



NELLIE GORBEA

FOR GOVERNOR



FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE
by Seizing Rhode Island's
Climate Opportunity





INTRODUCTION

I am running for governor to move Rhode Island forward with a robust economy that is more equitable and just. Because of Rhode Island's size and geography, our economic future will always be tied to the environment and our climate. Climate change will challenge our state with rising sea levels, rapidly eroding shorelines, more frequent and extreme storms, and other climate impacts. But we can—and must—seize this opportunity to expand renewable energy production, rethink the way we get around our state, and build our communities so that they are sustainable and resilient. I will make sure Rhode Island maximizes our geographic advantages while also becoming a national leader in the fight against climate change.

As governor, I will push to enact policies and invest the resources we need to support the Act on Climate—the 2021 Rhode Island law that establishes mandatory reductions in carbon emissions—and keep our state focused on the goal of net zero emissions by 2050. I will also work with the world-leading experts at our colleges and universities, our cities and towns, and the business community to ensure that Rhode Island and Rhode Islanders are ready for what is to come. I also look forward to working with the leadership of our nonprofit environmental groups. Rhode Island is blessed with an active array of nonprofit environmental groups that have established the Environmental Council of RI and advocated for the environmental progress we have started to see in statute. As governor, I will make sure that Rhode Island's efforts to fight climate change keep our economy strong and protect our people, our communities, and our environment.

Right now, offshore wind development and solar projects are happening with few regulatory guardrails and little leadership from the governor's office. In contrast, I plan to leverage the massive opportunities we have before us to create Rhode Island-based businesses and jobs that make our state a key player in the regional production of renewable energy. To do this, we will need to create new educational pathways, training programs, and apprenticeships similar to those in our state's defense industry. And We must ensure a just transition to a renewable energy economy for Rhode Islanders currently employed in the fossil fuel industry. The goal should be not only job creation but business creation as well. Rhode Island has the opportunity to lead a regional energy economy—from production to transmission, and from residential to commercial buildings. This opportunity should be accessible to all communities in Rhode Island.

In order to do this, I will prioritize climate policies in my first 100 days and in the years that follow. In addition to ramping up our transition to a renewable energy economy, I will make sure we incorporate climate best practices in residential and commercial building projects, ensure timely implementation of regulatory and legal requirements, as well as rethink our transportation and transit policies to reduce emissions from this sector, and lower the cost of living in our state for working Rhode Islanders. Through this approach, my administration will look to spur economic development, strengthen our communities, and address climate change through policies that invest in our people.

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GOVERNOR GORBEA'S ACTION PLAN ON CLIMATE

Climate change presents complex environmental and economic challenges, and it is crucial to understand that many climate solutions are interconnected with the solutions for many other challenges we face. For example, Rhode Island has an excellent opportunity to reduce carbon emissions through energy efficiency retrofits of single- and multi-family housing. These construction projects will create jobs and lower utility bills for families while decreasing carbon emissions. Likewise, clean energy infrastructure projects like wind and solar will create thousands of new permanent jobs and supply chain business opportunities while helping us to mitigate rising global temperatures.

I recently released my housing plan to ensure that everyone in Rhode Island has a place to call home. I will soon share a detailed plan for economic development reforms and innovations to move Rhode Island forward. My housing and economic development strategies—along with my approaches to other areas like education and job training—are all directly connected to and consistent with my approach on climate change. That's because I know that these issues are all interrelated. State agencies and offices accustomed to operating independently in their own silos will need to change. Since Rhode Island's housing, economic development, and climate change challenges are interconnected, our solutions to those problems will require an all-of-government approach.

To date, state efforts to build the jobs of the future and move Rhode Island forward on climate change have been unfocused and lackluster. Rhode Island already has an emerging, skilled renewable-energy workforce,¹ legally-defined state climate goals, and available federal infrastructure funding. What is lacking is focused leadership and a focused approach to fighting climate change that breaks down bureaucratic silos.

Rhode Island must move quickly and decisively to both seize economic opportunity and stave off the worst effects of a changing climate. New renewable energy jobs are being created right now, and investors and businesses are making long-term decisions on where to locate many of their critical research, development, and manufacturing facilities to produce the components of a renewable energy economy. Rhode Island needs to position itself at the forefront of states in the mid-Atlantic and Northeast that are rapidly advancing renewable energy, climate policies, and programs.

The time to act is right now.

- My Climate Action Plan will immediately implement measures that will directly combat climate change **in the first 100 days of my administration.**
- I will quickly and strategically invest federal infrastructure funds **in the first year** to move Rhode Island forward to achieve meaningful emissions reduction goals, jumpstart renewable energy projects, and create new jobs and economic opportunities for all Rhode Island communities.
- After the first year, I will take practical approaches to climate solutions – using federal, state, and private sector investments to achieve **Rhode Island's climate goals in the long term.**

¹ BW Research Partnership, on behalf of the Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources and Commerce RI. 2020 Rhode Island Clean Energy Industry Report.



RHODE ISLAND'S CLIMATE PROFILE TODAY

Fossil fuels produce the emissions that both negatively affect our daily quality of life and cause the global warming that threatens our planet. Because Rhode Island's current energy portfolio is highly reliant on fossil fuels from out of state,³ the transition to alternative energy sources not only will help reduce those conditions, but will also produce economic benefits for our state by keeping more energy dollars in the local economy.

Rhode Island's energy use is primarily centered on homes and transportation. The residential sector leads energy consumption with roughly 33%, transportation is a close second, with about 30%, followed by the commercial sector with 25% of energy consumption. Industrial businesses use another 10% of energy.² Examining energy use is a good way to track where most of Rhode Island's carbon emissions come from.

Carbon emissions can be reduced significantly by powering our cars and trucks, and heating and cooling our homes and buildings with cleaner sources of electricity. This energy market shift has already begun, with the potential for rapid growth through new investments in alternative energy industries such as wind, solar, energy storage, and other promising technologies. These investments will generate local jobs and help provide jobs for Rhode Islanders currently employed in the fossil fuel sector.

In 2020, about 12% of Rhode Island's in-state electricity came from renewable energy sources. Solar generation in Rhode Island has more than quadrupled since 2018, increasing to 6% of electricity supplies in 2020. In 2017,

Rhode Island launched the first offshore wind farm in the nation with the 30-megawatt Block Island power project—adding a source of another 6% of Rhode Island's energy.² Wind and solar sources have emerged as less expensive producers of electricity, and because of that, renewable power sources (such as wind, solar, and other technologies) will likely contribute to a rapidly increasing share of Rhode Island's electric supply.

Vulnerable Resources - Protecting Our Shores

Rhode Island's shoreline wraps around Narragansett Bay and includes the shorelines of many islands, including Block Island. Coastal infrastructure, communities, and economies are all vulnerable to rising sea levels, tides, shoreline erosion, and more severe storms due to climate change.

Encouraging Starts - But Failed Execution

Over the past 8 years, Rhode Island has seen a remarkable advance in laws and regulations that address climate change and renewable energy. In June 2014, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed the Resilient Rhode Island Act, which laid the groundwork for a comprehensive and coordinated state response to climate change, including the creation of the Rhode Island Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (known as EC4) to guide state agency actions on climate policy. In January 2020, Governor Gina Raimondo signed Executive Order 20-1, setting a goal for 100% Renewable Electricity by 2030. In April 2021, the Rhode Island General Assembly

² U.S. Energy Information Administration. "Rhode Island State Energy Profile."



passed the 2021 Act on Climate and established mandatory, enforceable climate emissions reduction goals while adding environmental justice requirements. The 2021 Act on Climate calls for net-zero emissions economy-wide by 2050. In June 2022, The Rhode Island General Assembly set a Renewable Energy Standard requiring that 100 percent of Rhode Island's electricity be offset by renewable production by 2033.

Many Rhode Islanders hoped that climate-related investments, projects, and activities would accelerate after the passage of the 2021 Act on Climate and related legislation. The state agency leaders tasked with administering the Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council do so in addition to their other job duties, and with the passage of the Act on Climate, their responsibilities in this area have grown. However, they do not have a dedicated staff, budget, or strong leadership from the governor. Rhode Island's progress toward the first set of climate milestones remains sluggish. The lack of leadership in this area puts in peril critical federal infrastructure funding opportunities.

During the 2022 legislative session, the General Assembly passed two additional landmark pieces of legislation: 100% Renewable Energy by 2033 and an offshore wind procurement requirement for Rhode Island's primary utility. These are important steps toward reaching our emissions targets, but their implementation will only add to the workload of the currently understaffed Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council. As someone who has worked in the government, non-profit, and private sectors, I know that effective progress toward climate goals will require focus, commitment and hands-on leadership.



A 100-DAY ACTION PLAN ON CLIMATE CHANGE

No one would argue that Rhode Island's path to net-zero emissions will be quick or easy. The route toward achieving Rhode Island's climate goals is complicated by the scale and extended timeframe of the effort, and so there are real risks that inertia and delay will threaten the opportunity we have to achieve our goals. Success will require the right style of state executive leadership combined with the full focus and attention of state agencies, environmental and community organizations, and the private sector. We need to be ALL IN and focused.

On day one of the Gorbea Administration, I will kickstart our state agencies' actions on achieving the goals of the Act on Climate and provide direct hands-on management leadership. There is no time to waste on climate change, given the threats to our coastline, the ambitious goals and deadlines set forth in the 2021 Act on Climate, and the potential jobs and economic opportunities at stake. Early actions capturing immediate opportunities right now will yield big dividends in job creation, lower energy costs, and emissions reductions.

This "all hands on deck" approach will break down state government silos, pull in experts from Rhode Island's finest academic institutions, and enlist assistance from environmental and community groups along with the private sector.

During my first 100 days in office, I will personally chair and direct the monthly Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council meetings to jumpstart the implementation of climate goals.

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AS GOVERNOR, I WILL:

- **Fully staff the Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council and its Advisory Boards.** Adding full-time environmental experts and policy staff will allow Rhode Island to catch up on missed deadlines and identify critical federal infrastructure funding opportunities.
- **Direct currently available federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, and/or state fines paid by polluters to fund priority climate change projects and activities through 2023.** I will also identify dedicated, long-term funding for Act on Climate-related activities.
- **Create a Public-Private Climate Partnership by Executive Order to fund and staff a Rhode Island Climate Fellows Program** that will tap into the skills of experienced Rhode Island business executives, academic leaders, and recent graduates. The Fellows Program will support state agencies on their most pressing climate deadlines and help grow our next generation of environmental and climate leaders. The Climate Fellows Program will draw on the expertise of Rhode Island's academic institutions and market experiences of business leaders to more rapidly achieve Rhode Island's climate goals.
- **Ensure that environmental justice principles and goals are integrated in the Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council's work.** The membership of the Climate Council and state agency leadership must include representation of all Rhode Island communities

in its policy and program development. My climate plan implementation team also will rely on convenient and accessible listening sessions to gather community input on climate policy.

- **Require the Secretary of Housing and Community Development to address energy efficiency in homes.** The Secretary will work with state agencies and stakeholders to create opportunities to expand energy efficiency in retrofits of low- and moderate-income homes, workforce and senior housing, improve training for new workers in energy efficiency retrofits, and assist entrepreneurs entering the industry with a goal to prioritize diversity in these new economic opportunities.
- **Work with the General Assembly to introduce legislation that would:**
 - **Revive the Renewable Energy Fund**, which will sunset this year.
 - **Extend Rhode Island's Energy Efficiency/ Demand Response - Least Cost Procurement Program** - scheduled to expire in 2023. Improvements could incorporate the latest innovations in Cost-Effectiveness Testing and Demand Response.
 - Make sure the **Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank** has the tools and resources it needs to supplement support for climate project financing after currently available federal infrastructure funds are captured and deployed.



MAXIMIZING FEDERAL FUNDING FOR RHODE ISLAND'S CLIMATE GOALS

Part of the urgency in moving on climate change activity in our state is the temporary availability of federal infrastructure funds. On November 15, 2021, President Biden signed the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The Infrastructure Law provides more than \$550 billion nationally in new investments for transportation, water, power and energy, environmental remediation, broadband, and resilience infrastructure. Many of these new investments are provided to states through both formula grants and competitive grants. **Rhode Island must be prepared to maximize its chances for competitive federal grant funding for climate-related infrastructure.**

The key to being ready is having in place the required plans that are part of the federal application process. This federal grant funding can help make significant down payments on the work Rhode Island will need to complete our Act on Climate goals.

During my first 100 days as governor, and continuing throughout my first year, I will make sure that all relevant state agencies are focused on tapping available federal infrastructure funds to invest in Rhode Island's climate plan activities. In many instances, federal funds will help make down payments on new climate-related projects and programs. Federal grant funding could also attract matching local and private sector investments into Rhode Island renewable energy, energy efficiency, and climate infrastructure projects.

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KICKSTARTING RHODE ISLAND'S CLIMATE INFRASTRUCTURE ACTIVITIES

I will direct the Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council and the corresponding state agencies to scour federal funding streams for the most immediate opportunities to fund climate and infrastructure projects in Rhode Island. The “business as usual” approach to acquiring federal funds should be discarded in favor of an aggressive pursuit of infrastructure funding that will advance Rhode Island’s climate goals. During my first 100 days, through my hands-on approach with the Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council and by working directly with the agencies and offices mentioned below, I will make clear the urgency with which we need to move forward on immediately seeking available federal funds in order to meet Rhode Island’s most pressing climate and infrastructure needs. Indecision, lack of focus, and silos in government must be a thing of the past if Rhode Island is to move forward and achieve its climate, economic development, and infrastructure goals.

While traditional infrastructure projects like repairs to roads and bridges should move forward as quickly as possible, my administration will aggressively pursue infrastructure projects that immediately advance Rhode Island’s climate goals. This work should be done with the additional goal of supporting Rhode Island engineering and road construction firms. Supporting our local firms is key to creating jobs, retaining our young people, and growing an economic climate that invests in Rhode Islanders.

The federal infrastructure law provides a number of funding streams from which states can access funds. Some of these funds are to be distributed to states by formula, and some consist of competitive grant opportunities. Many of the rules governing distribution of these funds to states are still being written, so effective advocacy for deploying more federal funds that meet Rhode Island’s infrastructure and climate goals continues to be essential. My

administration will be prepared to explore all opportunities.

TOP PRIORITY AREAS INCLUDE:

- **Roads and bridges.** The biggest line item in the federal infrastructure law is for the building and repair of roads and bridges. At least \$242 million is available for Rhode Island. The Department of Transportation should speed up repairs while also identifying funds for RI’s Bicycle Mobility Plan.
- **Railroads.** Amtrak received a large influx of funding for upgrades and maintenance. The Infrastructure Law targets a substantial amount of funding toward Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor. My administration will incorporate these rail improvements into its designs for implementing the Rhode Island Transit Master Plan 2020.
- **Public transit.** The Infrastructure Law will provide Rhode Island with at least \$252 million to upgrade buses, rail cars, trolley systems, and new rapid bus routes. I will direct the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority to pursue additional funding to support some of the common-sense recommendations included in the Rhode Island Transit Master Plan 2020. I will also work closely with cities and local governments to maximize Rhode Island’s ability to benefit from these new federal funding sources.
- **Power grid.** The Infrastructure Law provides substantial funding for “grid reliability and resiliency,” explicitly recognizing threats from climate change. The Office of Energy Resources should tap this opportunity to fund upgrades to the state’s electrical grid to accommodate new clean-energy sources, new grid technologies, and battery storage.



- › **Resilience.** Resiliency funds made available by the Infrastructure Law fall into two main categories: cybersecurity and climate change mitigation. The Department of Environmental Management and RI Coastal Resources Management Council should start working right away to maximize Rhode Island's share of Infrastructure Law funds to protect its coastlines.
- › **Remediation.** The Infrastructure Law provides funding to clean up Brownfield and Superfund sites. The Rhode Island Commerce Corporation, the Department of Environmental Management, and the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank should maximize Infrastructure Law funds for cleanups and consider reusing sites for commercial solar facilities as suggested by a report for the Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources.³
- › **Ports.** The Infrastructure Law provides significant investments in port infrastructure. Fifty percent of these funds are for Army Corps of Engineers projects, and additional funds are targeted to a wide variety of port infrastructure upgrades. I will direct the Department of Environmental Management and Economic Development Corporation to maximize Infrastructure Law funds for Rhode Island's ports to support offshore wind power projects.
- › **Safety.** The Infrastructure Law focuses on highway safety, but funding is also designated for pedestrian safety, pipeline safety, and wildlife crossing areas. I will direct the Department of Transportation to include the use of Infrastructure Law funds for safe pedestrian walkways and bike paths.
- › **Electric vehicle charging stations.** Rhode Island is already beginning a rapid transition to electric vehicles; I will ensure that the Office of Energy Resources maximizes our share of funds for deploying infrastructure to support new electric cars. I will also make sure that EV charging infrastructure is incorporated into new housing units when appropriate, and that an equitable investment in EV infrastructure is made in all RI communities.
- › **Electric school buses.** The Infrastructure Law will help states to replace existing school buses with electric-powered buses. Infrastructure Law funds target lower-income and rural communities to replace their school bus fleets. I will direct the Department of Education to maximize Rhode Island's share of school bus funding, which has no matching fund requirement. We will supply technical assistance and support to school districts that want to take advantage of this opportunity.
- › **Energy efficiency and housing.** The Infrastructure Law provides a large increase in Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) funding and State Energy Program Funding to allow states to retrofit thousands of homes to make them healthier and more energy-efficient while lowering utility bills. These funding increases will create jobs. I will direct the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training to focus on job training and small business assistance to attract minority contractors, women-owned businesses, and entrepreneurs into this expanding market segment. I will also direct the Rhode Island Department of Human Services and other state agencies to make sure we maximize the opportunities to draw down WAP funding and improve the delivery of these energy efficiency services to the communities that need them the most to help lower fuel bills.
- › **Broadband.** The Infrastructure Law provides funds to expand broadband in rural and low-income communities across Rhode Island. Broadband is an essential economic development tool and my administration will maximize the deployment of federal funding in all Rhode Island communities. My administration will also make certain that "smart thermostats" and other cost-saving technologies that require broadband internet connections are available in as many Rhode Island homes as possible.

³ Synapse Energy Economics, Inc., on behalf of the Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources. Solar Siting Opportunities for Rhode Island. August 18, 2020. <https://energy.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur741/files/documents/renewable/Solar-Siting-Opportunities-for-Rhodelsland.pdf>



FROM THE FIRST 100 DAYS TO THE FIRST YEAR - CREATING JOBS AND OPPORTUNITIES WHILE ACHIEVING RHODE ISLAND'S CLIMATE GOALS

My first 100 day Agenda will get the state back on track in meeting Rhode Island's climate goals and jumpstart the investment of federal infrastructure funds as a down payment on many critical projects. It will also focus on the climate projects that will create jobs and economic opportunities for all Rhode Islanders.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY JOBS IN RHODE ISLAND

Improving and expanding energy efficiency programs is one of the easiest ways to help Rhode Island achieve its climate goals while creating new jobs in a growing industry. There are 10,627 jobs in the energy efficiency industry in Rhode Island.⁴ Given our state's older, energy inefficient housing stock, I believe that we can create more residential energy efficiency industry jobs while moving forward toward climate goals.

I will push the State's Infrastructure Bank to prioritize the immediate investment of new federal infrastructure funds from the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), existing Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) proceeds, and other available energy efficiency funding to better leverage additional private sector investments in energy efficiency. Moving forward quickly with the implementation of new Infrastructure Law-funded energy efficiency retrofits will help create even more jobs in the largest energy sector employer in Rhode Island while at the same time reducing energy costs for ratepayers.

Establish New Roadway Engineering Standards at RIDOT - We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to overhaul our network of roads, highways, and transportation infrastructure thanks to the influx of billions of federal transportation dollars. Since the start of the pandemic, RIDOT has elected to use this money for the repair and expansion of traditional

automobile infrastructure and has made little—if any—consideration for other mobility modes or the climate impacts of these projects. I will direct RIDOT to overhaul its engineering guidelines to require state engineers to include to the maximum extent practicable sidewalks, protected bike lanes, transit-only lanes, crosswalks, traffic calming, and nature-based solutions for managing stormwater runoff into roadway upgrades. These guidelines must also include a requirement for an assessment of climate impacts on every state road construction project.

New Infrastructure Funds and Flexibility on Retrofits of Homes - New Infrastructure Law funds for the Weatherization Assistance Program and a new willingness to re-examine some of the bureaucratic red tape surrounding low- and moderate-income housing programs will allow us to improve Rhode Island's retrofit programs. Additional programs should be developed for workforce housing and senior housing. Reducing the energy burden of high winter heating bills on Rhode Islanders is one of the connections between housing, climate, and economic opportunity. Cutting winter heating bills makes more of the family budget available for food, education, health care, and other family priorities. I will pursue reforms to state and federal program rules to increase the number of Rhode Islanders with access to home retrofits. Workforce development training for new contractors to meet the demands of this newly expanded federal WAP program is essential.

New Infrastructure Funds for Retrofits of Schools - The Infrastructure Law includes new funds for school retrofits. I will direct the Department of Education to maximize these funds for schools and explore other funding sources to ensure that

⁴ EC4 The Future. "Rhode Island: Energy Efficiency Jobs in America." June 2021. https://e4thefuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Rhode-Island_2021.pdf



our schools have healthy air and drinking water, and are free of harmful chemicals. With these funds, we can make a down payment on Rhode Island's efforts to provide "green and healthy schools".

EV Charging Network Plan Development - The Infrastructure Law includes \$5 billion in funding for states to begin building out their EV charging infrastructure network. In order to access this money, states must have a plan for creating this network; Rhode Island currently has no plan. I will direct the Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council and relevant state agencies and stakeholders to expedite the process for creating a plan for a comprehensive network of electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

Least Cost Procurement - I will introduce legislation to extend RI's Least Cost Procurement program. This program will expire in 2023 and should be extended to make sure energy efficiency retrofits are cost-effective and benefit homeowners, small businesses, and the entire energy system. Continuation of the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program will be an additional priority as it provides access to lower cost and reliable financing for energy efficiency upgrades and retrofits.

Energy Code Upgrades - In 2019 Rhode Island adopted the 2015 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) for residential buildings and the 2015 IECC and American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) codes for commercial construction. The Rhode Island Building Code Commission should consider additional building code improvements to achieve common sense energy savings, including expanding some of the provisions of the 2022 Green Buildings Act to new and redeveloped private structures.

According to the National Association of State Energy Officials, adopting and enforcing current model energy codes helps consumers and businesses save money on their energy bills.⁵ Consumers can spend that money on local goods and services, while businesses can invest these cost savings into increased production,

capital investments, and employee retention. In both cases, building codes can positively impact the economic health of the local economy. In addition, the Infrastructure Law provides \$40 million to an Energy Auditors Training Grant Program and \$225 million in funding for Building Energy Codes and Technical Assistance Training support.⁶ The Office of Energy Resources should be maximizing Rhode Island's share of these competitive grant programs.

OTHER AREAS IMPORTANT TO ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AND RHODE ISLAND'S ECONOMY

Economic Development/Ports/Infrastructure

- Major expansion of wind-powered energy will potentially create hundreds of supply chain and logistical support businesses and jobs at or near Rhode Island's ports. New federal infrastructure funds can help Rhode Island efforts to expand the capacity of Rhode Island ports to prosper by serving as a staging platform for the development of offshore wind projects.

Port construction and expansion projects would provide good skilled jobs in the short and long term. These jobs should be opportunities for Rhode Islanders who live near the ports and who have historically not been a part of their operations through jobs. The Port of Providence, Quonset Business Park, South Quay Marine Terminal, and other potential sites can all play a critical role in filling the need for additional port capacity to support offshore wind. The Rhode Island Commerce Corporation, the Coastal Resources Management Council and the Department of Environmental Management should focus on identifying good port expansion projects and quickly access the Infrastructure Law's port funding to accelerate Rhode Island businesses' ability to supply the development of offshore wind projects.

⁵ National Association of State Energy Officials. "Building Energy Codes 101: Statewide Benefits to Adoption & Compliance." No date. https://www.naseo.org/data/sites/1/documents/codes/documents/NASEO-BCAPState_Benefits_from_Codes.pdf

⁶ International Institute of Building Enclosure Consultants. "House Passes Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, Sends It to President's Desk for Signature." November 10, 2021. <https://iibec.org/house-passes-bipartisan-infrastructure-billsends-it-to-presidents-desk-for-signature/>



Rooftop, Commercial, and Industrial Solar - As one of the fastest-growing and least expensive means to produce electricity, I will direct the Office of Energy Resources to encourage the expansion of solar power in the residential sector, on commercial properties, and at larger industrial-sized sites. I will direct the Office of Energy Resources to promote the steady growth of solar energy and related jobs.

First, I will ensure that large solar collection facilities are sited in the most appropriate places in Rhode Island – at currently unused industrial properties, Brownfield development sites, and other previously developed locations. Large, utility-scale solar power collection facilities should not be located on green forested or open spaces. The Division of Statewide Planning will also ensure that guidance for the appropriate zoning and placement of solar farms is developed in conjunction with municipal and local governments, advocates, issue area experts, and responsible solar developers.

Second, small residential solar producers must be reimbursed for any excess power they are able to produce and provide back into the grid, a process known as net metering. Net metering is an important way for residential consumers to offset their electric bills and help pay down the capital costs of their investments in solar panels. In addition, the Office of Energy Resources should develop rules that encourage and allow microgrids and community solar projects, particularly in low-income communities, so that all Rhode Islanders can benefit from lower cost solar power sources.

Third, as more solar panels are installed on homes, commercial properties, and manufacturing plants, Rhode Island will need a skilled workforce and a group of small business entrepreneurs to meet the growing market demand. Solar may be a high-growth business opportunity in the next decade, and Rhode Island should be prepared to meet that demand as the market shifts.

Fourth, one of the most immediate and direct ways to reduce energy burdens for low-income families is the addition of solar panels to homes to help cut electricity bills. This will be particularly important as home heating sources

switch from fossil fuels to electricity. I will task the Office of Energy Resources to draw down the maximum amounts available for low-income solar funding from the federal Infrastructure Law while identifying other state and private sector funding and financing mechanisms for local communities.

A Modern, Reliable, Affordable Rapid Transit System - As one of the largest sources of

emissions in our state, re-envisioning Rhode Island's transportation system sector will play a critical role in solving climate challenges as it evolves into an all-electric, clean energy alternative to fossil fuel-powered cars. A clean, convenient and affordable transit system serving all of Rhode Island's communities must be at the heart of any strategy to meet the 2021 Act on Climate goals.

Our transit goal is a simple one – make rail, bus and other transit options a more convenient and affordable option for all Rhode Islanders. Workers need to be able to commute efficiently to jobs, so that time isn't wasted in transit and so their work journeys do not needlessly exacerbate our climate and public health challenges. Older Rhode Islanders need a mobility system that allows them to continue living independent lives. Families need to be able to get their kids safely from home to school, to afterschool activities, and home again. Businesses need to know that they can efficiently transport goods from and throughout our state and getting workers and customers in their front doors. In short, a convenient and affordable public transportation system is essential to every area of economic productivity, healthy families, and a rewarding quality-of-life is the only way we will meet our climate goals.

I believe that a balanced mix of inter-connected fixed rail, rapid bus lines, traditional bus routes, safe bike routes, and pedestrian corridors can meet the needs of Rhode Island's commuters and workers while achieving climate goals.

My strategy starts with fixed rail resources and infrastructure that must be better integrated into the lives of Rhode Island commuters in a way that makes transit the most attractive method to get to and from work, home, and school. The December 2020 transit plan, RI Transit Forward 2040, sets forth a game plan for near-term



implementation steps and long-term planning that will help guide state planning and thinking on immediate projects to pursue.

Infrastructure Law funds should be utilized as much as possible to provide a down payment on these critical steps in 2022 and 2023 to achieve RI Transit Forward 2040 goals. These funds will provide more than \$272 million in transit investment opportunities over five years for Rhode Island.⁷ Short-term goals should include making fares more affordable and interchangeable across transit systems, adopting consumer-friendly systems to pay by credit card, and incorporating cutting-edge ride planning technologies, and real-time schedules.

Many of the recommendations of RI Transit Forward 2040 are longer-term and require budget and capital investment planning that will require additional study and consideration by the Division of Statewide Planning. However, a few common-sense recommendations should be considered immediately:

- Improving express bus service between Rhode Island communities to make rapid transit a better option than driving.
- Making community outreach and stakeholder input a critical component of planning to ensure that traditionally underserved communities benefit from all system upgrades.
- Developing more mobility hubs and encouraging transit-oriented development to improve local services as well as increasing connections to system-wide destinations.
- Explore high-capacity transit alternatives, including light rail, bus rapid transit (with dedicated lines), and regional rapid bus services.
- Strengthening regional ties and taking the best economic development approach toward increased demand for Boston commuter options.

TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Coastal Protection And Resiliency - Sea-level rise and coastal erosion are two top climate challenges. With more than 400 miles of coastline, Rhode Island is particularly vulnerable. While there are no simple solutions to deal with coastal erosion intensified and accelerated by the climate crisis, there are smart steps that coastal communities can take now to begin adaptation strategies to mitigate damages. Coastal communities like Warren are setting an example for sound and cost-effective, long-term community planning. I will direct the Department of Environmental Management and Coastal Resources Management Council to identify and draw down federal resources to support and expand coastal protection projects like the current initiative between Save The Bay and Coastal Resource Management Council. In this work, it will be key to work with the municipalities that are most affected—our coastal communities, the environmental community, and the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank.

It is time to review and restructure our government agencies, boards, and commissions that work in the environmental field to better serve the challenges we know we are facing. For example, the Rhode Island environmental community has for years advocated for habitat restoration and climate adaptation as part of Rhode Island's strategy to address our changing landscape. I will work with all interested stakeholders to create a Division of Ecological Restoration as part of a larger review of our current environmental and coastal agencies. These climate adaptation projects are another source of good paying jobs for Rhode Islanders as they design, engineer and build our climate resilient landscape.

⁷ Melanie DaSilva, "RI roads, bridges, to get fixed through \$2.5B infrastructure influx." WPRI.com. November 10, 2021.



Electric Vehicle Infrastructure - The Infrastructure Law provides at least \$23 million in Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Infrastructure funding for Rhode Island over the next five years.⁸ Federal support flows from two main buckets: 1) formula funding through the National Electric Vehicle Program and 2) discretionary grant funding through the Charging and Fueling Infrastructure program. Rhode Island can access additional EV funding from the second bucket with a well-crafted State Electric Vehicle Plan that meets state needs while complying with federal guidelines.

I support state efforts like H7653 and S2448 to fast-track Rhode Island's adoption of electric vehicles to meet the state's 2030 greenhouse gas reduction mandate. Rhode Islanders from all communities should have access to EV charging stations, and new housing units should include EV charging infrastructure wherever possible. I will direct the Office of Energy Resources to work with the Climate Council and draw down the maximum federal infrastructure funding to accomplish Rhode Island's EV infrastructure goals. I will also continue our state's investments in state tax credits that incentivize the purchase or lease of electric vehicles.

Building Out a Resilient, Reliable Grid with Transparency in its Operations - Funds from the Infrastructure Law may be used to address two immediate needs: cybersecurity and climate change mitigation. I will make sure that these funds are used to make Rhode Island's power grid more secure against cyber-attacks and more durable during severe storms and winds. I will direct the Office of Energy Resources to engage with the private sector to identify the areas of greatest vulnerability and need. Rhode Island will also need its electric grid infrastructure to be more dynamic and flexible. As more vehicles and homes are powered and heated through clean sources of electricity - more will be demanded of the power grid. While the policy issues are becoming more complex, I will make a simple request to the Office of Energy Resources and the Division of Public Utilities and Carriers: follow the most cost-effective and pragmatic solutions - and keep

energy prices low for all Rhode Island communities.

In the pursuit of keeping energy prices low while achieving efficiencies and reliability in operation of the electrical grid, there are many new, emerging technologies and tools—such as demand reduction and demand response. One recent summary describes many tradeoffs and options—Methods, Tools, and Resources: A Handbook for DER and Benefit-Cost Analysis.⁹ I will direct the Office of Energy Resources to pursue the most efficient and cost saving approaches for keeping Rhode Island's electrical grid safe and reliable.

I will also review the operations of our Public Utilities Commission and work to bring greater transparency and accountability to the operations of Rhode Island Energy and New England Power. Our grid's operating and financial structure was created at a different time. Rhode Island has the opportunity to become a leader in wind, solar, and other alternative sources to fossil fuels in the region, but that transformation is being held back by outdated financial and operating practices. I have always fought for transparency in government. Transparency in essential services like the production of energy, and investment, and upgrades in utility infrastructure are key to developing a new power supply that leverages our advantages in off-shore wind, solar, and other alternative energy supplies that may be developed in the future.

To fully leverage the programs to advance clean energy initiatives such as wind and solar power, expansion of the electric grid to accept these new power sources is essential. I will direct the state agencies regulating the transmission companies to require that this critical infrastructure expansion be prioritized to ensure that new power sources are available immediately when these projects are ready to go online.

⁸ U.S. Department of Transportation. "The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Will Deliver for Rhode Island." April 11, 2022. <https://www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/bipartisan-infrastructure-law-will-deliver-rhode-island>

⁹ National Energy Screening Project. Methods, Tools, and Resources Handbook. March 2022. <https://www.nationalenergyscreeningproject.org/resources/quantifying-impacts/>



In working with the Public Utility Commission, I will also require full transparency and accountability for how Rhode Island utilities are deploying federal infrastructure funding opportunities on clean alternative energy sources, energy efficiency, broadband, and other new investments. We need to make sure that consumers benefit from the transition to lower cost sources of energy in wind and solar (which in many instances are less expensive than traditional fossil fuels). We must continue to hold our utilities accountable for any increases in rates requested and make sure that energy efficiency programs follow transparent accounting and reporting requirements to make sure that potential cost savings are passed along appropriately to ratepayers, homeowners, small businesses, and consumers.

Leading by Example in State Purchasing and Procurement - I will ensure that Rhode Island is leading the private sector by setting example with the implementation of renewable energy system upgrades in state buildings and facilities. In order to be energy efficient, the state will focus on the purchase of renewable energy, and develop plans to transition the state fleet of trucks, cars, and buses to be all-electric, implementing the Green Buildings Act, as well as directing funds to sustainable capital investments.

Recently, the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ACEEE) gave Rhode Island high marks for requiring efficient public buildings and fleets, benchmarking its state office energy use, and encouraging state agencies to use energy savings performance contracts.¹⁰ I will set an example for the private sector on climate-friendly procurement policies.

Creating Opportunities for Rhode Islanders and Growing our Small Businesses - As small business construction and supply chain opportunities emerge in the growing energy

efficiency and renewable energy industries, I will make sure that Rhode Island's diversity is represented in this new economic sector. I will work with higher education institutions like the Community College of Rhode Island as well as the trades to help prepare a trade to career pipeline—just like we have done for the defense industry, focused on these new construction and supply chain opportunities in the renewable energy and climate resiliency fields. Partnering with unions and our education sector we can grow our training and apprenticeship programs that help provide the needed workforce.

Transparency on Climate Progress – Public Dashboards and Reporting - As pointed out in the Rhode Island Transit Master Plan 2020, technology has evolved to where easy access to critical information like schedules and arrival times should be standard operating procedure for public services. So too, with the Rhode Island Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council's implementation of Rhode Island's climate goals. The Council will set up a simple reporting system that will allow the public to monitor and assess progress. Easy access to a "climate dashboard" from a phone would allow the public to see the status of new climate infrastructure projects, how much energy is being produced from new Rhode Island solar and wind projects, and other areas of progress. I will direct the Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council to establish simple and easy reporting systems to engage taxpayers and citizens on metrics to measure climate plan implementation.

¹⁰ American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy. "2020 State Energy Efficiency Scorecard: Rhode Island." No date. https://www.aceee.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/ACEEE_ScrSht20_RhodeIsland.pdf



CONCLUSION

The challenge of climate change provides us with the opportunity to develop a world-class workforce and business sector in renewable energy, sustainable buildings, and life sciences. In many parts of this new economy there are opportunities to partner with labor to train and support our workers and grow a strong, diverse, middle-class workforce. There are great opportunities to grow new Rhode Island based businesses. The legal structures are there. What is needed is the leadership to implement and grow this new area from the governor's office. I will jumpstart Rhode Island's efforts to develop

a plan to meet the emissions reduction goals that have been set by the legislature to combat climate change and protect our state's coastal resources. When I do, I will measure success on combating climate change not just by carbon reduction goals but through the number of new clean energy jobs and new businesses created, the number of new minority and women-owned businesses engaged, the amount of private sector investments attracted, and the ability to share the benefits with all Rhode Island communities.



APPENDIX A - Recent Rhode Island Reports Related to Implementation of the 2021 Act on Climate

The following Reports contain valuable insights and useful data related to the implementation of the 2021 Act on Climate and the attainment of Rhode Island's climate goals. Several of the following Reports are cited in the footnotes or text of the Climate Plan. While Nellie Gorbea's Climate Plan does not endorse or support all the recommendations in these Reports, many of the policy approaches described in the Reports listed below are worthy of further consideration.

RHODE ISLAND CLEAN, ALTERNATIVE ENERGY JOBS AND ENERGY DATA

2020 Clean Energy Jobs Report - <https://energy.ri.gov/cleanjobs>

Energy Efficiency Jobs in America - Rhode Island Fact Sheet - https://e4thefuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Rhode-Island_2021.pdf

Building a Just Transition for a Resilient Future - a Climate Jobs Program for Rhode Island - <https://www.cjnrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Rhode-Island-Report-Final-2.3-Compressed.pdf> Rhode Island - State Profile and Energy Estimates - U.S. Energy Information Administration <https://www.eia.gov/state/analysis.php?sid=RI>

U.S. Energy & Employment Jobs Report (USEER) US Department of Energy (June 2022) - <https://www.energy.gov/policy/us-energy-employment-jobs-report-useer>

USEER Rhode Island, ENERGY AND EMPLOYMENT Fact Sheet 2022 - <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2022-06/USEER%202022%20-%20Rhode%20Island.pdf>

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The City of Providence's Climate Justice Plan 2019 - <https://www.providenceri.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Climate-Justice-Plan-Report-FINAL-English-1.pdf>

Equity in Sustainability (Just Providence Framework) - <https://www.providenceri.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Equity-and-Sustainability-SummaryReport-2-20-reduced.pdf>

A MODERN, RELIABLE, AFFORDABLE RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM

Transit Forward RI - Rhode Island Transit Master Plan Recommendations (December 2020) - <https://transitforwardri.com/pdf/TFRI%20Recs%20Briefing%20Book-Final%20201230.pdf>

Clean Transportation & Mobility Innovation Report - RI's Roadmap to a Clean Transportation Future - <http://climatechange.ri.gov/documents/mwg-clean-trans-innovation-report.pdf>

Bike/Pedestrian Master Plan (included in the Long-Range Transportation Plan) 2020 - <http://planri.com/pdf/lrtp/RI%20Long%20Range%20Transportation%20Plan%20December%202020.pdf>

SOLAR POWER SITING AND DEPLOYMENT IN RHODE ISLAND

Solar Siting Opportunities for Rhode Island (August 2020) - <https://energy.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkqbur741/files/documents/renewable/Solar-Siting-Opportunities-for-Rhode-Island.pdf>

Rhode Island - Comprehensive Plans & Solar Energy Systems (February 2019) - https://energy.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkqbur741/files/documents/renewable/Comp_Plan_Solar_Siting_Report_Feb_2019.pdf

GREEN AND HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Climate Jobs Rhode Island's Green and Healthy Schools - <https://climatejobsri.org/green-and-healthy-schools/>

TRANSFORMATION OF THE ELECTRIC POWER SECTOR

The Road to 100% Renewable Electricity by 2030 in Rhode Island - Brattle Group & Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources (December 2020) <https://www.brattle.com/insights-events/publications/the-road-to-100-renewable-electricity-by-2030-in-rhode-island/>

The Road to 100% Renewable Electricity by 2030 in Rhode Island - Technical Support Guide <https://energy.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkqbur741/files/documents/renewable/The-Road-to-100-Renewable-Electricity---Technical-Document.pdf>



Rhode Island Power Sector Transformation (Grid Mod) (November 2017) http://www.ripuc.ri.gov/utilityinfo/electric/PST%20Report_Nov_8.pdf

Methods, Tools & Resources Handbook - Quantifying DER Impacts for Benefit - Cost Analysis: <https://www.nationalenergyscreeningproject.org/resources/quantifying-impacts/>

RESILIENT RHODE ISLAND – INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING AND POLICY REFERENCES

Resilient Rhody - An Actionable Vision for Addressing the Impacts of Climate Change in RI <https://www.riib.org/ResilientRhody> (Overview) <http://climatechange.ri.gov/documents/resilientrhody18.pdf> (July 2018)

Towards a Resilient Providence: Issues, Impacts, Initiatives, Information (February 2021) - <http://providenceresilience.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Combined3-25final-low-res.pdf>

Rhode Island Hazard Mitigation Plan WebSite (2019 Update) - <https://riema.ri.gov/planning-mitigation/hazard-mitigation/hazard-mitigation-planning>

Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank – Clean Water, Green Energy & Transportation - <https://www.riib.org/>

CARBON EMISSION REDUCTION STRATEGIES AND RELATED TOPICS

Heating Sector Transformation in Rhode Island (May 2020) - <https://energy.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur741/files/documents/HST/RI-HST-Final-Pathways-Report-5-27-20.pdf>

The Value of Rhode Island Forests (August 2019) <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/forest/pdf/forest-value.pdf>

Rhode Island Carbon Pricing Study (February 2021) <https://energy.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur741/files/documents/carbonstudy/final-rhode-island-carbon-price-study-report.pdf>

Deeper Decarbonization in the Ocean State: The 2019 Rhode Island Greenhouse Gas Reduction Study (September 2019) - <https://cdn.sei.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/deeper-decarbonization-in-the-ocean-state.pdf>

Faster & steeper is feasible: Modeling deeper decarbonization in a Northeastern U.S. State Energy Research & Social Science (February 2021) <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2214629620304667>

**FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE
by Seizing Rhode Island's Climate Opportunity**