossing enhancements, and continued evaluation of alternative routes such as the Wood Street Connector.
- Naomi Street. This street experiences cut-through traffic and pedestrian safety concerns, including sidewalk gaps and constrained intersections. The Plan recommends improving

pedestrian continuity, filling sidewalk gaps, and implementing targeted traffic calming and signage improvements.
- Poppasquash Road. This corridor presents safety challenges related to speeding, limited sight distances on curves, and interactions with the East Bay Bike Path. Recommended improvements include speed management, visibility enhancements, improved crossings, pedestrian facility upgrades, and coordination with longer-term coastal resilience planning.

On State-owned roadways, implementation will require coordination with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation. Priority corridors include:

- Metacom Avenue (Route 136). Recommended improvements include enhanced pedestrian crossings, sidewalk continuity, bicycle accommodations, intersection safety improvements, and speed management.
- Hope Street and Ferry Road (Route 114). Recommended measures include improved crosswalks, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, traffic calming treatments, and intersection upgrades while maintaining regional mobility.

The Town will use the Safety Action Plan to guide capital improvements, pursue state and federal funding, and coordinate with RIDOT and other partners.

Traffic Calming and Speed Management

The Town of Bristol maintains an established Traffic Calming Policy to address neighborhood concerns about vehicle speeds and roadway safety on Town-maintained residential streets. The policy provides a formal process through which residents may initiate traffic calming requests by submitting a petition demonstrating at least sixty percent support within the defined area of influence.

Requests are evaluated through traffic studies and reviewed by Town staff, including Police and Public Works, with recommendations presented to the Town Council for final action and funding. Potential measures include speed humps, roadway narrowing, electronic speed feedback signs, and other design-based strategies intended to reduce vehicle speeds and enhance safety. Requests for removal of installed measures also require Town Council approval.

Public engagement conducted during the Comprehensive Plan update revealed strong and consistent concern regarding speeding, unsafe driving behaviors, and difficult pedestrian crossings, particularly along Metacom Avenue, Hope Street, Ferry Road, and downtown streets. Residents expressed strong support for traffic calming measures, improved crosswalks, clearer markings, and enhanced pedestrian visibility.

Public Transit (RIPTA) Service

Public bus service in Bristol is provided by the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) and is an important component of the Town's transportation system. Route 60 primarily serves Hope Street and downtown Bristol and is a high-ridership corridor that provides frequent and reliable service. This route supports access to employment, education, healthcare, and commercial

destinations and plays a central role in supporting downtown vitality. Route 60X primarily serves Metacom Avenue and provides more limited service.

Enhanced frequency, reliability, and stop amenities along Metacom Avenue could improve transit access to neighborhoods and employment areas and support transit-supportive development patterns. The Town supports exploring opportunities to enhance service along Metacom Avenue without reducing service levels along Route 60 or negatively affecting existing ridership.

The Town will continue coordinating with RIPTA to improve the safety, accessibility, and functionality of bus stops in Bristol. Improvements should include ADA-compliant access, enhanced pedestrian and bicycle connections, and the installation of shelters or seating and other rider amenities where warranted. The Town has identified the following priority locations for future bus stop improvements:

- Hope Street and State Street (northbound and southbound)
- Hope Street and Franklin Street (northbound and southbound)
- Hope Street and Fales Road
- Hope Street before Creek Street (northbound)
- Roger Williams University (northbound and southbound)

~~The Town will continue coordinating with RIPTA to improve the safety and accessibility of bus stops, including ADA-compliant access, pedestrian and bicycle connections and shelters where appropriate. The Town has prepared a list of priority bus stops where amenities should be considered.~~

Public engagement indicated interest in improved service frequency, clearer bus route information, additional shelters and benches, potential local or seasonal shuttle services, and coordination with Roger Williams University to reduce automobile dependence.

Map TR-2 illustrates RIPTA bus routes and stops, the East Bay Bike Path, and highlights the concentration of transit service along Hope Street (Route 114) and Metacom Avenue (Route 136).

Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure

East Bay Bike Path

Bristol's bicycle network is anchored by the East Bay Bike Path, a regionally significant shared-use path connecting Bristol to Warren, Barrington, East Providence, and Providence. The path serves both recreational and transportation functions and is an important component of the Town's active transportation network.

High user volumes, speed differentials, roadway crossings, and constrained segments present ongoing safety and connectivity challenges, particularly during peak tourism seasons and special events.

The Town will continue to coordinate with state and regional partners to improve safety, strengthen connections to key destinations, and integrate bicycle facilities with pedestrian networks, transit service, and land use planning.

Bristol Bicycle Network Plan

The Town of Bristol completed the Bristol Bicycle Network and Connector planning effort to improve bicycle and pedestrian connectivity throughout the community. While the study was initially intended to explore improved connections between Roger Williams University and downtown Bristol, the scope expanded to evaluate broader townwide connectivity between the East Bay Bike Path, downtown, waterfront destinations, civic sites, and surrounding neighborhoods.

As part of the planning process, consultants developed conceptual design approaches for several corridors, including a shared-street concept for Thames Street. The concept emphasizes traffic calming, raised crosswalks, improved intersection design at State Street, and shared-street elements intended to slow vehicle speeds and enhance pedestrian and bicycle comfort. Public engagement indicated support for the Thames Street concept as a way to strengthen connections to Independence Park, State Street Dock, Rockwell Park, Fireman's Memorial Park, and the Prudence Island Ferry, while allowing portions of the street to function as pedestrian-oriented space during community events.

The Wood Street Connector (bicycle/pedestrian) was also identified as an important component of the active transportation network. This concept would provide a safer and more direct bicycle and pedestrian connection between residential neighborhoods and downtown Bristol, while improving overall access to the East Bay Bike Path and reducing cut-through traffic on nearby neighborhood streets.

The Bicycle Network planning effort establishes a framework for incremental, context-sensitive improvements that enhance safety and will advance Bristol's identity as a walkable and bicycle-friendly community.

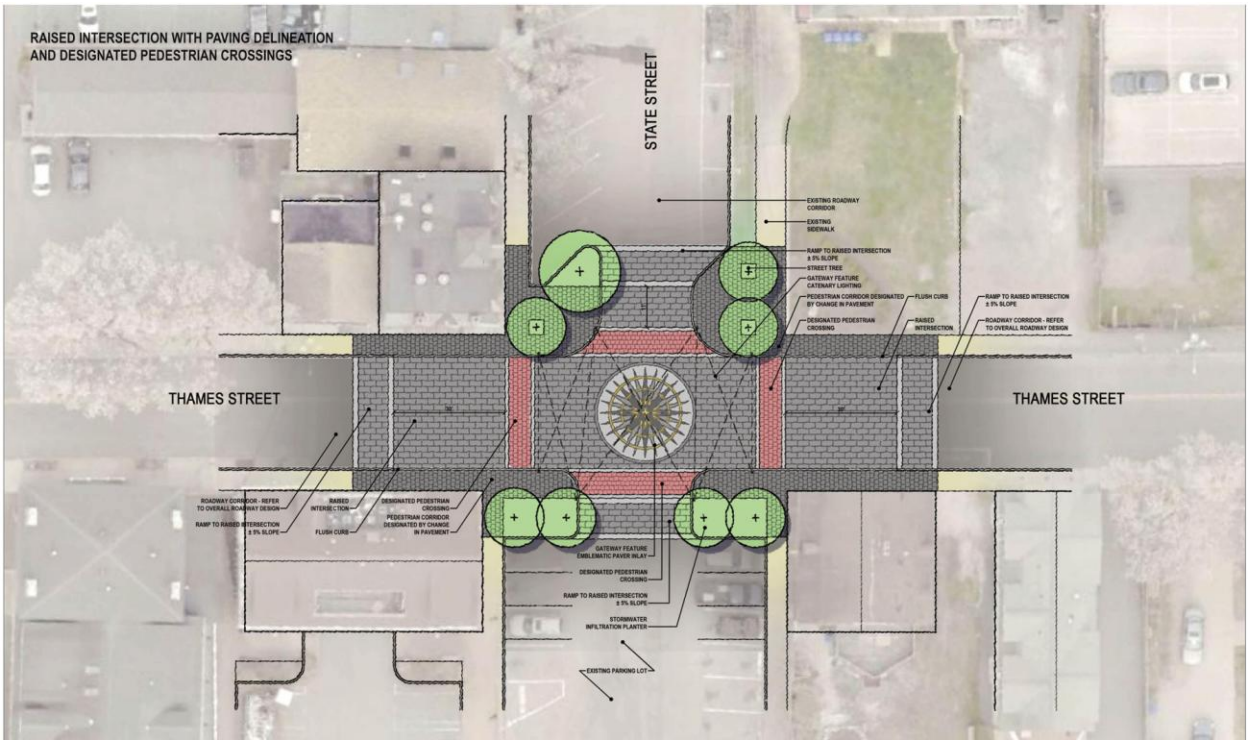

Figure 1 Thames Street Shared Street Conceptual Design (Fuss & O'Neill)

(2 Illustrations removed - TA Comment)

Sidewalk and Pedestrian Connectivity

Public engagement emphasized the need for additional sidewalks and improved pedestrian connections linking residential neighborhoods with downtown, schools, parks, and the waterfront. Gaps in the sidewalk network and challenging roadway crossings were identified as barriers to walking, particularly for older residents and families with children.

The Town will continue to prioritize incremental sidewalk construction, ADA accessibility improvements, crossing enhancements, and pedestrian infrastructure that strengthens connectivity throughout Bristol.

Rhode Island Energy Utility Easement Trail

In coordination with the Town of Warren, Bristol completed a feasibility study evaluating a shared-use path within the Rhode Island Energy electric transmission easement. The study identified the potential for an off-road, north–south multi-use trail connecting the two communities and strengthening regional active transportation connections.

Ferry Service

Bristol serves as the mainland access point for year-round ferry service to Prudence Island, located within the Town of Portsmouth. This privately operated ferry service utilizes a Town-owned dock along Bristol's Thames Street waterfront. Sea level rise assessments prepared by Fuss & O'Neill have identified the dock as vulnerable to future coastal flooding and inundation, indicating that elevation or other resiliency improvements will be necessary to maintain long-term accessibility.~~Bristol serves as the mainland access point for year-round ferry service to Prudence Island, which is located within the Town of Portsmouth. This ferry service is privately operated, with access occurring through Bristol's Thames Street waterfront.~~

The Town recognizes that mainland parking demand associated with Prudence Island residents presents ongoing challenges. Bristol may work with property owners and residents to identify and support appropriate parking and access solutions that reduce impacts on residential streets while maintaining safe and reliable access to ferry service.

Seasonal passenger ferry service connecting Providence, Bristol, and Newport includes a limited stop in Bristol that was introduced in recent years and currently operates primarily on weekends during the peak visitor season. In addition to supporting tourism and visitor access to downtown Bristol, this service provides Bristol residents with a seasonal non-automobile travel option to regional destinations. The Town supports the continued operation of seasonal service to Bristol and encourages the exploration of expanded service, where feasible, and may coordinate, as appropriate, with service providers and partners to support pedestrian and bicycle access, traveler information, and wayfinding within the public right-of-way.

Mount Hope Bridge and Regional Connectivity

The Mount Hope Bridge is a critical regional transportation asset linking Bristol to Aquidneck Island and providing the most direct connection to employment centers, services, and destinations in Newport County. The bridge supports commuter travel, tourism, goods movement, and regional connectivity for residents and businesses throughout the East Bay. The Town will continue coordinating with the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority regarding maintenance activities, construction impacts, asset management, and public communication related to bridge operations. Given the bridge's importance to regional mobility, the Town should work with state and regional partners to prepare for potential extended closures or major service disruptions, including evaluation of contingency transportation strategies such as temporary ferry service or other alternative travel connections. The bridge's designation as a National Historic Landmark further underscores the importance of preserving and maintaining this iconic structure as both a transportation asset and historic resource.

~~The Mount Hope Bridge is a critical regional connection linking Bristol to Aquidneck Island and supporting commuting, tourism, goods movement, and emergency access. The Town will continue to coordinate with the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority on construction impacts, asset management, and public communication.~~

Parking and Downtown Access

Parking management is an important component of Bristol's transportation system, particularly within the historic downtown and waterfront areas where street widths are constrained and seasonal visitation increases demand. Public engagement identified parking availability, turnover, and time limits as recurring concerns, especially during peak summer months and special events.

Downtown Bristol relies heavily on on-street parking supplemented by municipal and privately owned surface lots. While this pattern supports walkability and a compact development form, high-demand periods can result in circulation inefficiencies and competition between short-term visitor parking, employee parking, and ferry-related parking demand. Parking associated with Prudence Island ferry users also contributes to pressure on nearby streets and waterfront areas.

A comprehensive parking and curb management approach will be important to improving turnover, supporting local businesses, and reducing unnecessary vehicle circulation. This may include:

- Evaluation of utilization patterns
- Time limits
- Loading zones
- Seasonal demand
- Enforcement practices
- Review and update of the Town's parking ordinance and associated signage to ensure consistency, clarity and enforceability
- Evaluation and identification of satellite public parking locations outside of Downtown
- Implementation of a shuttle service to key destinations (coordinated with satellite parking)
- Strategic siting of public EV charging infrastructure

These strategies support downtown vitality, improve circulation efficiency, and reinforce Bristol's commitment to maintaining a walkable and accessible historic Downtown.

Reference Documents

Consistency with the Rhode Island State Guide Plan

This Transportation Element is consistent with the Rhode Island State Guide Plan, specifically Moving Forward RI 2050: The Long-Range Transportation Plan (State Guide Plan Element 640). Bristol's emphasis on Complete Streets, bicycle and pedestrian connectivity, and implementation of the Bicycle Network Plan advances the State's goals to connect people and places and promote travel choices across a multimodal system. Coordination with RIDOT on safety improvements and access management along state corridors, including Route 114 and Route 136, supports a safer and more reliable regional transportation network. Policies incorporating green infrastructure and stormwater considerations into transportation projects further advance environmental sustainability and long-term system resilience, consistent with statewide transportation priorities.

Supporting Plans

Town of Bristol, Rhode Island. *Bristol Safety Action Plan.* August 2025.
Adopted September 10, 2025. Prepared by VHB (with Cambridge Systematics and SmithGroup).

Town of Bristol, Rhode Island. Bristol Bicycle Network Project. Established 2020.
Prepared by Fuss & O'Neill (with Toole Design) under the RIDEM Bikeways Program Grant.

Town of Warren and Town of Bristol, Rhode Island. *National Grid (RI Energy) Easement Trail Feasibility Study*. June 2016. Prepared by Horsley Witten Group, Inc., and Bradford Associates LLC.

Next Steps:
Send to Bristol Police Department for Review/Comments
Planning Board to Review Again at April 23rd Meeting