

July/August 2020

COVID-19 and RI Traffic Volumes

At the four-month mark since the visible impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic began to shake the U.S., the Division of Statewide Planning has been monitoring its impact on transportation movement and travel at both a national level and in Rhode Island. Against the backdrop of statewide shutdowns, quarantining, and working from home, the impacts that the pandemic has had on Rhode Island's transportation system have been particularly jarring. With Statewide Planning working to complete our *Congestion Management Plan*, these impacts come at a crucial time for all of us as we determine what the transportation horizon may look like in years to come.

Nationwide at the peak of the pandemic, traffic was at 52% of normal rates, with Rhode Island's low of 46% reached at the beginning of April. On June 25, the nation saw its first day back to pre-pandemic levels observed since the last week of February. While there is still variation from state to state, Rhode Island had bounced back to 99% pre-pandemic traffic levels by the week of June 20 – 26. Currently, Hawaii is still seeing the largest continuous decline in traffic at 57% normal rates (38% at peak low).

Other less-populated states such as South Dakota (144%), Montana (145%), and Wyoming (165%) have seen significant traffic increases as states re-open.

In Rhode Island, trips per person have returned to a pre-pandemic level of 3.65 trips per day, up from 2.65. However, miles per person is still at approximately 32, from a normal of 35 per day (with a peak low of 18). The percentage of people staying home is still holding at 23%, compared to 18% pre-pandemic (peak of 38%). Most telling is the number of work trips per person: Rhode Islanders took 0.75 work trips per day pre-pandemic and, as of June 24, that number had declined and stabilized at 0.46 trips per day since the beginning of April. This is no doubt due to the number of people working from home but may also be the result of people who are unemployed due to COVID-19-related business closures and layoffs.

While the nation is still facing the pandemic and continuing hurdles as we progress through 2020 (and beyond), we will continue to monitor how our roadways are impacted by the long-term effects of COVID-19. As more people return to the workforce, it is vital that the State continue to work on managing congestion through limiting trip distances by shopping locally and enabling employees to work from home. These strategies also help limit the spread of illness through

April 8th, 2020



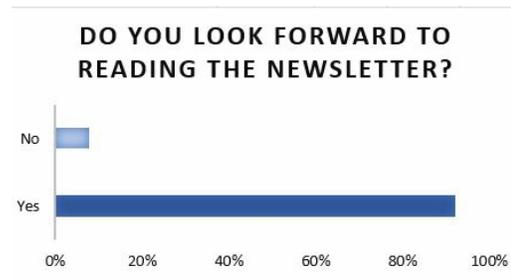
minimizing exposure, while decreased automobile trips help reduce CO2 emissions and improve air quality. As the nation and economy starts to return to normal, it does not mean that travel habits have to as well: making smart decisions to reduce congestion and supporting local businesses will help RI thrive for years to come.

For more information, please contact Mason.Perrone@doa.ri.gov.

U.S. trips per person, at the peak of the pandemic shutdown.

Survey Says!

We asked, and you responded! Over twenty-five percent of newsletter recipients took our survey about the *Plan RI* newsletter, offering great feedback about what they like about it (and what they don't).



What did we learn from respondents?

- Ninety-five percent open the newsletter every time, or almost every time, they receive it
- It's just about the right length
- Three-quarters are likely to recommend it to a colleague
- Most liked feature: planning activities and projects from Statewide Planning and from around the state
- Least liked feature: most people said "none"
- The majority of comments indicated that we are doing a good (or great) job

What we could do better:

- More planning news from around the state
- More articles about the history and past planning accomplishments in Rhode Island to inform both the current and new generations

Surprising:

- Thirteen percent said they most disliked the Photo Trivia (it's just a photo!)
- One person said the font was too small (please buy some reading glasses!)

Thank you to all who participated. If you would like to offer additional feedback about this newsletter, please send it to Roberta.Groch@doa.ri.gov.

Brady's Bulletin

When I think of summer in Rhode Island, I think of Del's lemonade, of festivals and

beaches, of nights spent grilling or gathered at bonfires, of visits with extended family and vacation in other areas of the country (or world). Summer is looking a little different for us all this year, for a variety of reasons. COVID-19 restrictions, there's no state budget in place yet, there's a debate in Washington both about adding our 51st state and about funding for COVID-19 related initiatives, unease, unrest, economic uncertainty. No wonder so many people are on-edge. No wonder I'm on edge. There, I said it! I'm finding myself more stressed, despite my shortened commute; more emotional, despite the limited range of interactions with others; eating more, vacillating about decisions, forgetting to tie up loose ends on a variety of projects. Distracted. Sometimes disheartened.

So I'm not going to write a long column in this summer of physical distancing and social anxiety. I'm going to ask just two things from you:

- Most important of all: be kind to each other. Check to see how your friends, your co-workers, your neighbors, and your community members are doing? Could you bring someone flowers or a little gift card? Could you buy a gift certificate from your favorite local shop that may be struggling, and give it to someone who is having a hard time smiling these days while balancing work and home? How about setting up an appropriately distanced morning coffee stroll in a park, or tailgate coffee in parking lot with friends? This feels very hard for some people, even with the Zoom meetings, webinars, calls, and e-mail discussions.
- Have any great photos of places in Rhode Island? Transportation, construction projects, main streets, people, natural beauty? Willing to let us use them for our website or future publications? Send them to maria.mignanelli@doa.ri.gov and we will be sure to give you a photo credit!

I'm also going to tell you that I'm here if you need to reach out: do you need advice about work, a question answered about planning, or just someone to talk to for a few minutes, about anything at all? E-mail me at meredith.brady@doa.ri.gov or at home at ladybard@verizon.net, or call/text (401) 368-7601.

Upcoming Meetings

Please check the links to see if meetings have been canceled and/or changed.

[Technical Committee](#)

August 7- 9AM via Zoom

[State Planning Council](#)

August 13- 9AM via Zoom

[Transportation Advisory Committee](#)

August 27- 5:30PM via Zoom

All meetings are open to the public. Please click on the links to find out how to attend virtually.

PHOTO TRIVIA

Do you know where in RI this building is located? See the answer, below!



Virtual Events

July 1 [More Than Meets the Eye: Density and Transportation During COVID-19.](#) The impacts of density on the COVID-19 pandemic are currently a concern in public opinion, policy decisions, and planning practice: the assumptions surrounding density challenge will be explored in this webinar. Time: 1:15PM-2PM. Free.

July 7 [Evaluating Road Diets: Recent Research and Case Studies.](#) A road diet, sometimes called a roadway reconfiguration, can improve safety for all users by reducing crash severity and reducing vehicle speeds. Webinar panelists will share recent research and case studies of recently completed projects. Time: 3PM-4:30PM. Free.

July 9 [Preserving Manufacturing in the Covid-19 Economy.](#) The ninth annual John Hazen White Forum on Public Policy will focus on the current manufacturing landscape and what lies ahead. Webinar panelists will examine ways to revitalize and renew growth amid the health and economic crisis. Moderator: Darrell M. West. Time: 10AM-11:30AM.

July 10 [Innovative Financing to Build Market Rate Apartments in Rural Areas.](#) Creating market-rate rental housing in rural areas is challenging. New market-rate apartments cannot achieve rental rates high enough, based on construction and financing costs. This webcast will explore creative financing options. Time: 1PM-2:30PM. 1.5 CM. Free.

July 15 [Team/Group Development and Organizational Self-Assessment.](#) This webinar will focus on how to conduct an equity-focused organizational assessment consistent with the practice of equitable leadership. Time: 11AM (ET). Free.

July 16 [Engaging City Leadership in Equitable Park Access and Quality.](#) An on-going challenge that park professionals face is how to meaningfully engage city leadership in supporting/advocating for equitable park access and quality. This webinar will feature communities that are addressing this challenge. Time: 2PM-3PM. Free.

July 23 [Bite-sized Preservation: Historic Districts 101.](#) This webinar will illuminate the differences between local and national historic districts. Why are districts under local preservation protection and districts on the National Register both called "historic districts?" Time: 12PM-1PM. Free.

July 23 [Ethics for Planners.](#) This session will be an interactive dialogue about ethical principles and guidelines that planners face. It will cover the AICP Code of Ethics and will apply the Code to ethics scenarios. Time: 1PM-2:30PM. 1.5 CM Ethics. Free.

July 29 [A Match Made in Heaven? Integrating Climate Change into Hazard Mitigation Planning.](#) This webinar discusses the opportunities and challenges of climate-smart hazard planning along with ways to effectively merge these two fields. Time: 2PM. Free.

July 29 [The Big Ones: How Natural Disasters Have Shaped Us \(and What We Can Do About Them\).](#) With populations in hazardous regions growing and temperatures around the world rising, the impacts of natural disasters are greater than ever. This is a discussion of the book, which participants are expected to have read. Time: 3PM ET. Free.

July 31 [Designing Green Stormwater Infrastructure.](#) This training is intended for professionals involved with the siting, design, implementation, permitting, and regulation for effective stormwater management using green stormwater infrastructure. Time: 9AM-12PM. Free.

August 4-7 [Walk/Bike/Places Conference](#) "Walk/Bike/Places" strives to be the most informative and progressive active transportation conference in North America.

Produced by Project for Public Spaces, the event consists of nearly 100 participant-led virtual breakout sessions and locally-led workshops. Flat rate: \$250. CM credits available.

Every Wednesday [Grow Smart RI's "Wednesday Webinars"](#) on a variety of topics; part of the 2020 Power of Place Summit. Time: 10AM. Fee: \$10. CM credits are available.

Anytime The [National Recreation and Park Association website](#) has free, on-demand webinars and videos about planning for parks, open space, and recreational facilities.

Grant Opportunities

July 6 [Urban Agriculture and Innovation Production Grant Program](#) deadline. UAIP supports the development of urban agriculture and innovative production activities by funding Planning Projects and Implementation Projects led by nonprofit organizations, local or Tribal governments, and schools in areas of the United States.

July 8 [FY20 FEMA Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program](#) provides funding to build regional capacity to manage catastrophic incidents by improving and expanding collaboration. Applicants should also consider how regional preparedness capabilities may be impacted by a disaster while dealing with an on-going pandemic emergency.

July 10 [North American Wetlands Conservation Act](#) deadline. NAWCA grants increase bird populations and wetland habitat while supporting local economies, hunting, fishing, bird watching, family farming, and ranching through flood control, reducing coastal erosion, and recharging ground water. Standard and Small Grants are available.

August 6 [Our Town grant deadline](#). National Endowment for the Arts' creative place-making grants program supports projects that integrate arts, culture, and design activities into efforts that strengthen communities by advancing local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes.

August 12 [Public Humanities Projects deadline](#). National Endowment for the Humanities supports projects that bring the humanities to life for general audiences. Projects must engage humanities scholarship to analyze themes in history, literature, ethics, and art history.

Planning Articles of Interest

[Narragansett takes steps to limit student rentals](#)

[CRMC to homeowner: Take down the ropes and signs](#)

[Smithfield says no more permanent containers in yards](#)

[New study finds thousands more RI properties at risk of flooding in 100-year storm](#)

[Composting dispute headed for Zoning Board](#)

[Black businesses largely missed out on Opportunity Zone money](#)

Click on staff person's name for their email address:

[Meredith Brady](#), Associate Director
401/222-6496

[Roberta Groch](#), AICP- Assistant Chief
401/222-4720

[Benny Bergantino](#), Principal Planner
401/222-1755

[Nancy Hess](#), Supervising Planner
401/222-6480

[Linsey Callaghan](#), Assistant Chief
401/222-6479

[Benjamin Jacobs](#), Principal Research
Technician
401/222-3949

[Paul Capotosto](#), Fiscal Management Officer
401/222-6170

[Maria Mignanelli](#), Chief Implementation
Aide

[Michael D'Alessandro](#), AICP- Supervising
Planner
401/222-2177

[Kevin Nelson](#), Supervising Planner
401/222-2093

[Christina Delage Baza](#), Data Analyst I
401/222-6481

[Joshua O'Neill](#), AICP- Supervising Planner
401/222-4849

[Vincent Flood](#), Data Analyst II
401/222-1243

[Mason Perrone](#), Principal Planner
401/222-7966

[Kim Gelfuso](#), Information Services
Technician II
401/222-5764

[Catherine Pitassi](#), Executive Assistant
401/222-7901

[Caitlin Greeley](#), Principal Planner
401/222-2848

Water Resources Board staff:
[Kathleen Crawley](#), Acting General Manager

[Paul Gonsalves](#), Principal Planner
401/222-1756

[Timothy Stagnitta](#), Programming Services
Officer

PHOTO TRIVIA ANSWER:
[East Greenwich Town Hall \(1804\)](#)
Photo: Wikipedia