



Post Road Business Alliance

2026 State Candidate Questionnaire Responses

Question 1— Jurisdiction and Collaboration

Post Road is a state road, but our businesses live with the fallout when the town and state can't agree on who is responsible for maintenance and improvements. If elected, what specific steps would you take to get RIDOT and North Kingstown's town government actually coordinating maintenance on Post Road — not just exchanging blame?

Alana DiMario, Rhode Island State Senator, District 36

"First, I would need more information about the specific needs and goals and what efforts have already been undertaken by the town and RIDOT. If there is a need for clarifying legislation to establish responsibility for different aspects of ongoing maintenance, I am open to sponsoring or cosponsoring that legislation. I would also like to review what plans and agreements have happened between other municipalities and RIDOT to address similar issues that could serve as a model for how we move forward on Post Rd. Finally, once goals and needed steps are established I believe having a quarterly meeting of stakeholders to review progress and address barriers would be beneficial."

Sen. Bridget Valverde, Rhode Island State Senator, District 35

"From a legislative perspective, clarity in our state laws around various parties' roles and responsibilities when it comes to maintenance on state roads could help prevent conflict. This past legislative session, I supported a bill (S. 2042) that clarified that all sidewalk maintenance on state highways is the responsibility of the state with the exception of snow removal. This bill passed in the Senate, but not the House. Legislation like this could potentially go further in specifying whether the town or the abutting property owners are responsible for snow removal, which, if I recall correctly, was a point of contention this past winter. I will gladly take feedback from town officials and local businesses on ways I can support providing additional clarity in our state law. RIDOT is currently without a permanent director following the retirement of Director Alviti this past winter. When a new RIDOT director is appointed by the new governor in January I will be happy to facilitate an introductory meeting and conversation with town officials, business leaders and RIDOT if all parties are willing to do so."

Robert Craven, Jr., Democratic Nominee for State Representative, District 32

"A strong relationship with DOT leadership is crucial to intergovernmental cooperation. As state representative, I intend to be a liaison between the town and DOT to (1) ensure municipal needs are met and projects are completed on time, and (2) ensure the town - and therefore businesses - receive advance notice of roadwork. Post Road must remain a visible priority for whoever is to lead DOT under the incoming administration. Further, legislative models in other states such as Oregon establish a framework for mandatory intergovernmental road maintenance agreements. Such agreements can increase intergovernmental communications before projects proceed, and provide a municipality with increased input over maintenance on state roadways."

James C. Sheehan, Candidate, Rhode Island House of Representatives

"I would work to bring RIDOT and North Kingstown officials together to clearly identify their respective responsibilities and agree upon specific priorities for Post Road. Where possible, I would encourage those commitments to be put in writing, with clear timelines and accountability. I would also support a regular Post Road priority list identifying needed improvements, the responsible agency, potential funding sources, and project status. As State Representative, I would work with state agencies, the Town, and the business community so jurisdictional disagreements do not delay needed improvements."

Question 2 — The Legislative Grant

Our previous efforts secured legislative grants for Post Road beautification via Reps. Casimiro and Craven. Will you commit to securing continued or increased state funding for Post Road improvements?

Alana DiMario, Rhode Island State Senator, District 36

"Legislative grant approval is at the discretion of Senate leadership, however I will commit to applying for a grant."

Sen. Bridget Valverde, Rhode Island State Senator, District 35

"Yes, with the caveat that state discretionary expenditures are likely to be very constrained this coming fiscal year due to the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funding to RI as a result of HR1 (The One Big Beautiful Bill Act)."

Robert Craven, Jr., Democratic Nominee for State Representative

"Yes. Post Road improvement funds were a priority for Representatives Casimiro and Craven, Sr. and - as your state representative - I will remain a priority. As Director of Policy and Intergovernmental Affairs for the General Treasurer, I work every day with members of both chambers, the Department of Transportation, and the Commerce Corporation, the offices that allocate the funds we need to reshape Post Road. I will use those relationships to defend the funding North Kingstown currently receives, make the case for more, and ensure Post Road projects are ready to compete when additional resources become available."

James C. Sheehan, Candidate, Rhode Island House of Representatives

"I would first like to review the purpose, amount, and results of previous legislative grants to determine what has worked and where additional resources are most needed. After doing so, I would be willing to advocate for continued state funding for worthwhile Post Road revitalization projects. Potential general priorities could include beautification, sidewalks, landscaped buffers and appropriate street trees, safer crosswalks, façade-improvement grants, sewer infrastructure (town investment), blight elimination (town investment), and other improvements that attract businesses, customers, residents, and private investment."

Question 3 — Economic Development

Strategy Beyond one-time grants, would you support creating long-term economic development incentives specifically for the Post Road corridor? For example, would you support pursuing programs such as a state Main Street or commercial revitalization designation, an Opportunity Zone, or Tax Increment Financing (TIF)? Which approach do you believe would be most realistic and beneficial for Post Road, and why?

Alana DiMario, Rhode Island State Senator, District 36

"I am open to pursuing any strategies that help meet the goals of Post Road revitalization, whether it is inclusion in an existing program like the Main Street America initiative or creating a new opportunity. I would like to understand more about the ultimate vision for Post Road, or if there is a need for assistance in establishing a plan for revitalization."

Sen. Bridget Valverde, Rhode Island State Senator, District 35

"I would really like to learn more about the goals and vision that PRBA has for improvements and revitalization along the Post Road Corridor as a starting point. It's hard to say what program(s) would best serve your needs without having that conversation first. I am of course open to discussing and exploring all possibilities in partnership with state and federal officials as needed."

Robert Craven, Jr., Democratic Nominee for State Representative

"Yes. To transform the Post Road corridor, North Kingstown needs sustained investment. The most realistic path is the state Main Street Program. Over the past two years, I worked with Representative Handy and Senator Urso to help secure nearly \$300,000 to revitalize downtown corridors like Post Road. These programs - currently in the pilot phase in Rhode Island - have proven their ability to reshape downtown districts and reinvigorate local economies. Rhode Island should scale this program beyond the pilot phase and make a real, sustained investment. I would also support a TIF model for streetscape improvements. However, it is unclear Post Road would qualify under the state TIF program as it is currently constituted. I would support a cooperative effort with municipal leaders to create a local TIF program to fund targeted renewal, but it depends on a growing tax base and works best alongside a program like Main Street. An Opportunity Zone is the least feasible, since commercial redevelopment is outside the scope of that federal program. Though not mentioned in the prompt, designation as a state Enterprise Zone is feasible, would help spur economic development, and is an initiative I would support."

James C. Sheehan, Candidate, Rhode Island House of Representatives

"I support exploring long-term economic-development tools for Post Road rather than relying exclusively on one-time grants. I would work with the Alliance, Town, Commerce RI, and other agencies to identify available state and federal economic-development incentives and determine which are best suited to the corridor. I would also explore façade and property-improvement grants, rehabilitation of vacant or underutilized properties, blight-removal assistance, parklets and temporary art spaces, and incentives for private investment. Sewer expansion and other infrastructure improvements should also be examined to determine whether they could help unlock appropriate redevelopment opportunities. Where supported by the Town, selected underutilized commercial properties might offer opportunities for mixed-use redevelopment combining housing with retail or commercial space."

Question 4 — Vision/Commitment

Do you have any unique and specific plans you can introduce and champion that would help our mission? Will you commit to helping us by meeting quarterly with our Board to discuss your efforts and work in collaboration with us? Do you have any other ideas that will be relevant to our mission?

Alana DiMario, Rhode Island State Senator, District 36

"I would be very interested in meeting regularly with your board to understand the mission and assist in executing it from my role in the State House. I am interested in looking both at examples of where successful revitalization in similar areas has happened both in Rhode Island and elsewhere to gain insight into what steps are needed for successful execution of a similar plan for Post Road."

Sen. Bridget Valverde, Rhode Island State Senator, District 35

"I am very open to meeting with your Board and members anytime to learn more about your struggles, successes and ideas so we can strategize together. My family and I are frequent patrons of many Post Rd businesses, and as a lover of shopping local, I am very interested in supporting current and future efforts to improve the experience of the corridor for both residents and businesses in town. One piece of legislation you might find relevant to your mission is a bill I have been working on in partnership with Local Return to provide tax credits for investments in local small businesses. I would love to discuss the bill (S. 2833) with your board to see if there is an interest in joining the advocacy effort and helping to inform improvements to the legislation."

Robert Craven, Jr., Democratic Nominee for State Representative, District 32

"My most specific proposal is a Rhode Island version of the Massachusetts Vacant Storefront Program, which gives municipalities access to up to \$50,000 in refundable state tax credits to attract businesses into long-vacant storefronts, with individual businesses eligible for up to \$10,000. Post Road has vacant plots and struggling strip malls along both sides, and this gives a town a targeted incentive to bring businesses back to them. I am prepared to work with the Board and the Town to develop and sponsor such legislation. I also commit to meeting with the Board at least quarterly to share my progress, hear your priorities, and work with you on solutions."

James C. Sheehan, Candidate, Rhode Island House of Representatives

"I would be an advocate and partner for the Post Road business community at the State House—helping secure resources, bringing state and Town officials together, and supporting initiatives that strengthen Post Road and the North End. One idea I would like to explore is a Post Road Revitalization Action Plan establishing short-, medium-, and long-term priorities and identifying responsibility and potential funding for each. An initial step could be a Post Road walk-through with Alliance members, Town officials, and RIDOT to identify specific problem areas and opportunities firsthand. Priorities could include the aforementioned ideas in response # 3. My direct authority over local planning and land-use decisions would be more limited than that of Town officials, but I can help pursue state resources and work with RIDOT, Commerce RI, and other agencies. I would also work to ensure that state decisions involving Quonset consider their impacts on Post Road and the North End, including traffic, infrastructure, businesses, neighborhoods, and quality of life. Stopping the proposed sewage sludge plant is my top concern. Finally, I would be pleased to meet periodically with the Post Road Business Alliance Board and, when useful, jointly with Town officials, the Chamber of Commerce, and state agencies. The North End has considerable economic potential but needs sustained attention and investment. I would work with the Alliance to identify realistic priorities and help connect those priorities with the appropriate state agencies, programs, and funding opportunities."