

RHODE ISLAND INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS & ASSOCIATES



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PRESS RELEASE: RHODE ISLAND INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS & ASSOCIATES (RIICA)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Rhode Island Independent Contractors & Associates (RIICA) announced today their opposition to Governor Raimondo's \$ 1.1 billion dollar, toll-financed bridge and highway repair plan while they took a "luke" warm position on the Rhode Island Trucking Association's (RITA) proposal, both which add more taxes and increased fees to an already over taxed Rhode Island said RIICA President Mathew Olson.

RIICA was formed in 1980 as a means for small business to have a voice against discriminatory and over reaching state regulatory rules, regulations and laws to help small and large businesses thrive. With over 300 members and vendors which we represent, our non-union and some union company members fully support our cause.

Olson said that a survey conducted over the last month of its membership concluded that "while we understand that the department is attempting to find a way to fix our decades old problems with roads and bridges, this proposal is in no way a help to our economy and especially small businesses that we represent." We applaud the Governor's initiative to create defined program for the rehab of our infrastructure, but to heap it on the backs of the very people that keep Rhode Island working is just plain wrong.

"100% of our membership believe that the RI General Assembly should find the funds within the current state budget as in the approach presented by the minority party proposal," Olson said. "To impose more taxes and fees without cutting waste in our state budget is another example pushing Rhode Island to an economic tsunami" Olson expressed. Olson said that RIICA believes that first finding the root cause will lead to a well thought out, concise and mutually agreed upon plan to fund such an infrastructure repair plan before one cent is spent.

Olson said that RIICA does agree with GARVEE refinancing saving over \$120 million along with the re-appropriation of the Rhode Works Tax credits/rebates producing another nearly \$54 million in available funding. "Taking action on just those two items would produce over \$ 175 million to begin rebuilding our infrastructure" Olson said.

Simply put, we believe that the Department of Transportation bears the brunt of the root cause, Olson said. "Decisions like the continued use of salt on our roads and bridges only further decimate our infrastructure. Other issues related to past public works projects being completed with many corrections still to be made and no action taken to date, like the Sakonnet Bridge, the I95 Viaduct and Interstate 95 which still uses barriers on the "new" bridge around the improper concrete installation and or material,

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Olson exclaimed. RIDOT and the Governor need to hold contractors accountable instead of a free pass, he said.

In the survey, Olson explained that over 66% of the respondents hold memberships in both RIICA and RITA and 94% of the membership oppose the Governor's plan. Over 75% oppose the RI Trucking Association proposal to increase registration fees by \$ 500 and 80% oppose an increase in the diesel tax to .52, Olson explained. "Just because we are lower than other surrounding states around doesn't make it right to increase the diesel tax and registration fees. Rhode Islanders are fed up with increased taxes and fees as a means to correcting our governments' failure to act responsibly." He said. "If anything, having lower taxes and fees are exactly the kind of issues that we should be touting to help spur economic growth," he said.

Olson further explained that over 75% of the membership also like the idea of privatization of the maintenance of roads and bridges and should be explored. In addition, over 94% of the membership believe that if the Governor's plan is passed for trucks only, it is inevitable that all vehicles will eventually be tolled.

We can no longer operate under the premise of the "increase taxes and fees" ideas without first finding money within the current budget to fix this long term problem. Olson said that this kind of thinking is wrong and will only further hurt Rhode Island's chances to help rebuild our economy. In addition, the small business companies we represent will surely suffer the financial consequences. "The financial impact on our members would be significant enough that some would get out of the business or move out of state" Olson warned.

Olson expressed optimism in working with all stakeholders to bring about a secure and fair plan to fix our roads and bridges.