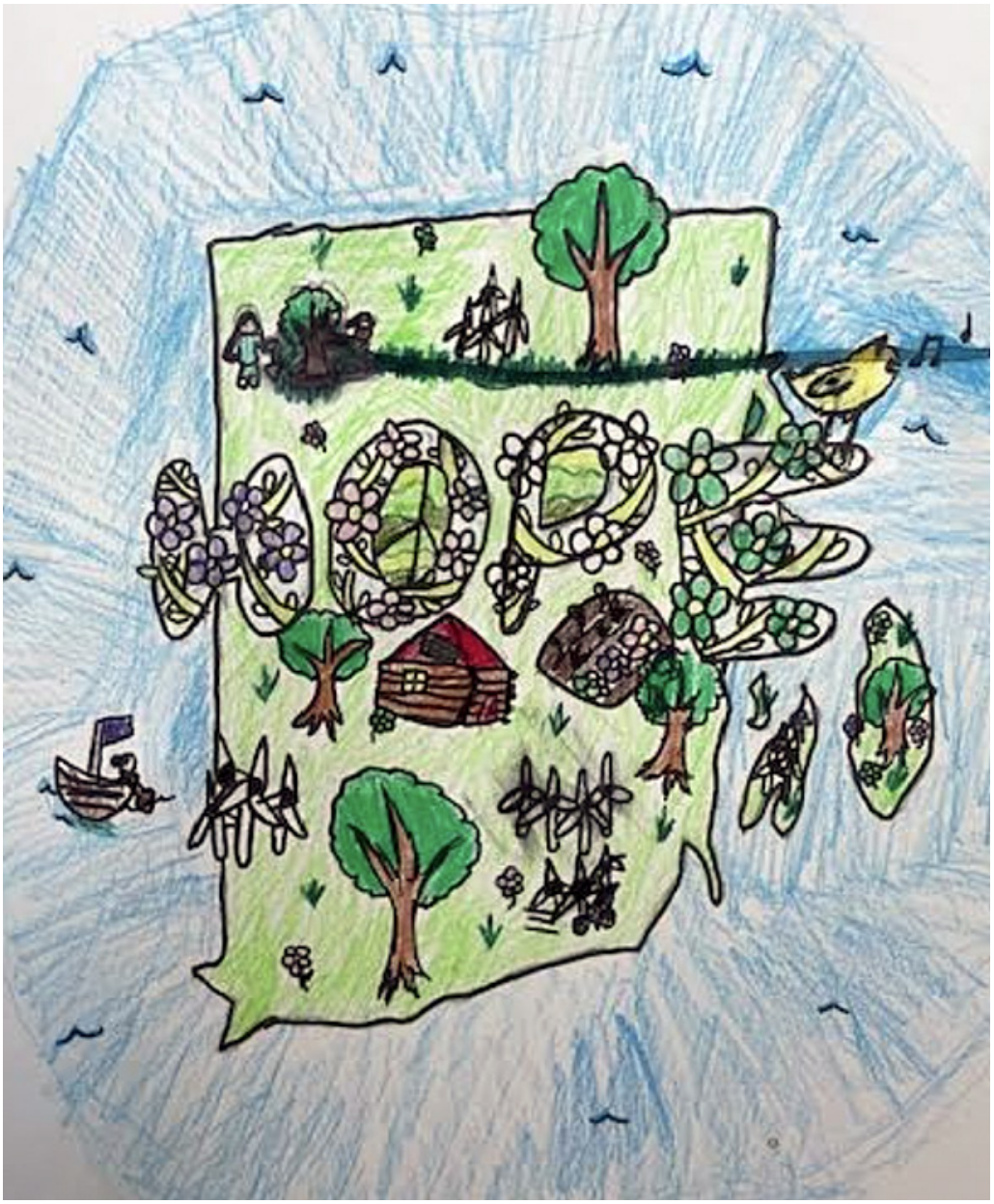
SUMMARY

RIEC 4

MAY 2026



RHODE ISLAND 2025 CLIMATE ACTION STRATEGY

RI EXECUTIVE CLIMATE CHANGE COORDINATING COUNCIL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COVER IMAGES:
RHODE ISLAND HOPE ARTWORK, MAYA RAKER
E-BIKES, RI DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
BLOCK ISLAND WIND FARM, CAVAN/ADOBE STOCK
MANCHESTER STREET POWER STATION IN PROVIDENCE, BIG JOE/SHUTTERSTOCK
SWEET AND SALTY FARM IN LITTLE COMPTON, RI OFFICE OF ENERGY RESOURCES

Rhode Island's Climate Action Strategy

In 2021, the General Assembly passed the Act on Climate, a law that sets binding targets to reduce Rhode Island's greenhouse gas emissions by:

45% BELOW 1990 LEVELS BY 2030

80% BY 2040

NET-ZERO BY 2050

The **Rhode Island Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (EC4)**, a team made up of leaders from multiple state agencies, is coordinating state efforts to meet these goals. To guide that work, the EC4 is required to update the state climate strategy every five years.

The 2025 Climate Action Strategy shows how the state can meet its emissions goals while keeping energy affordable, protecting vulnerable residents, and creating good local jobs. The strategy took shape over 14 months from late 2024 through December 2025. A consulting team – **Energy and Environmental Economics (E3), Lighthouse Consulting, and BW Research** – along with dozens of local agencies, utilities, community groups and residents helped to shape the plan with strategy analysis, surveys, and comments.

In spring 2025, the project team held in-person sessions and virtual meetings to gather feedback on Rhode Islanders' top priorities for the strategy. Over the summer, the consulting teams analyzed key data to understand how the state's emissions could change over time, explore different near-term strategies to reduce emissions, and assess how climate action might affect future costs and jobs. In fall 2025, the state hosted webinars to share the analysis results and key findings and continued collecting input online through surveys and comment forms.

Icons sourced from the Noun Project (CC BY 3.0): Reduce by Adrien Coquet; Path by path by Larea; Today by Adrien Coquet

Photos from the Woonsocket (left) and Newport (right) engagement sessions

WHAT RHODE ISLANDERS SAID

Hundreds of Rhode Islanders joined public meetings in person and online. They shared their hopes, concerns, and ideas about clean energy, transportation, household utility bills, and jobs. Their feedback directly shaped the strategys priorities. Here is what the state heard most clearly.

Shift from Planning to Action

People want implementation, not more studies. Rhode Islanders asked for clear timelines, accountability, and visible progress — like cleaner buses on the road, new charging stations, and home upgrade programs that are easy to access.

Affordability

Participants urged the state to keep costs low, especially for families already struggling with energy bills. That means streamlining incentives, offering upfront rebates instead of tax breaks, and designing electric rates that reward efficiency and electrification.

Increased Coordination

Residents and local officials called for stronger collaboration across state agencies, utilities, and municipalities. Too often, climate programs are fragmented. People want one clear roadmap with shared goals.

Prioritize Equity

Equity, justice, and inclusion came up in nearly every meeting. Communities asked the state to prioritize investments in overburdened neighborhoods, provide workforce support, and build long-term relationships based on transparency.

Support the Workforce

Workers and trade organizations highlighted the need for training programs, apprenticeships, and clear career ladders to fill the growing demand for clean energy jobs.

Keep Local Voices at the Table

Rhode Islanders want the opportunity to provide ongoing input — not just during the planning phase but throughout implementation. Regular public reporting and engagement will be essential.

Together, these tools create a picture of a state steadily shifting toward clean energy — and they help identify where more work is needed.

Rhode Island Today

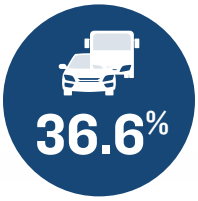
Greenhouse gases (GHGs) are gases that are released when fossil fuel is burned to produce electricity, run vehicles, and heat our homes. When GHGs are released into the atmosphere they trap heat, causing global warming and climate change. Rhode Island is already feeling the effects of a changing climate. Summers are hotter, floods are more frequent, and storms have become stronger and more unpredictable. Sea levels along our coast have risen over 11 inches since 1930, threatening homes, roads, and businesses from Westerly to Providence. Without action, scientists expect another one to four feet of sea-level rise by the end of the century.

Extreme heat now endangers older residents, outdoor workers, and people without reliable air conditioning. Heavy rainstorms overwhelm drainage systems, damaging homes and local roads. Coastal erosion threatens iconic beaches and salt marshes that protect communities and support tourism. Increasing allergens and air pollution leads to higher risks of asthma, allergies, and other respiratory conditions.

Climate action is about much more than cutting emissions. It's about **protecting health, maintaining affordability, creating jobs, and strengthening communities.**

The first step to evaluating pathways to reduce emissions is to assess where we are today. As of 2022, Rhode Island produced about 9.6 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_2e) each year – 18.3% less than in 1990. That's progress, but the state will need to go further to meet the 2030 target.

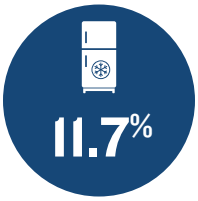
HERE'S WHERE THOSE EMISSIONS COME FROM:



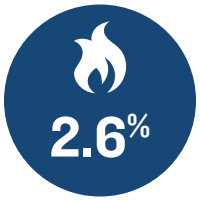
TRANSPORTATION:
cars, trucks, buses, ships, and planes

BUILDINGS:
heating and cooling homes, offices, and schools

ELECTRICITY:
power generation and imported grid electricity



INDUSTRY:
manufacturing, construction, etc.



OTHER SOURCES:
agriculture and natural gas leaks

WASTE:
landfills and wastewater treatment facilities

Rhode Island has already met the Act on Climate's 2020 goal, a 10% reduction below 1990 levels, due primarily to cleaner electricity and improved efficiency. But to stay on track, the state must nearly halve emissions again by 2030, just a few years from now.

RHODE ISLAND'S PROGRESS UNDER CURRENT POLICIES

Some important programs, policies and/or laws are already working to meet Rhode Island's near- and long-term CO_2 reduction targets:

- **The Renewable Energy Standard (RES)**, which requires that 100% of retail electricity sales are met with renewable sources by 2033
- **Existing State Energy Efficiency Programs**, which encourage weatherization and appliance efficiency upgrades in buildings
- Existing state heat pump incentive programs like **Clean Heat RI**, which encourages heat pump adoption in buildings
- Existing state electric vehicle and electric bicycle incentive programs, such as **DRIVE EV**, which help to lower upfront costs for customers
- **Advanced Clean Cars II (ACC II) and Advanced Clean Trucks (ACT) rules**, which shift new car and truck sales to zero-emission models over time

If these programs, policies and/or laws are implemented successfully, Rhode Island could be on track to reach its 2030 GHG reduction target — but deeper action is required for 2040 and 2050. Reaching the 2030 target will also depend on several things outside of state programs, such as growing regional clean-energy markets and building the right infrastructure. For example, expanding EV charging stations and adding more renewable energy across New England are both essential to making sure the projected emissions reductions actually happen.

Recent federal changes have created major uncertainty about how quickly Rhode Island can move its clean energy and climate policies forward. The Trump administration, through HR1/HR14 and related actions, cut federal funding for energy programs, ended several clean energy tax credits, and began rolling back clean car standards.

A state report from October 2025 estimates that Rhode Island lost or had frozen more than $75 million in federal support for clean energy projects, research, and infrastructure. The state also lost over $80 million in grants and all IRA clean-energy tax credits. These cuts make renewable projects—especially offshore wind—more expensive and harder to build, and they reduce the effectiveness of programs that help residents upgrade their homes with energy efficient equipment and heat pumps.

Transportation policies have also shifted. The federal EV tax credit ended in September 2025, leading to a sharp drop in EV sales. Federal rollbacks are weakening fuel-economy standards for cars and could prevent Rhode Island from enforcing the Advanced Clean Cars and Trucks rules, limiting EV availability and slowing progress on carbon reductions.

Rhode Island and other states are challenging many of these federal decisions in court (in particular, Rhode Island is fighting to retain its authority to continue with implementation of Advanced Clean Cars and Trucks rules). Despite these setbacks, the state remains committed to advancing its climate goals and will continue coordinating across agencies in 2026 and beyond.

Cutting Emissions: The Path to Net-Zero

The RI Climate Action Strategy looks at two possible futures:

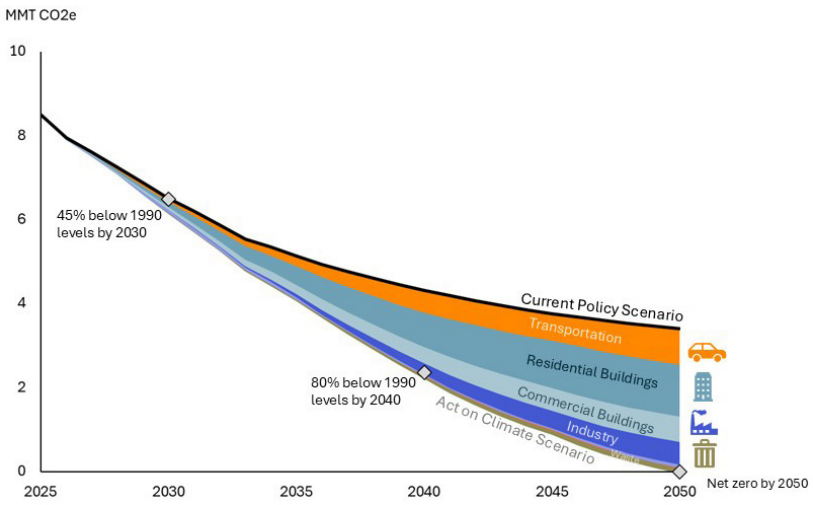
- **1. Current Policy Scenario:** What happens if Rhode Island continues with existing policies programs.
- **2. Act on Climate Scenario:** What would be required to fully meet the state's legally mandated GHG reduction targets.

Under the Current Policy scenario, emissions fall about 70 percent by 2050, a strong start, but not enough to reach net-zero. The Act on Climate scenario shows one potential pathway to what it would take: near-total electrification of buildings and vehicles, cleaner industries, and new renewable energy to power them. ***Figure 1*** below shows the projected emissions over time under both scenarios.

This transformation isn't just about technology; it's about planning ahead so that every community benefits. That means providing affordable options, workforce training, and clear policies that make it easier to choose clean energy.

To understand how Rhode Island can reach its goals, the Strategy breaks the economy into major parts, or "sectors", and explores how each one can change.

FIG. 1: GHG REDUCTIONS BY SECTOR IN ACT ON CLIMATE SCENARIO



Sector	Potential Changes to Reduce Emissions
Transportation	Transportation is the largest source of emissions. Cutting emissions means cleaner vehicles, better public transit, and safer streets for biking and walking.
Buildings	Homes, offices, and schools use large amounts of oil and gas for heating. Solutions include insulation, efficient appliances, and switching to electric heat pumps.
Electricity	Powering our lives with clean, renewable energy, mainly wind, solar, and hydropower, is the backbone of every other climate solution.
Industry and Waste	Factories and construction equipment can shift to cleaner fuels and greater efficiency, while waste reduction and recycling limit methane from landfills.
Natural and Working Lands	Forests, farms, and wetlands absorb carbon. Protecting and restoring them strengthens biodiversity and shields communities from floods and storms.

Strategies for Achieving Rhode Island's Goals

Rhode Island's current policies have already driven meaningful progress toward reducing GHG emissions, but additional action is needed to close the remaining gap to meet the 2040 and 2050 Act on Climate targets. To help chart a path forward, the state has identified several potential GHG reduction strategies that could accelerate progress in the decades ahead.

CLEAN ENERGY AND THE ELECTRIC GRID

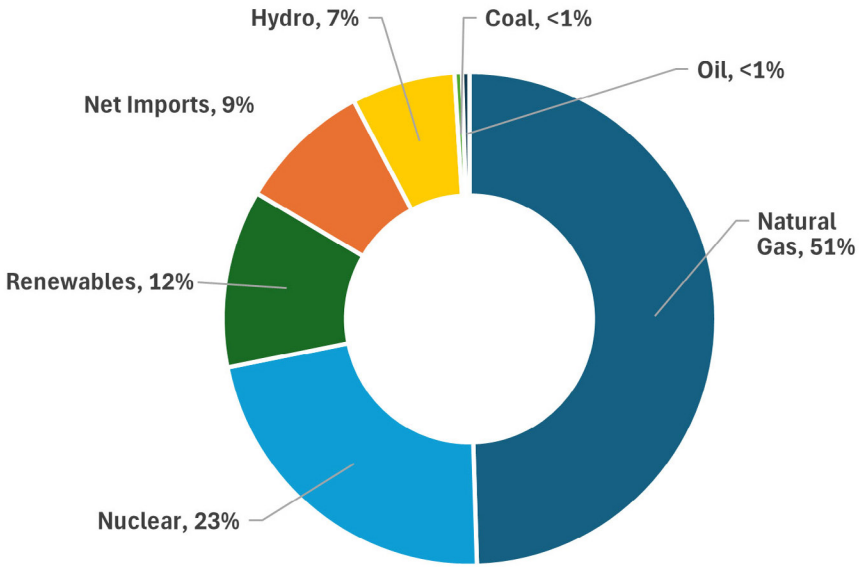
Rhode Island's electricity comes from the regional ISO-New England grid, shared with neighboring states. As the grid gets cleaner, every electric vehicle and heat pump in the state also gets cleaner.

At the time of this writing, Rhode Island's Renewable Energy Standard (RES) requires that 100% of retail power sales are from renewable sources by 2033. That will be achieved through:

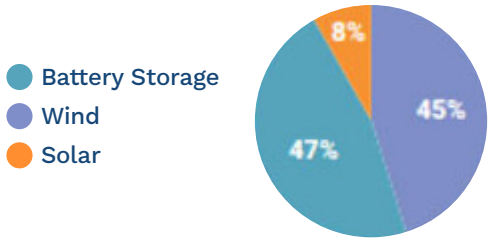
- Offshore and onshore wind projects
- Expanded solar power on rooftops and open land
- Purchase of renewable energy certificates from other states
- Investments in battery storage and modern grid infrastructure

The Act on Climate scenario estimates that total electricity demand will double due to an increasing number of homes, cars, and industrial activity running on electricity. To meet this need while keeping costs reasonable, Rhode Island will need strong regional coordination, continued investment in renewable projects, and ongoing grid modernization to support reliability. The analysis found that although building a clean energy system requires upfront investment, the long-term benefits are projected to outweigh the costs – mostly due to avoided climate damages and reduced air pollution.

FIG. 2: ISO-NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL ENERGY MIX IN 2024



NEW PROPOSED GENERATION FOR NEW ENGLAND

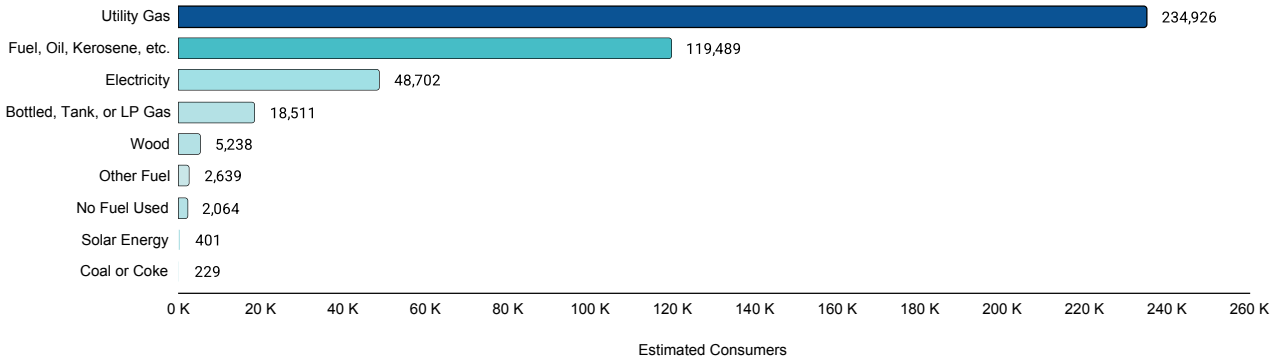


Developers have proposed **38,474 MW** of new generating resources as of Jan. 2025

BUILDINGS AND HOMES

Most Rhode Islanders heat their homes with natural gas or oil. The combustion of these fuels leads to GHG emissions and air pollution.

FIG.3: HOW RHODE ISLANDERS ARE HEATING THEIR HOMES



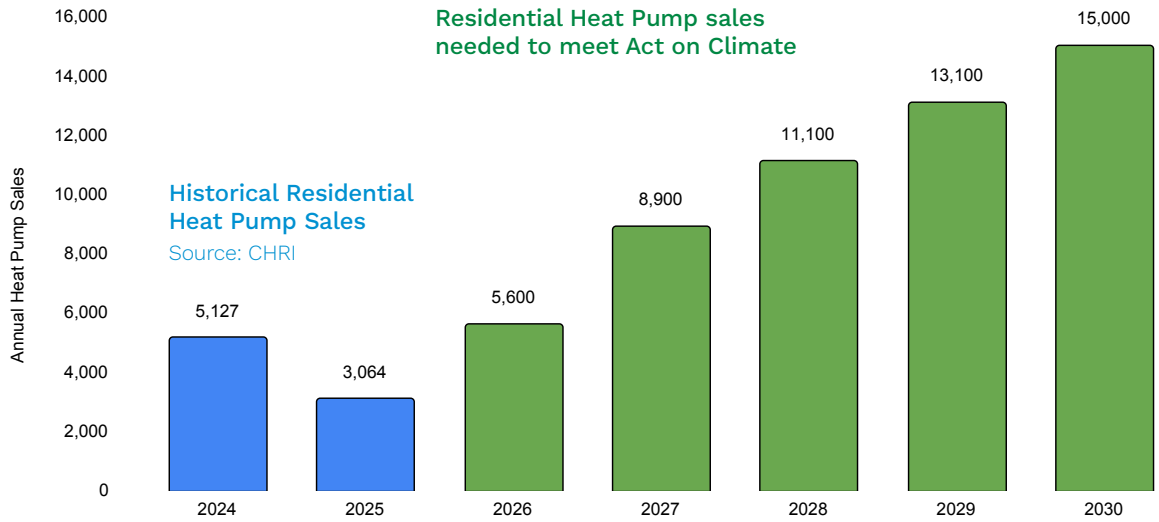
Support Programs for Heat Pumps and Weatherization

A key solution is the heat pump, an efficient electric system that provides both heating and cooling. In the Current Policy scenario, it is estimated that about 16% of homes will have heat pumps by 2050. In the Act on Climate scenario, it is assumed that nearly every building will. About one-third of those buildings will use "hybrid" systems that keep old furnaces or boilers as backup for very cold days.

Programs like **Clean Heat Rhode Island** already offer rebates for installing heat pumps. Expanded funding, contractor training, and outreach will help make these technologies mainstream. The state is also participating in programs like the **New England Heat Pump Accelerator**, which is a regional program designed to speed up heat pump adoption through incentives designed to bring down costs and support contractors and installers through training and education.

As of this writing, Clean Heat Rhode Island has prevented CO_2 emissions that are equivalent to the energy use of more than 30,000 homes for a year.

FIG. 4: ANNUAL HEAT PUMP SALES REQUIRED TO REACH ACT ON CLIMATE SCENARIO



Weatherization, such as adding insulation, sealing air leaks, and upgrading windows, keeps homes warmer and reduces bills by improving energy efficiency. The state is exploring the potential of maintaining and expanding existing weatherization programs in Rhode Island to increase the number of homes each year receiving energy efficiency improvements.

60,000

Around 60,000 homes in Rhode Island still have knob and tube wiring

Rhode Island should aim to increase weatherization of homes from around 800 per year to

2,400/year

Support Access and Affordability by Renovating Homes

Low-income households often live in older, less efficient buildings and face higher energy bills. The strategy includes potential strategies for expanding pre-weatherization and "whole-home" programs that fix health and safety issues (like mold or old wiring) before installing clean-energy upgrades. These integrated efforts would mean families in every neighborhood can benefit.

Make New Construction All Electric

New construction policies could also require that all new homes and apartments be built all-electric, preventing new fossil fuel hookups and locking in long-term savings.

Retrofit and Electrify Government Buildings

Rhode Island has a Lead By Example program that assists state agencies to upgrade state buildings and make them more energy efficient. The program also supports municipal efforts to upgrade buildings and schools.

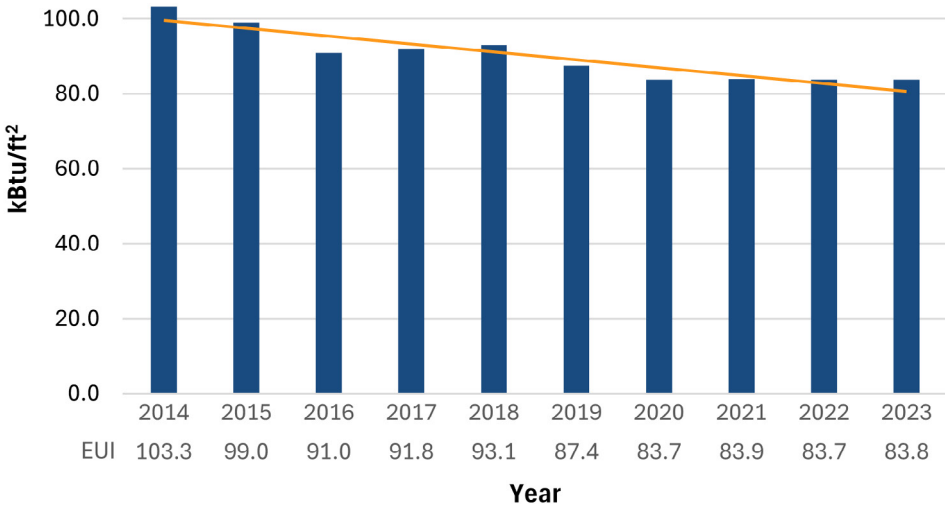
Building Performance and Clean Heat Standard

There are also additional programs that Rhode Island could explore to further incentivize heat pump and efficiency adoption, such as a Building Performance Standard or a Clean Heat Standard. These new policies would set long-term goals for building owners and fuel suppliers to improve efficiency and cut emissions.

As of 2023, RI state agencies have reduced their overall Energy Use Intensity (EUI) from a 2014 baseline of 103.28 kBtu/ft^2 to 83.77 kBtu/ft^2 representing a 18.7% reduction.

Source: RI Lead by Example Dashboard

FIG.5: RHODE ISLAND STATE AGENCIES OVERALL EUI BY YEAR



TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

Rhode Island's passenger cars, trucks, and buses account for over one third of total emissions. Cleaning up transportation not only reduces GHG emissions but can also improve mobility and accessibility for Rhode Islanders.

Increase the number of Electric Vehicles (EVs) in Rhode Island

The Advanced Clean Cars II rule requires that by 2035 all new light-duty vehicles sold in the state are zero-emission. This doesn't ban older gas cars, people can keep or buy used ones, but it ensures the new car market shifts steadily toward EVs.

Likewise, the Advanced Clean Trucks rule increases sales of zero-emission trucks and delivery vehicles beginning in 2027.

To support this shift, it will be important for Rhode Island to continue to provide EV rebates to reduce the upfront cost of these vehicles for customers, such as through the DRIVE EV Program.

Increase Electric Car Charging Stations

Rhode Island is building a statewide network of EV chargers. Charging will become more accessible in public places, apartment complexes, and workplaces, reducing "range anxiety," and encouraging adoption.

At the time of this writing, the Drive EV program has provided

$5.6M

in vehicle rebates to RI consumers and Rhode Island has

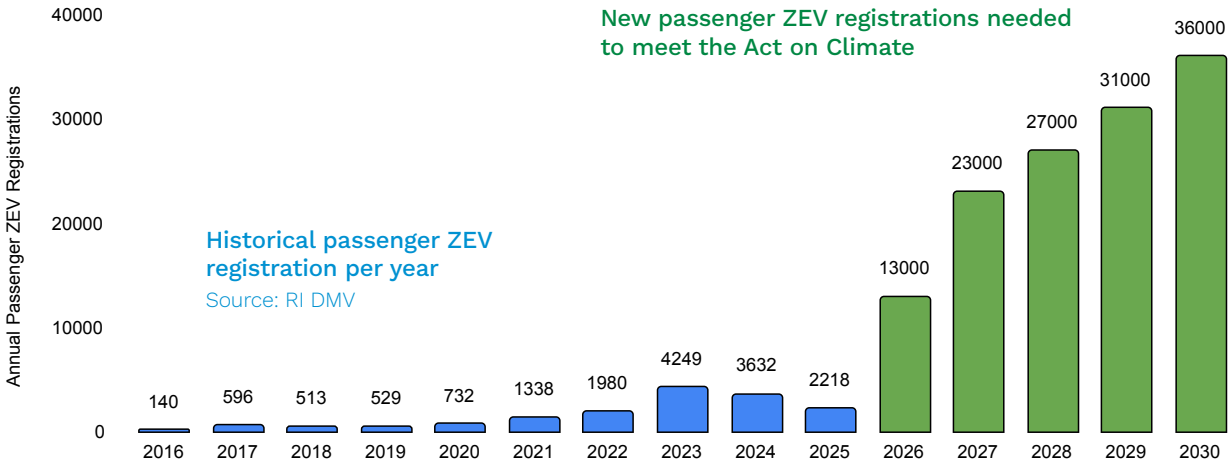
366

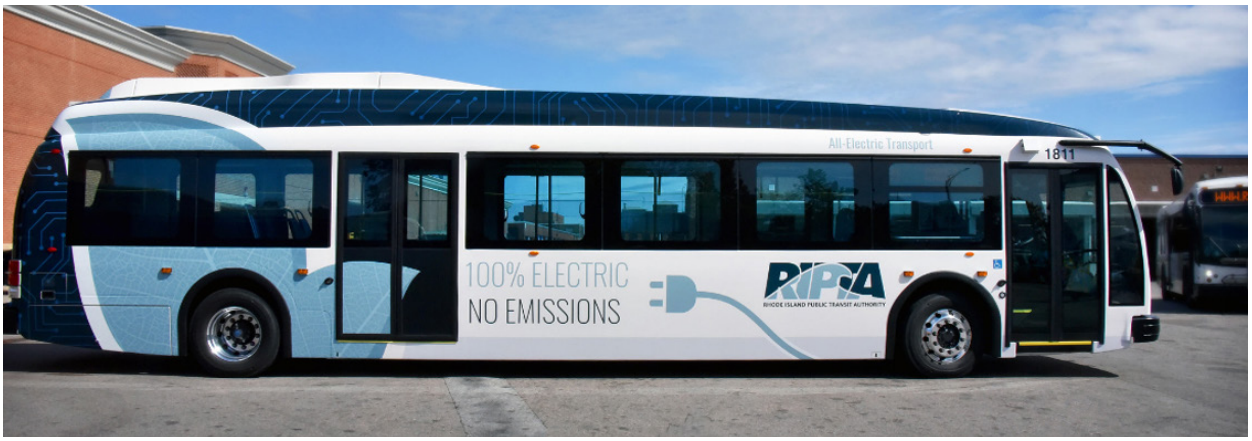
EV charging station locations

962

charging ports

FIG. 6: PASSENGER EV REGISTRATIONS IN ACT ON CLIMATE SCENARIO





Expand and Electrify Public Transit and Active Travel

Electrifying buses and school buses can eliminate diesel fumes and improve health in neighborhoods near busy routes. Beyond vehicles, the Climate Action Strategy offers potential options for the state to invest in transit service, sidewalks, and bike infrastructure to give people more choices for getting around. Initiatives like mode shift and transit incentives can help reduce total vehicle miles traveled and congestion.

Transition State and Municipal Fleets to Zero Emission Vehicle

Rhode Island's Lead by Example program mandates that state agencies reduce greenhouse gas emissions by transitioning to zero-emission vehicles.

Supports should also be put in place to ensure that municipalities also have an incentive to transition their vehicle fleets.

Pricing Travel

As Rhode Island electrifies cars, trucks, and busses, we should consider pricing travel differently. We currently pay for part of our road maintenance, transit, and other services through a tax on gasoline consumption. Our goal is to use less gas and drive fewer miles. By creating alternative pricing such as mileage-based fees or congestion tolls, we can incentivize people to drive less. A cap-and-invest program could allow Rhode Island to participate in a broader application for putting a price on transportation emissions.

FIG. 7: TOTAL ACTIVE RIPTA FIXED-ROUTE FLEET VEHICLES BY BUS TYPE (2025)

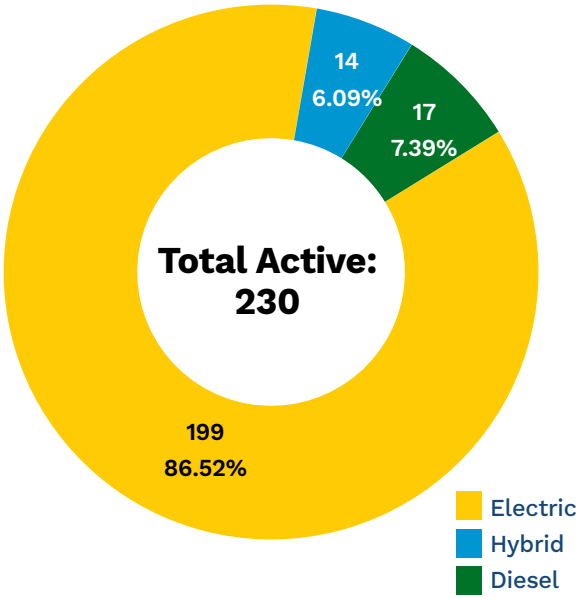
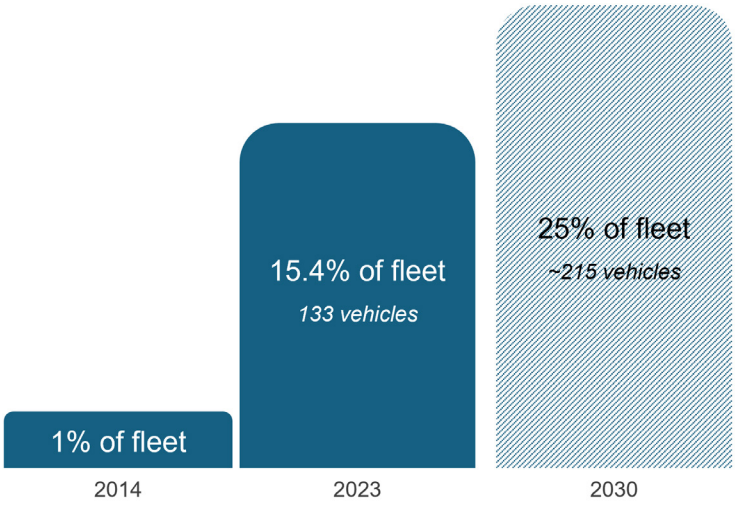


FIG. 8: VEHICLE FLEET PERCENTAGE OF ZEVS IN THE STATE FLEET AND PROJECTED TARGET



INDUSTRY, WASTE, AND NATURAL LANDS

Cleaner Industry

Rhode Island's factories and industrial facilities produce about 5% of statewide emissions. That may sound small, but cleaning up these sources will still be important for reaching climate goals. Industrial plants burn fossil fuels for heat, use diesel-powered equipment, and release gases during manufacturing.

The Climate Action Strategy looks at potential pathways for industries to become more efficient and switch to cleaner fuels:

- **Efficiency upgrades:** replacing outdated equipment, improving insulation, and capturing waste heat.
- **Electrification:** using electricity instead of gas or oil for industrial heating, where possible.
- **Renewable fuels:** introducing renewable natural gas or low-carbon hydrogen for processes that can't yet run on electricity.
- **Emissions standards:** setting performance requirements for large facilities to encourage continuous improvement.

Reduce Waste and Methane

Landfills release methane, a potent greenhouse gas. To tackle this, the Climate Action Strategy explores the potential for diverting organic waste, things like food scraps and yard trimmings, away from landfills and into composting or anaerobic digestion systems that produce biogas.

If Rhode Island increases organic waste diversion to 75% by 2045, landfill methane could fall by nearly half. That's a big win for both the climate and local air quality.

These efforts could be coordinated by the RI Department of Environmental Management and the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation, working with municipalities, schools, and community groups. Federal grants and local composting partnerships can help fund new facilities.

Protect Natural and Working Lands

Rhode Island's forests, wetlands, and farms are vital allies in the fight against climate change. They store carbon naturally, filter air and water, and buffer communities from storms. The Climate Action Strategy includes options for protecting and expanding carbon sinks through conservation, tree planting, and sustainable land management. This builds on the state's Forest Action Plan and local land trust efforts.

Equity matters here too. Access to green space improves health, lowers urban heat, and builds community pride, so conservation investments should benefit every city and town, not just rural or affluent areas.

Providence's urban forest stores

124,000

tons of carbon

That's equivalent to the annual carbon emissions of

74,100

cars or

37,200

single-family houses
(Estimated value: $8.80 million).

EVERY YEAR, PROVIDENCE'S URBAN FOREST

$3.5M ESTIMATED YEARLY VALUE	$281k ESTIMATED YEARLY VALUE	$591k ESTIMATED VALUE	$4.7M ESTIMATED VALUE
Removes 91 tons of pollutants from the air we breath	Prevents 31.5 million gallons of polluted stormwater runoff	Saves thousands in building energy costs	Provides millions in environmental benefits

Source: PVD Tree Plan

Costs and Benefits of Action

Decarbonization requires installing new technologies – like heat pumps and electric vehicles – and upgrading infrastructure, such as the electric grid and EV charging stations. These steps involve additional upfront costs, but they also create other long-term benefits in addition to combating climate change including cutting air pollution, improving public health, and reducing the economic damages caused by climate change.

Rhode Island DEM's electric vehicle fleet.

To understand these impacts, the analysis compared the incremental costs of the Current Policy and Act on Climate scenarios to a "business-as-usual" (BAU) future – one with no climate policies. The incremental costs include extra spending on electricity, clean equipment in buildings, vehicles, and other measures needed to reduce emissions. The analysis also accounted for cost savings from using less gasoline and natural gas, as well as the societal benefits from cleaner air and avoided climate damages.

BENEFITS AND COSTS BY SCENARIO

In the Current Policy scenario, Rhode Island spends about $1.4 billion more each year by 2050 on things like electricity, building equipment, and other upgrades compared to BAU. However, many of these costs are mostly offset by savings from using less fuel and spending less on vehicles. The state would also gain about $1.2 billion in benefits from avoiding climate-related damages and improving air quality compared to the BAU. Overall, this scenario results in roughly $1.1 billion in net benefits by 2050—but it still falls short of meeting the Act on Climate's required GHG reductions.

$3.3B

annual incremental costs by 2050 in Act on Climate scenario

$2B

annual costs savings on fuels and vehicles by 2050 Act on Climate scenario

$2.6B

annual quantified health (improved air quality) and climate benefits (social cost of GHGs) by 2050 in Act on Climate scenario

In the Act on Climate scenario, incremental costs are higher than the Current Policy scenario because more buildings and vehicles switch to electricity. Incremental costs in the Act on Climate scenario compared to BAU are estimated to reach $3.3 billion annually by 2050. However, cost savings from avoided spending on fuels and vehicles are also higher – these savings are estimated to reach $2 billion annually by 2050. The monetized benefits of reduced air pollution and avoided climate impacts are significant in the Act on Climate scenario, reaching $2.6 billion in benefits annually by 2050. As a result, the Act on Climate scenario is expected to achieve net benefits for Rhode Island of about $1.3 billion annually by 2050.

Solar array on the rooftop of Rhode Island's Department of Administration building.

WHAT COSTS MORE AND WHAT SAVES MONEY

Taking action on climate change may shift how and where spending takes place in Rhode Island's economy. Under the Act on Climate scenario, some costs are higher than in an approach that does not take any climate action. At the same time, higher levels of electrification and efficiency in the Act on Climate scenario would lead to lower spending in areas that now rely on fossil fuels. The list below highlights the key ways that costs increase or decrease under both the Current Policy and Act on Climate scenarios compared to business as usual.

- **Investments increase** in renewable electricity, electric grid upgrades, and clean heating systems in the Current Policy and Act on Climate scenarios compared to the BAU scenario.
- **Fossil fuel costs decrease** as households, businesses, and drivers use less gas, oil, and gasoline in the Current Policy and Act on Climate scenarios compared to the BAU scenario.
- **Electric vehicles** often save money over time because electricity is cheaper than gasoline, EVs are more efficient, and EVs require less maintenance.
- **Heat pumps** cost more upfront than furnaces but save on fuel and improve comfort. Rebates and rate reforms can make them more affordable.
- **Health benefits** come from cleaner air and fewer asthma attacks or heart-related hospital visits in the Current Policy and Act on Climate scenarios compared to the BAU scenario.

HOW CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AFFECTS HOUSEHOLDS

The study also looked at what this transition means for Rhode Islanders' wallets:

- **Oil users** tend to save money by switching to heat pumps because electricity costs less than oil heating and heat pumps are more efficient than oil furnaces and boilers
- **Natural gas users** might see higher bills at first, but new rate designs and efficiency upgrades could offset that if pursued in Rhode Island
- **EV drivers** often save hundreds of dollars per year on fuel and maintenance.

Currently, many programs like Clean Heat RI (for home heating) and DRIVE EV (for cars) can reduce upfront costs, and potential new incentive programs could help further reduce upfront equipment costs. Additionally, the upfront cost of some lower emissions technologies, like EVs, is projected to decline over time.

Five turbines from the Block Island off shore wind project. (Adobe Stock Image)

Jobs and Workforce

Rhode Island's transition to cleaner energy will increase demand for technologies like heat pumps, electric vehicles, and renewable energy, all of which require people to manufacture, install, and maintain them. As more of the state's energy use shifts to electricity, the electric grid will need to be expanded and modernized, along with more renewable energy projects to supply it. Together, these changes point to significant future workforce needs across construction, installation, maintenance, and other clean energy industries.

6,600

net jobs created by 2035 as modeled in Act on Climate scenario

To better understand these needs, the strategy analyzed how decarbonization may affect employment. Based on the investment levels in the Act on Climate scenario, the analysis projects a net gain of more than 6,600 jobs by 2035, with the largest growth in offshore wind, construction, and maintenance work. Electricians, construction laborers, and HVAC technicians are expected to see some of the strongest increases. Some occupations, such as automotive attendants, are likely to decline; however, many of these workers have skills that overlap with growing clean energy jobs. With targeted training and upskilling, many workers in declining roles could transition into positions in the clean energy workforce.

Retraining will be especially important for workers whose industries may be disrupted by the transition, including those in fossil fuel–related jobs. Rhode Island stakeholders emphasized the need for supports such as paid training time, wraparound services, and clear communication to help workers feel secure and valued as they move into new roles. Training providers can also help by integrating climate and clean energy technologies directly into traditional trades programs. Expanding this type of training across the state would help ensure that more tradespeople are prepared to install, maintain, and repair the technologies needed for decarbonization.

Peace and Plenty Park in Providence

Public Health Impacts

In addition to reducing GHG emissions, decarbonization efforts can also improve public health. Burning fossil fuels creates air pollutants like fine particles and ozone, which are linked to asthma, heart and lung disease, and premature death. These impacts are often worse in low-income and disadvantaged communities, where exposure is typically higher. As Rhode Island uses less fossil fuel in the modeled scenarios, pollution levels are expected to drop, leading to healthier air and fewer health problems over time.

To estimate these benefits, the state used EPA's COBRA (CO-Benefits Risk Assessment Health Impacts Screening and Mapping Tool) tool, which calculates how changes in emissions affect air quality and health. Both the Current Policy and Act on Climate scenarios show meaningful health improvements by 2050. Because the Act on Climate scenario includes deeper emissions reductions, it produces the largest benefits – including a reduction of thousands of asthma cases. When translated into economic terms, these health benefits are valued at nearly $100 million per year under Current Policy and more than $250 million under the Act on Climate scenario by 2050 compared to BAU.

5,000

avoided asthma cases per year from reduced air pollution as modeled in Act on Climate scenario

$2.6B

annual quantified health (improved air quality) and climate benefits (social costs of GHGs) by 2050 Act on Climate Scenario

Equity at the Center of Rhode Island's Climate Action Strategy

Equity means that everyone, regardless of income, race, or zip code, has the opportunity to benefit from clean energy and protection from climate risks. That includes:

- Affordable access to programs and incentives
- Safer, healthier housing
- Reliable, low-cost transportation options
- Job opportunities in the new green economy
- Protection from displacement as homes are upgraded and improved

Rhode Island is prioritizing thoughtful policy design to ensure decarbonization is equitable and inclusive across the state. A key component of equitable policy design is close coordination with local communities. Meaningful community engagement ensures residents and local organizations have a voice in shaping the clean energy transition. Engaging community voices is also essential for shaping equitable program design. Input from renters, low-income households, and residents of multifamily housing can help tailor incentives, refine outreach strategies, and remove structural barriers to participation.

There are important equity considerations for each of the potential near-term carbon reduction strategies that Rhode Island is considering. For example, maintenance and expansion of energy efficiency programs could prioritize older buildings and offer enhanced incentives for income-eligible households. For initiatives that strive to increase EV adoption, ensuring widespread availability of charging infrastructure, especially in multifamily buildings and rural areas, will be especially important.

Overall, Rhode Island's Climate Action Strategy doesn't just aim to reduce emissions — it strives to do so equitably, ensuring that the transition is fair and inclusive.

VOICES FROM ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITIES

During public engagement, many Rhode Islanders voiced strong support for action — but also concern that policies and strategies must be implemented with communities. Residents emphasized the importance of:

- **Transparency and trust:** Clear communication about how decisions are made
- **Access:** Simple, multilingual application processes for rebates and grants
- **Community leadership:** Partnering with local organizations that know their neighborhoods
- **Tenant protections:** Ensuring building upgrades don't lead to rent hikes or displacement

How Rhode Islanders Can Reduce Carbon Emissions

AT HOME

Save energy: Weatherize your home, install smart thermostats, and switch to LED lighting.

Go electric: Consider a heat pump, electric water heater, or induction stove when replacing old equipment.

Drive cleaner: Explore rebates for electric cars, bikes, or transit passes.

Reduce waste: Buy only what you need, eat what you buy, compost food scraps, and recycle correctly.

IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Join local efforts: Participate in town climate committees, clean-up events, or tree-planting programs.

Support local policies: Encourage your city or town to adopt renewable energy, EV infrastructure, and resilient land-use plans.

Share your voice: Attend public meetings or submit comments when new programs and legislation are proposed.

Stay informed: Follow progress through Rhode Island's climate dashboards and newsletters.

AT WORK OR SCHOOL

Advocate for sustainability: Help your workplace or school adopt energy-saving measures, recycling programs, or green transportation options.

Explore training programs: If you're a student or worker, look into clean-energy career paths — electricians, HVAC technicians, construction specialists, and more.

Support local businesses: Choose products and services from companies that prioritize sustainability.

Conclusion

Rhode Island's 2025 Climate Action Strategy outlines practical options for cutting emissions while supporting equity, affordability, and a fair transition for workers and environmental justice communities. The state has already made meaningful progress through programs such as the Renewable Energy Standard, Clean Heat RI, DRIVE EV, energy efficiency efforts, and major offshore wind investments, and it has successfully met its first Act on Climate target for 2020. Although major federal rollbacks in 2025 have created uncertainty and made clean energy less affordable – disrupting programs like Solar for All, EV tax credits, and residential solar incentives – Rhode Island is committed to moving forward. Modeling shows that the state could be on track to meet the 2030 climate target if current policies are successfully implemented and supportive infrastructure is developed, underscoring the importance of sustained action and creative problem-solving. Achieving a decarbonized future will require careful planning, responsible investment, and strong collaboration across state agencies, businesses, municipalities, nonprofits, and residents. The EC4 looks forward to working with the Governor's Office and legislative leaders to advance the priorities in this Strategy and ensure that Rhode Island continues on a just, affordable, and achievable path to meeting the Act on Climate.