

**American Rescue Plan State Fiscal Recovery Fund Recommendation
Cover Sheet**

Please submit this document with any recommendations for funding from Rhode Island's allocation of federal fiscal recovery funds available through the American Rescue Plan Act. This information will be made available to the public along with any detailed documents submitted that describe the proposal. It is encouraged that such documents identify clear goals and objectives and quantifiable metrics.

This is not a formal request for funds, and submission of recommendations does not guarantee a response, public hearing, or appropriation from the General Assembly.

Name of Lead Agency: BRIDGING THE GAP FOR SAFETY & HEALING

Additional agencies making recommendation (if applicable): THE SAMARITANS OF RI
MELISSA COTTA, CO-FOUNDER (401-835-0797)

Contact Person / Title: BRYAN GANLEY " " Phone: (401-374-7125)

Address: LEG. SPONSORS: REP JOE SOLOMON (401) 308-3904
SEN. LOU DIPALMA (401) 339-2773

Email Address (if available) _____

Brief Project Description (attachments should contain details) FUNDING IN SUPPORT OF
21H-5053 + 21S-117 PHYSICAL DETERRENTS/SUICIDE PREVENTION
BARRIERS ON MT HOPE, PELL, JAMESTOWN (AND SAKONNET) BRIDGES

Total request: \$ SEE ATTACHED DOA BUDGET OFFICE FISCAL NOTE.

One-time or Recurring Expense? ONE-TIME

ARPA Eligibility Category (check all that apply) – See link for further information

<https://www.rilegislature.gov/commissions/arpa/commdocs/Treasury%20-%20Quick-Reference-Guide.pdf>

- Respond to the public health emergency and its economic impacts X
- Premium pay to eligible workers _____
- Government services/state revenue replacement _____
- Water/sewer/broadband infrastructure _____



BRIDGING THE GAP FOR SAFETY AND HEALING
Co-founders Bryan Ganley and Melissa Cotta
Petition for Barriers on RI's Unprotected Bridges over Narragansett Bay
tinyurl.com/ribridgingthegap

October 29, 2021

His Excellency Daniel McKee, Honorable K. Joseph Shekarchi, Speaker & Honorable Dominick J. Ruggerio, President
RI General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence RI 02903
Reference: American Rescue Plan State Fiscal Recovery Fund/Response to Public Health Emergency
21H-5053 and 21S-117

Dear Governor McKee, Speaker Shekarchi and President Ruggerio,

Per the RI Department of Health, from 2009-2018, there were at a minimum 33 bridge suicides in Bristol and Newport County. As of the writing of this letter, from November 2020 to October 29, 2021, we know of twelve (12) falls/suicides from Rhode Island's bridges over Narragansett Bay. Approximate total: 45. In comparison, per the Army Corp of Engineers, on Cape Cod's Sagamore and Bourne bridges, where 12-foot-high suicide deterrent fences are installed, they report the following:

“According to what information we have, during a 28-year period after the fencing was installed, between 1984 and 2012, a total of 7 persons committed suicide from the bridges. A far lower rate of incidence than what was recorded for the years before the fencing was installed as part of the major rehabilitation project started in 1979.” “Since 2013 we know of two attempts that were prevented thanks to the quick actions of state and local law enforcement officers. The presence of fencing may not only deter attempts from occurring, it can also delay an attempt long enough to give law enforcement a chance to successfully respond to an incident when one does occur.”*

Gentlemen, representing the generations of hopeless Rhode Islanders who have fallen from the unprotected bridges and died as well as those who have fallen and survived with life changing injuries, and on behalf of their families, friends, co-workers and communities impacted by their falls; as well as those who have testified and written letters of support for legislation 21H-5053 and 21S-117; as well as the more than 3,700 signers of our petition in support of our initiative to install physical barriers on the bridges over Narragansett Bay, we respectfully request financial support for three items (1) immediate temporary construction barriers; (2) the engineering study for the design and implementation and (3) installation of said permanent barriers on the Mount Hope, Pell, Jamestown and Sakonnet Bridges – under the category of Public Health Emergency.

BRIDGING THE GAP FOR SAFETY AND HEALING
Request for Physical Barriers on Bridges over Narragansett Bay

p. 2.

The pandemic has exacerbated the stressors in all aspects of life in Rhode Island, the USA and around the world. The impact of the pandemic on public health both physical and emotional has been well established. Deaths from Rhode Island's iconic bridges must stop now.

- There is no other state or privately owned facility where accidental falls/suicide deaths would be tolerated.
- In private industry, OSHA has strict fall prevention guidelines and, after an accident, emergency response requirements which must be implemented before work can recommence.
- Installation of barriers removes the means of a suicide attempt; just as we remove guns from the suicidal.
- Global studies document the need for barriers as well as document there is no evidence would be suicide jumpers go elsewhere.
- The Army Corp of Engineers, Cape Cod have document and support the effectiveness of barriers.
- There are barriers on the Bourne, Sagamore, and Braga bridges.
- Along the Massachusetts and Rhode Island coastline, only RI continues to tolerate these needless injuries and deaths by not addressing the need for physical deterrents.
- Per the CDC, Suicides/suicide attempts cost the nation almost \$70 billion per year in lifetime medical and work-loss alone.

<https://www.cdc.gov/policy/polaris/healthtopics/suicide/index.html>

As two Rhode Islanders personally impacted by bridge suicides, we support the need for additional mental health services. But as the medical and behavioral health community continues decades old battles over market share for clients and funding, suicide from our bridges is something we can prevent.

Until the temporary and permanent barriers are erected, every death will represent our collective failure to finally say "enough".

Sincerely,

Melissa J. Cotta
80 Brackett Avenue, Tiverton RI 02878
401.835.0797
mjcotta1@my.ccri.edu

Bryan S. Ganley
7 Prenda Lane, Bristol RI 02809
401.374.7125
bryganley@yahoo.com

cc: Rep. Joseph Solomon and Sen. Louis DiPalma;
Denise Panichas, Ex. Director, The Samaritans of RI

-End-



At 5,000 signatures, this petition is more likely to get picked up by local news!



Suicide Prevention Barriers on Rhode Island's Bridges Now!

3,748 have signed. Let's get to 5,000!



At 5,000 signatures, this petition is more likely to get picked up by local news!



Tina Harvey signed 18 hours ago



Lisa Ramsbottom signed 1 week ago

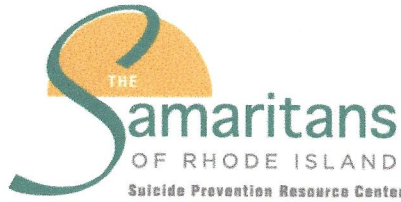


Bryan Ganley started this petition to Rhode Island Residents and [24 others](#)

Thank you for signing our petition to add barriers to Rhode Island's unprotected bridges.

Important Note: All donations requested by Change.org are to boost this petition and is paid directly to Change.org and do NOT directly benefit Bridging the Gap for Safety and Healing nor The Samaritans of Rhode Island.

[Sign this petition](#)



Crisis Hotline: 401-272-4044 Toll Free: 800-365-4044 Business Line: 401-721-5220 Fax: 401-753-7938 www.samaritansri.org

44th Year of Service
to Rhode Island
1977- 2021

October 29, 2021

Board of Directors

To: His Excellency Daniel McKee; Honorable J. Joseph Shekarchi, Speaker and Honorable Dominick J. Ruggiero, President

Meredith Hampton
President

Cc: Sen. Lou DiPalma and Rep. Joe Solomon

Joseph Tavares
Chief, East Prov. Police
Dept., Retired, Vice President

From: Denise Panichas, Executive Director
Reference: American Rescue Plan State Fiscal Recovery Fund/ Response to Public Health
Emergency/Economic Impact

Marilyn Dorsey
Treasurer

A ONCE IN A GENERATION OPPORTUNITY TO CHANGE THE COURSE OF HISTORY

Irene Ogarek
Secretary

On behalf of the Board of Directors of The Samaritans of Rhode Island, I am writing in support of the request by Bridging the Gap for Safety and Healing to use American Rescue funds for the study, design and installation of physical suicide deterrent barriers on the state's bridges over Narragansett Bay-Public Health Emergency/Economic Impact*.

Rui P. Alves, Esq

Elsa A. Campos

Everett Dana Carvalho
Officer, Providence Police Dept.

The Rhode Island General Assembly has tragically been touched by bridge suicides. Over the years, individual members the Executive and Legislative Branches have been touched by bridge suicides.

Teresa Chopoorian, EdD, MSN

Nicole Coggins, RN

Since our inception, we at SAMSRI have supported scores of families grieving loss by suicide including suicide from Rhode Island's Mt. Hope, Sakonnet, Pell and Jamestown Bridges. Now, since November 2020, I too have personally lost friends to our iconic bridges.

Alfred L. Grant

John M. LaCross
Chief, Barrington Police Dept., Retired

The efforts of 40-year Samaritan volunteer Bryan Ganley, of Bristol, grieving the loss of family and friends to suicide from the bridges and other means and Tiverton resident Melissa Cotta, who was literally the car behind a suicide from the Hope Bridge are to be commended. Unlike anyone I know before them, though their efforts, Bryan and Melissa have placed this preventable public health issue before us with more than 3,700 signing their petition in support of barriers and with major publicity via television, Boston Globe, Providence Journal, Newport Daily News, Jamestown Press and publications, blogs and social media around New England and the country. They have raised awareness of the consequences of our state's neglect to protect our citizens and visitors from falling from our bridges as an unselfish, grass roots effort unparalleled in its goal.

Ann McCarthy

Kenneth W. Walsh

William A. Catelli Jr.
Board President Emeritus

Forever Home Campaign
Volunteer Advisor

Dennis E. Stark

Forever Home Campaign
Volunteer Architect

Dana M. Newbrook

Forever Home Campaign
Volunteer Project Management

Michael D. Cassidy

Each and every bridge incident before us has had life altering consequences with personal, community and economic implications. But it does not have to be our future. We have the ability to change the course of history, once and for all, by innovatively installing barriers on our bridges over Narragansett Bay. And, just as we searched the globe to learn about the impact of bridge barriers around the world – the world is now watching Rhode Island. If we successfully study, design and install barriers, stakeholders from around the world will come to Rhode Island to see how we made it possible.

Denise Panichas
Executive Director

Per the CDC, Suicides/suicide attempts cost the nation almost \$70 billion per year in lifetime medical and work-loss alone.
<https://www.cdc.gov/policy/polaris/healthtopics/suicide/index.html>

Date of State Budget Office Approval: Thursday, April 8, 2021

Date Requested: Thursday, March 25, 2021

Date Due: Sunday, April 4, 2021

<i>Impact on Expenditures</i>		<i>Impact on Revenues</i>	
FY 2021	\$0	FY 2021	N/A
FY 2022	\$1.0 million - \$1.5 milli	FY 2022	N/A
FY 2023	\$5.0 million - \$30.0 mi	FY 2023	N/A

Explanation by State Budget Office:

This bill would amend Chapter 24-12 of the General Laws entitled "Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority" directing the department of transportation (DOT), in conjunction with the Rhode Island turnpike and bridge authority (RITBA) to erect a safety barrier or safety netting on the Mount Hope Bridge, the Claiborne Pell Bridge, and the Jamestown Verrazzano Bridge on or before January 1, 2023.

The bill proposes the erecting of safety barriers or netting as an additional suicide prevention measure that will work in tandem with a smart surveillance system that alerts authorities, which is currently in place.

Comments on Sources of Funds:

RITBA's tolling revenues and 3.5 cent per gallon gas tax allocation are used to cover the costs of maintenance & operations as well as the dedicated revenue stream for payback of existing 2016A and 2019A motor fuel revenue and 2019A tolling revenue refunding bond series. In addition, these bonds include minimum annual debt service coverage requirements (motor fuel revenue bonds coverage: 1.25x and toll revenue bonds coverage: 1.20x).

Uses of the 2016A and 2019A motor fuel revenue bond proceeds is currently reflected in RITBA's FY 2021- FY 2026 capital plan, while toll revenue refunding bond proceeds were used to refund 2010A series bonds. As a result, a source of financing for the safety barriers project could potentially be an additional bond issuance, provided that minimum coverage ratios are maintained. The 2019 debt affordability study published by the Public Financial Management Board (PFMB) has indicated that as of 2018, RITBA's debt service coverage ratio for its outstanding motor fuel revenue bonds is 1.59x, lower than the recommended minimum level of 1.70x coverage, while RITBA's 2020 continuing disclosure report indicates a projected coverage ratio of between 3.63x-4.00x for its outstanding toll revenue bonds. Should bonding capacity prove to become an issue in the future, the repurposing of issued proceeds will be required order to provide funding for this project in absence of gas tax or toll rate increases.

In addition, because the bill also directs DOT to erect safety barriers or netting, there is a potential that the department could dedicate motor fuel tax or Highway Maintenance Account (HMA) revenues to cover project costs. Funds are currently fully allocated in the DOT budget and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Use of DOT state funds for safety barrier installation would require a repurposing of funds, potentially delaying existing goals around bridge or

Prepared by:

Gary Pascoa / 4012222327 / gary.pascoa@budget.ri.gov

Thursday, April 8, 2021

Page 1 of 2

*Summary of Facts
and Assumptions:*

pavement sufficiency. This project is unlikely to have general revenue impact

1. This note assumes the implementation period is extended due to estimates provided by RITBA for the procurement, architectural & engineering phase (one year) and the construction phase (two construction seasons). Agency staff also note that another issue contributing to a longer timeframe is the limited number of firms available who perform the construction of safety barriers/netting on bridges. As a result, the Budget Office assumes the completion date is amended to December 31, 2024.

2. RITBA has determined that an engineering feasibility study would need to be procured and conducted, detailing the estimated impacts (load and wind analysis, visual, etc.) and construction cost ranges for the erecting of barriers and safety netting on all three bridges. The current estimate provided by RITBA for the engineering feasibility study is approximately \$1.0 million - \$1.5 million.

3. As a result of the unique characteristics of bridges, a firm estimate is difficult at this time and would require the production of a feasibility study. Preliminary cost estimates provided by RITBA range from \$15.0 million - \$50.0 million for design and construction of safety barriers or netting on all three bridges. A notable example on the higher end of project costs is the installation of safety barriers on the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, totaling \$200 million. A lower end total cost can be seen in St. Petersburg, Florida. In March 2021, construction of a steel barrier began on the Sunshine Skyway. The barrier will span one and a half miles with a total projected cost of \$3.4 million with expected completion in summer 2021. As a comparison the three Rhode Island bridges have a combined span of 4.68 miles (Claiborne Pell Bridge: 2.1 miles (11,247 feet), the Mount Hope Bridge: 1.16 miles (6,130 feet) and the Jamestown Verrazzano Bridge 1.39 miles (7,350 feet).

4. RITBA has indicated that cost comparisons to such projects as the Golden Gate bridge or the recent Sunshine skyway would not suffice, as factors such as differing ages and span of heights lead to different total project costs. For example, the sunshine skyway is a 34-year-old bridge with lower height spans, compared to the Mount Hope and Claiborne Pell bridges, which are 90 and 60 years old, respectively. As a result of these factors, RITBA indicates that age and higher height spans may lead to more limited and costlier options.

*Summary of Fiscal
Impact:*

Based on the foregoing facts and assumptions, the fiscal impact presented by passage of this bill is as follows:

FY 2021 Expenditures: \$0; No impact due to timing.

FY 2022 Expenditures: \$1.0 million - \$1.5 million in Other Funds

FY 2023 Expenditures: \$5.0 million - \$30.0 million in Other Funds

Budget Office Signature:

Digitally signed by Joseph Codega
Date: 2021.04.08 12:08:56 -04'00'

Fiscal Advisor Signature:

Prepared by:

Gary Pascoa / 401222327 / gary.pascoa@budget.ri.gov

Thursday, April 8, 2021

Page 2 of 2

● **BREAKING** JERRY REMY, RED SOX ICON ON THE FIELD AND IN THE BROADCAST BOOTH, DIES AT 68

BREAKING: JERRY REMY, RED SOX ICON ON THE FIELD AND IN THE BROADCAST BOOTH, DIES AT 68

RI NEWS

After years of advocacy, a 'huge first step' toward suicide prevention barriers on R.I. bridges

At least nine people have committed suicide by jumping from Rhode Island bridges since November

By Edward Fitzpatrick Globe Staff, Updated July 28, 2021, 4:35 p.m.



The Mount Hope Bridge, opened in 1929, connects the Rhode Island towns of Bristol and Portsmouth, Rhode Island. LANE

PROVIDENCE — The Rhode Island Bridge and Turnpike Authority is seeking proposals to study putting suicide prevention barriers on the state's most iconic bridges.

Nearly 3,000 people have signed an online petition in support of legislation requiring “a safety barrier and/or safety netting on the Mount Hope Bridge, the Claiborne Pell Bridge, and the Jamestown Verrazzano Bridge.”

And the action, which follows years of advocacy, comes as Bristol's Bryan Ganley, co-founder of Bridging the Gap for Safety and Healing, is warning that nine people “that we know about” have committed suicide by jumping from those Rhode Island bridges since November.

“It tells me every minute we are not doing this, that more people are at risk,” Ganley told the Globe. “Stop talking and make it happen.”

He said he has been advocating for barriers on Rhode Island bridges since 1985, and he is glad to hear that the Turnpike and Bridge Authority has issued a request for proposals.

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“I am ecstatic,” Ganley said Wednesday. “This is a huge first step.”

Lori C. Silveira, executive director of the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority, said the authority issued the request on July 14, seeking proposals from qualified consulting firms to perform a “conceptual study and analysis” of suicide prevention measures for the Jamestown Verrazzano, Claiborne Pell, Mount Hope, and Sakonnet River bridges.

The proposals are due back by Sept. 3, and the award of the contract will be “subject to funding,” Silveira said.

“We wanted to solicit proposals for a study to inform the decision making process as we examine whether and what type of preventative measures could safely be deployed on the bridges,” she said in a statement.

DiPalma, a Middletown Democrat, and Representative Joseph J. Solomon Jr., a Warwick Democrat, introduced legislation requiring suicide prevention barriers on three of those bridges by Jan. 1, 2023.

Those bills ended up being “held for further study” during the legislative session that ended on July 1. But DiPalma said he and Solomon expect that the issue will continue to be discussed when the General Assembly reconvenes – whether in a special fall session or next year’s regularly scheduled session.

Funding for the projects could come from the federal government, perhaps from the nearly \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure deal that’s now the subject of intense negotiations, he said.

DiPalma said he and Solomon might amend the legislation to focus on the design of the barriers for the three bridges. He estimates the cost to analyze and design barriers for the

three bridges will be about \$1.5 million.

“It’s a case of bite-sized chunks,” he said. “Before we can build anything, we have to analyze the design. I would like to thank the Turnpike and Bridge Authority for getting out in front of this very important issue.”

DiPalma said the value of suicide prevention barriers is becoming evident in St. Petersburg, Florida, where the Sunshine Skyway Bridge has ranked among the deadliest in the nation for suicides since 1987.

Over the past decade, that bridge has seen an average of one suicide per month. But in January, crews began installing diamond-patterned steel netting attached to posts on the bridge’s barrier wall. Since the \$3.41-million project began, there have been no suicides from the bridge, and officials are giving some credit to the recently completed suicide prevention barrier, according to the Tampa Bay Times.

“It has shown to be a deterrent,” DiPalma said. “As an engineer, it’s a case of asking: Is it doing what it’s supposed to do, and the answer is ‘yes.’ The evidence is there.”

DiPalma agrees with those who emphasize the need to provide mental health services to address the root causes of suicides. But, he said, “We need to do both. We need treatment in the community, and we need to take away this venue where many people have taken their lives.”

Denise Panichas, executive director of The Samaritans of Rhode Island, said the value of suicide prevention barriers is also evident closer to home – on Cape Cod.

She noted that, according to the Army Corps of Engineers, barriers placed on the Sagamore and Bourne bridges have succeeded in lowering the number of suicides from those spans, and there have been no suicides reported to the Army Corps of Engineers from those bridges since 2013.

“The Army Corps of Engineers don’t do their work frivolously and they are telling us the barriers on the Bourne and Sagamore work,” Panichas said. “For Rhode Island, while

clearly each bridge is unique, we are the creative state, and if we could put a man on the moon, if we can find things on the bottom of the ocean, there should be no excuse for someone to be able to fall off a bridge.”

For this project, Panichas said, “What I’m looking for is creativity, innovation, cost effectiveness, and a little humanity. The rest of the world is watching. It will be historic.”

Ganley rejects the argument that people will simply find another way to take their lives. “That’s the biggest myth on the planet,” he said. “If someone was holding a loaded gun, you wouldn’t say ‘Don’t bother taking the gun away from them – they will find another way to do it.’ Those bridges are loaded guns. We need to take that gun away.”

Ganley also rejects the argument that barriers will ruin the view from the bridges. The Tampa Bay Times article quotes an official saying the marine-grade netting on the Sunshine Skyway Bridge “would be almost invisible” to motorists. “It really disappears against the sky and water,” the official said.

Those who have lost family members to suicide from the bridges want to see action, Ganley said. “It won’t bring back their loved ones, but no more people will be lost to these unprotected bridges,” he said. “The goal is to make these bridges safe once and for all.”

You can reach The Samaritans of Rhode Island at (401) 272-4044, toll free in Rhode Island at (800) 365-4044, or go to samaritansri.org. The National Suicide Prevention Hotline is 1-800-273-Talk (8255).

Edward Fitzpatrick can be reached at edward.fitzpatrick@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter @FitzProv.

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