



April 10, 2024

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney  
House Finance Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith St.  
Providence RI, 02903

RE: Bill Number: 7677 AN ACT RELATING TO HIGHWAYS -- MAINTENANCE OF TOWN HIGHWAYS

Dear Chairman Abney and Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee:

I am writing to express our support for House Bill 7677, which proposes to shift the responsibility for inspections, cleaning, maintenance, repairs, and remediation of dangerous and hazardous conditions on sidewalks along state highways and city and town roads to the state government. This bill is a crucial step towards improving public safety and ensuring equitable infrastructure maintenance across Rhode Island.

Currently, the burden of maintaining sidewalks falls primarily on municipalities, despite many of these sidewalks being adjacent to state highways and roads. House Bill 7677 rightly recognizes that sidewalk maintenance is a vital public safety issue that should be addressed at the state level, especially for thoroughfares that serve as key transportation routes.

Key reasons to support House Bill 7677 include:

- **Equity and Consistency:** Standardizing sidewalk maintenance responsibilities under state jurisdiction ensures uniform standards of upkeep and safety across different municipalities. This approach eliminates disparities in sidewalk conditions based on local budget constraints or resources.
- **Public Safety:** Well-maintained sidewalks are essential for pedestrian safety and accessibility. By placing responsibility on the state, we can ensure timely inspections and repairs to address hazardous conditions, reducing the risk of accidents and injuries.
- **Financial Relief for Municipalities:** Transferring sidewalk maintenance responsibilities to the state eases the financial burden on local governments, allowing them to allocate resources to other critical municipal services and infrastructure projects.
- **Efficiency in Maintenance:** State-level oversight can lead to more efficient and coordinated sidewalk maintenance efforts, leveraging economies of scale and specialized expertise to address issues promptly and effectively.

House Bill 7677 aligns with broader goals of enhancing public infrastructure and promoting pedestrian-friendly communities. By making sidewalk maintenance a state responsibility, we can achieve safer and more accessible streets for all Rhode Islanders.

This legislation represents a meaningful step towards improving our state's infrastructure and ensuring equitable access to safe sidewalks for residents and visitors alike.

On behalf of the League of Cities and Towns, thank you for considering our testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David M. Bodah".

David M. Bodah  
Associate Director

Cc: House Finance Committee  
Ernie Almonte, Executive Director, RILT