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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

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A N A C T

RELATING TO MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES -- DEFINITIONS AND GENERAL CODE PROVISIONS

Introduced By: Representatives Boylan, Furtado, Potter, Serpa, Speakman, Kazarian, Caldwell, Tanzi, and Handy

Date Introduced: February 12, 2026

Referred To: House State Government & Elections

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 31-1-3 of the General Laws in Chapter 31-1 entitled "Definitions and
2 General Code Provisions" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **31-1-3. Types of vehicles.**

4 (a)(1) "Antique motor car" means any motor vehicle that is more than twenty-five (25)
5 years old. Unless fully inspected and meeting inspection requirements, the vehicle may be
6 maintained solely for use in exhibitions, club activities, parades, and other functions of public
7 interest. The vehicle may also be used for limited enjoyment and purposes other than the previously
8 mentioned activities, but may not be used primarily for the transportation of passengers or goods
9 over any public highway.

10 (2) After the vehicle has met the requirements of state inspection, a registration plate may
11 be issued to it on payment of the standard fee. The vehicle may be operated on the highways of this
12 and other states, and may, in addition to the registration plate, retain the designation "antique" and
13 display an "antique plate."

14 (3) For any vehicle that is more than twenty-five (25) years old, the division of motor
15 vehicles may also issue or approve, subject to rules and regulations that may be promulgated by
16 the administrator, a "year of manufacture plate" for the vehicle that is an exact replica plate
17 designating the exact year of manufacture of the vehicle. The year of manufacture plate, as
18 authorized by this subsection, need only be attached to the rear of the vehicle.

1 (b)(1) “Antique motorcycle” means any motorcycle that is more than twenty-five (25)
2 years old. Unless fully inspected and meeting inspection requirements, the vehicle shall be
3 maintained solely for use in exhibitions, club activities, parades, and other functions of public
4 interest. The vehicle may also be used for limited enjoyment and purposes other than the previously
5 mentioned activities, but may not be used primarily for the transportation of passengers or goods
6 over any public highway; and

7 (2) After the vehicle has met the requirements of state inspection, a registration plate may
8 be issued to it, on payment of the standard fee, and the vehicle may be operated on the highways
9 of this and other states, and may, in addition to the registration plate, retain the designation
10 “antique” and display an “antique plate.”

11 (c) “Authorized emergency vehicle” means vehicles of the fire department (fire patrol);
12 police vehicles; vehicles of the department of corrections while in the performance of official
13 duties; vehicles used by the state bomb squad within the office of state fire marshal; vehicles of
14 municipal departments or public service corporations designated or authorized by the administrator
15 as ambulances and emergency vehicles; and privately owned motor vehicles of volunteer
16 firefighters or privately owned motor vehicles of volunteer ambulance drivers or attendants, as
17 authorized by the department chief or commander and permitted by the Rhode Island Association
18 of Fire Chiefs and Rhode Island Association of Police Chiefs Joint Committee for Volunteer
19 Warning Light Permits.

20 (d) “Automobile” means, for registration purposes, every motor vehicle carrying
21 passengers other than for hire.

22 (e) “Bicycle” means every vehicle having two (2) tandem wheels, except scooters and
23 similar devices, propelled exclusively by human power, and upon which a person may ride.

24 (f) “Camping recreational vehicle” means a vehicular type camping unit, certified by the
25 manufacturer as complying with ANSI A119.2 Standards, designed primarily as temporary living
26 quarters for recreation that has either its own motor power or is mounted on, or towed by, another
27 vehicle. The basic units are tent trailers, fifth-wheel trailers, motorized campers, travel trailers, and
28 pick-up campers.

29 (g) “Electric motorized bicycle”, also called an “electric bicycle”, as defined in § 31-19.7-
30 1, means a two-wheel (2) vehicle that may be propelled by human power or electric motor power,
31 or by both, with an electric motor rated not more than two (2) (S.A.E.) horsepower, that is capable
32 of a maximum speed of not more than twenty-eight miles per hour (28 m.p.h.), and are permitted
33 to be operated on state, municipal roads, or highways in this state by a person sixteen (16) years of
34 age or older pursuant to § 31-19.1-1 and are not required to be registered under chapter 3 of this

1 [title](#).

2 (h) “Electric personal assistive mobility device” (“EPAMD”) is a self-balancing, non-
3 tandem two-wheeled (2) device, designed to transport only one person, with an electric propulsion
4 system that limits the maximum speed of the device to fifteen miles per hour (15 m.p.h.), [and are](#)
5 [permitted to be operated on state, municipal roads, or highways in this state by a person sixteen](#)
6 [\(16\) years of age or older pursuant to § 31-10.1-1 and are not required to be registered under chapter](#)
7 [3 of this title](#).

8 (i) “Fifth-wheel trailer”: A towable recreational vehicle, not exceeding four hundred (400)
9 square feet in area, designed to be towed by a motorized vehicle that contains a towing mechanism
10 that is mounted above or forward of the tow vehicle’s rear axle and that is eligible to be registered
11 for highway use.

12 (j) “Hearse” means every motor vehicle used for transporting human corpses. A hearse
13 shall be considered an automobile for registration purposes.

14 (k) “Jitney or bus” means: (1) A “public bus” that includes every motor vehicle, trailer,
15 semi-trailer, tractor trailer, or tractor trailer combination, used for the transportation of passengers
16 for hire, and operated wholly or in part upon any street or highway as a means of transportation
17 similar to that afforded by a street railway company, by indiscriminately receiving or discharging
18 passengers, or running on a regular route or over any portion of one, or between fixed termini; or
19 (2) A “private bus” that includes every motor vehicle other than a public bus or passenger van
20 designed for carrying more than ten (10) passengers and used for the transportation of persons, and
21 every motor vehicle other than a taxicab designed and used for the transportation of persons for
22 compensation.

23 (l) “Kei car” or “Kei truck” means every motor vehicle of the keijidōsha class of imported
24 vehicles, including, but not limited to, mini-trucks, microvans, and Kei cars imported pursuant to
25 49 U.S.C. § 30112(b)(9), having four (4) wheels, an engine displacement of six hundred sixty cubic
26 centimeters (660 cc) or less, an overall length of one hundred thirty inches (130”) or less, an overall
27 height of seventy-eight inches (78”) or less, and an overall width of sixty inches (60”) or less.

28 (m) “Low-speed motor vehicle” or “low-speed vehicle” means a motor vehicle defined in
29 49 C.F.R. § 571.3 as a vehicle that is four (4) wheeled, whose speed attainable in one mile is more
30 than twenty miles per hour (20 m.p.h.) and not more than twenty-five miles per hour (25 m.p.h.)
31 on a paved level surface, is electric, and whose gross vehicle weight rating is less than three
32 thousand pounds (3,000 lbs.). All low-speed motor vehicles shall comply with the standards
33 established in 49 C.F.R. § 571.500, as amended, and pursuant thereto, shall be equipped with
34 headlamps, front and rear turn signal lamps, tail lamps, stop lamps, an exterior mirror mounted on

1 the driver's side of the vehicle and either an exterior mirror mounted on the passenger's side of the
2 vehicle or an interior mirror, a parking brake, a windshield that conforms to the federal standards
3 on glazing materials, a vehicle identification number that conforms to the requirements of 49 C.F.R.
4 pt. 565 for such numbers, a Type 1 or Type 2 seat belt assembly conforming to 49 C.F.R. § 571.209,
5 installed at each designated seating position, and reflex reflectors; provided, that one reflector is
6 red on each side as far to the rear as practicable and one reflector is red on the rear. A low-speed
7 motor vehicle that meets the requirements of 49 C.F.R. § 571.500, as amended, and is equipped as
8 herein provided, may be registered in this state, subject to inspection and insurance requirements.

9 (n) "Motorcycle" means ~~only those motor vehicles having not more than three (3) wheels~~
10 ~~in contact with the ground and a saddle on which the driver sits astride, except bicycles with helper~~
11 ~~motors as defined in subsection (p) of this section~~ a two (2) or three (3) wheeled self-propelled
12 vehicle designed for use on public roads and highways and displaces in excess of fifty cubic
13 centimeters (50 cc) or four and nine-tenths horsepower (4.9 hp).

14 (o) "Motor-driven cycle" means every motorcycle, including every motor scooter, with a
15 motor of no greater than five (5) horsepower, except bicycles with helper motors as defined in
16 subsection (p) of this section.

17 (p) "Motorized bicycles" means two-wheel (2) vehicles that may be propelled by human
18 power or helper power, or by both, with a motor rated not more than four and nine-tenths (4.9)
19 horsepower and not greater than fifty cubic centimeters (50 cc), that are capable of a maximum
20 speed of not more than thirty miles per hour (30 m.p.h.).

21 (q) "Motorized camper": A camping recreational vehicle, built on, or permanently attached
22 to, a self-propelled motor vehicle chassis cab or van that is an integral part of the completed vehicle.

23 (r) "Motorized skateboard" means every vehicle regardless of the number of its wheels in
24 contact with the ground, that:

25 (1) Is designed to allow an operator to stand;

26 (2) Is powered in whole or in part by an electric motor;

27 (3) Weighs less than one hundred pounds (100 lbs.); and

28 (4) Has a speed of not more than twenty miles per hour (20 mph) on a paved level surface
29 when powered solely by the electric motor.

30 ~~(s)~~ (s) "Motorized tricycles" means tricycles that may be propelled by human power or
31 helper motor, or by both, with a motor rated no more than 1.5 brake horsepower that is capable of
32 a maximum speed of not more than thirty miles per hour (30 m.p.h.).

33 ~~(t)~~ (t) "Motorized wheelchair" means any self-propelled vehicle, designed for, and used by,
34 a person with a disability that is incapable of speed in excess of eight miles per hour (8 m.p.h.).

1 ~~(t)~~(u) “Motor scooter” means a ~~motor driven cycle with a motor rated not more than four~~
2 ~~and nine tenths (4.9) horsepower and not greater than fifty cubic centimeters (50 cc) that is capable~~
3 ~~of a maximum speed of not more than thirty miles per hour (30 m.p.h.)~~ gasoline powered motor-
4 driven cycle with a motor rated not more than four and nine-tenths horsepower (4.9 hp) and not
5 greater than fifty cubic centimeters (50 cc) that is capable of a maximum speed of not more than
6 thirty miles per hour (30 mph) or propelled by an electric motor that has a speed of not more than
7 thirty miles per hour (30 mph) and is not required to be registered pursuant to § 31-3-2.2.

8 ~~(s)~~(v) “Motor vehicle” means every vehicle that is self-propelled or propelled by electric
9 power obtained from overhead trolley wires, but not operated upon rails, except vehicles moved
10 exclusively by human power, an EPAMD and electric motorized bicycles as defined in ~~subsection~~
11 subsections (g) and (h) of this section, and motorized wheelchairs.

12 ~~(r)~~(w) “Motor vehicle for hire” means every motor vehicle other than jitneys, public buses,
13 hearses, and motor vehicles used chiefly in connection with the conduct of funerals, to transport
14 persons for compensation in any form, or motor vehicles rented for transporting persons either with
15 or without furnishing an operator.

16 ~~(q)~~(x) “Natural gas vehicle” means a vehicle operated by an engine fueled primarily by
17 natural gas.

18 ~~(p)~~(y) “Park trailer”: A camping recreational vehicle that is eligible to be registered for
19 highway use and meets the following criteria: (1) Built on a single chassis mounted on wheels; and
20 (2) Certified by the manufacturer as complying with ANSI A119.5.

21 ~~(o)~~(z) “Passenger van” means every motor vehicle capable of carrying ten (10) to fourteen
22 (14) passengers plus an operator and used for personal use or on a not-for-hire basis. Passenger
23 vans may be used for vanpools, transporting passengers to and from work locations, provided that
24 the operator receives no remuneration other than free use of the vehicle.

25 ~~(n)~~(aa) “Pedal carriage” (also known as “quadricycles”) means a nonmotorized bicycle
26 with four (4) or more wheels operated by one or more persons for the purpose of, or capable of,
27 transporting additional passengers in seats or on a platform made a part of or otherwise attached to
28 the pedal carriage. The term shall not include a bicycle with trainer or beginner wheels affixed to
29 it, nor shall it include a wheelchair or other vehicle with the purpose of operation by or for the
30 transportation of a person with a disability, nor shall it include a tricycle built for a child or an adult
31 with a seat for only one operator and no passenger.

32 ~~(m)~~(bb) “Pick-up camper”: A camping recreational vehicle consisting of a roof, floor, and
33 sides designed to be loaded onto and unloaded from the back of a pick-up truck.

34 ~~(l)~~(cc) “Rickshaw” (also known as “pedi cab”) means a nonmotorized bicycle with three

1 (3) wheels operated by one person for the purpose of, or capable of, transporting additional
2 passengers in seats or on a platform made a part of, or otherwise attached to, the rickshaw. This
3 definition shall not include a bicycle built for two (2) where the operators are seated one behind the
4 other, nor shall it include the operation of a bicycle with trainer or beginner wheels affixed thereto,
5 nor shall it include a wheelchair or other vehicle with the purpose of operation by or for the
6 transportation of a person with a disability.

7 ~~(ee)~~(dd) "School bus" means every motor vehicle owned by a public or governmental
8 agency, when operated for the transportation of children to or from school; or privately owned,
9 when operated for compensation for the transportation of children to or from school.

10 ~~(dd)~~(ee) "Suburban vehicle" means every motor vehicle with a convertible or
11 interchangeable body or with removable seats, usable for both passenger and delivery purposes,
12 and including motor vehicles commonly known as station or depot wagons or any vehicle into
13 which access can be gained through the rear by means of a hatch or trunk and where the rear seats
14 can be folded down to permit the carrying of articles as well as passengers.

15 ~~(ee)~~(ff) "Tent trailer": A towable recreational vehicle that is mounted on wheels and
16 constructed with collapsible partial side walls that fold for towing by another vehicle and unfold
17 for use and that is eligible to be registered for highway use.

18 ~~(ff)~~(gg) "Trackless trolley coach" means every motor vehicle that is propelled by electric
19 power obtained from overhead trolley wires, but not operated on rails.

20 ~~(gg)~~(hh) "Travel trailer": A towable recreational vehicle, not exceeding three hundred
21 twenty square feet (320 sq. ft.) in area, designed to be towed by a motorized vehicle containing a
22 towing mechanism that is mounted behind the tow vehicle's bumper and that is eligible to be
23 registered for highway use.

24 ~~(hh)~~(ii) "Vehicle" means every device in, upon, or by which any person or property is or
25 may be transported or drawn upon a highway, except devices used exclusively upon stationary rails
26 or tracks.

27 SECTION 2. Sections 31-3-2 and 31-3-2.2 of the General Laws in Chapter 31-3 entitled
28 "Registration of Vehicles" are hereby amended to read as follows:

29 **31-3-2. Vehicles subject to registration.**

30 Every motor vehicle, trailer, semi-trailer, pole trailer, motorized camper, tent trailer, travel
31 trailer, pick-up coach, and pick-up camper, owned by a resident of this state when operated or
32 drawn upon a highway within this state for a period of thirty (30) days, shall be subject to the
33 registration provisions of chapters 3 — 9 of this title except:

34 (1) Any vehicle operated upon a highway in conformance with the provisions of the

1 chapters relating to manufacturers, transporters, dealers, lien holders, or nonresidents;

2 (2) Any vehicle that is operated upon a highway only for the purpose of crossing the
3 highway but not along the highway from one property to another;

4 (3) Any farm vehicle, whether or not of a type otherwise subject to registration under this
5 chapter, that is only incidentally operated upon a highway. For purposes of this title, the phrase
6 “incidentally operated upon a highway” shall mean the operation upon a highway of a slow-moving
7 motor vehicle that is designed and used primarily as a farm implement for drawing plows, mowing
8 machines, and other implements of husbandry, between agricultural operations owned or managed
9 by the owner of the motor vehicle. Unless the incidental operation is only for purposes of crossing
10 the highway but not traveling along it, the farm vehicle engaged in the incidental operation shall
11 display a “Slow Moving Vehicle” emblem in a manner that complies with requirements established
12 by the division of motor vehicles;

13 (4) Any special mobile equipment as defined in § 31-1-9;

14 (5) Any vehicle that is propelled exclusively by electric power obtained from overhead
15 trolley wires, though not operated upon rails;

16 (6) Any low-speed motor vehicle or low-speed vehicle as defined in § 31-1-3;

17 [\(7\) Any electric motorized bicycle exempt pursuant to § 31-3-2.2;](#)

18 [\(8\) An electric personal assistive mobility device \(“EPAMD”\) exempt pursuant to § 31-3-](#)
19 [2.2.](#)

20 **31-3-2.2. Registration of motorcycles, motorized bicycles, and motorized tricycles.**

21 (a) Every motorcycle, motorized bicycle, and motorized tricycle owned by a resident of
22 this state shall be subject to the registration provisions of chapters 3 — 9 of this title whether the
23 motorcycle, motorized bicycle, or motorized tricycle is operated or drawn upon a highway within
24 this state or upon private property. An electric personal assistive mobility device (“EPAMD”) and
25 electric motorized bicycles shall not be required to register under this chapter; provided, however,
26 that an EPAMD and/or electric motorized bicycles shall not be operated in this state by a person
27 under the age of sixteen (16) years [pursuant to §§ 31-1-3\(g\) and 31-1-3\(h\).](#)

28 (b) Notwithstanding any general law to the contrary, cities and towns are empowered to
29 enact ordinances that permit the use and regulation of electric personal assistive mobility devices
30 (“EPAMD”).

31 SECTION 3. Section 31-10.1-1 of the General Laws in Chapter 31-10.1 entitled "Special
32 Licenses for Motorcycles, Motor Scooters, Low-Speed Vehicles and Other Motor Driven Cycles"
33 is hereby amended to read as follows:

34 **31-10.1-1. License required.**

1 (a) No resident of this state, except those expressly exempted in this chapter, shall drive
2 any two-wheeled (2) motorcycle or motor-driven cycle upon a highway in this state, unless the
3 person shall first obtain a special license as an operator under the provisions of this chapter;
4 provided, however, motorized bicycles and motor scooters with a motor rated not more than four
5 and nine-tenths horsepower (4.9 h.p.) and not greater than fifty cubic centimeters (50 cc), which is
6 capable of a maximum speed of not more than thirty miles per hour (30 m.p.h.), shall be exempt
7 from the provisions of this section. No person shall be licensed pursuant to this chapter unless he
8 or she shall be at least sixteen (16) years of age or unless the person previously has been issued a
9 full operator's license or a limited provisional license and has satisfied the requirements of § 31-
10 10.1-3(a), [has the required equipment pursuant to § 31-10.1-4](#), or is already licensed under a prior
11 act of this state. Any person under the age of eighteen (18) duly licensed under the prior act shall
12 be eligible to have his or her license renewed in the same manner as persons over the age of eighteen
13 (18). All licenses issued pursuant to this chapter shall reflect any requirement of the operator to
14 wear a helmet pursuant to § 31-10.1-4.

15 (b) No resident of this state, except those expressly exempted in this chapter, shall drive
16 any three-wheeled (3) motorcycle or motor-driven cycle upon a highway in this state, unless the
17 person shall first obtain a special license as an operator under the provisions of this chapter;
18 provided, however, motorized bicycles and motor scooters with a motor rated not more than four
19 and nine-tenths horsepower (4.9 h.p.) and not greater than fifty cubic centimeters (50 cc), which is
20 capable of a maximum speed of not more than thirty miles per hour (30 m.p.h.), shall be exempt
21 from the provisions of this section. No person shall be licensed pursuant to this chapter unless he
22 or she shall be at least sixteen (16) years of age or unless the person previously has been issued a
23 full operator's license or a limited provisional license and has satisfied the requirements of § 31-
24 10.1-3(b) or is already licensed under a prior act of this state. Any person under the age of eighteen
25 (18) years duly licensed under the prior act shall be eligible to have their license renewed in the
26 same manner as persons over the age of eighteen (18) years. All licenses issued pursuant to this
27 chapter shall reflect any requirement of the operator to wear a helmet pursuant to § 31-10.1-4.

28 (c) Any person currently licensed pursuant to this chapter, prior to March 1, 2022, shall
29 continue to be permitted to operate both two-wheeled (2) and three-wheeled (3) motorcycles and
30 motor-driven cycles without further examination.

31 (d) The holder of a special license as an operator under the provisions of this chapter who
32 has a limited provisional license may drive the motorcycle only at times when the license holder
33 could drive a motor vehicle without supervision pursuant to § 31-10-6.

34 SECTION 4. Section 31-19.7-1 of the General Laws in Chapter 31-19.7 entitled "Electric

1 Bicycles" is hereby amended to read as follows:

2 **31-19.7-1. Classes.**

3 (a) There shall be ~~three (3)~~ four (4) classes of electric bicycles:

4 (1) Class 1: Bicycle equipped with an electric motor that provides assistance only when the
5 rider is pedaling, and that ceases to provide assistance when the electric bicycle reaches twenty
6 miles per hour (20 m.p.h.).

7 (2) Class 2: Bicycle equipped with a throttle-actuated electric motor that ceases to provide
8 assistance when the electric bicycle reaches twenty miles per hour (20 m.p.h.).

9 (3) Class 3: Bicycle equipped with an electric motor that provides assistance only when the
10 rider is pedaling, and that ceases to provide assistance when the electric bicycle reaches twenty-
11 eight miles per hour (28 m.p.h.).

12 (4) Class 4: Bicycle equipped with an electric motor exceeding seven hundred fifty watts
13 (750W) and a top assisted speed over twenty-eight miles per hour (28 mph). Provided, class 4
14 bicycles shall be also be deemed to be a "recreational vehicle" as defined in chapter 3.2 of title 31
15 ("snowmobiles and recreational vehicles") and subject to the same operation, rules, and regulations
16 pertaining to recreational vehicles provided for in that chapter.

17 (b) All businesses that sell electric bicycles in Rhode Island shall prominently display
18 provisions and restrictions of state law regulating electric bicycles.

19 (c) The Rhode Island office of energy resources shall notify electric bicycle rebate
20 recipients of applicable state laws regarding electric bicycles.

21 SECTION 5. Chapter 31-19.7 of the General Laws entitled "Electric Bicycles" is hereby
22 amended by adding thereto the following section:

23 **31-19.7-4. Notice of state laws, rules, and regulations.**

24 (a) All businesses that sell electric bicycles in Rhode Island shall prominently display
25 provisions and restrictions of state law regulating electric bicycles.

26 (b) The office of energy resources shall notify electric bicycle rebate recipients of
27 applicable state laws regarding electric bicycles, including but not limited to the provisions of this
28 chapter and any regulations promulgated pursuant to this chapter.

29 SECTION 6. Section 31-22-30 of the General Laws in Chapter 31-22 entitled
30 "Miscellaneous Rules" is hereby amended to read as follows:

31 **31-22-30. Distracted driving prohibited while operating a motor vehicle.**

32 (a) For purposes of this section, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

33 (1) "Driving" means operating a motor vehicle on a public road, including operation while
34 temporarily stationary because of traffic, a traffic light or stop sign, or otherwise, but does not

1 include operating a motor vehicle when the vehicle has pulled over to the side of, or off, an active
2 roadway and has stopped in a location where it can safely remain stationary.

3 (2) “Hands free” means the manner in which a wireless handset is operated by using an
4 internal feature or function, or through an attachment or addition, including, but not limited to, an
5 earpiece, headset, remote microphone, or short-range wireless connection, thereby allowing the
6 user to operate said device without the use of hands, except to activate, deactivate, or initiate a
7 feature or function thereof.

8 (3) “Inoperability” means a motor vehicle that is incapable of being operated or being
9 operated in a safe and prudent manner due to mechanical failure, including, but not limited to,
10 engine overheating or tire failure.

11 (4) “Motor vehicle” means any vehicle that is self-propelled by a motor, including, but not
12 limited to: automobiles, trucks, vans, construction vehicles, etc.: provided, for provisions of this
13 section only, the term “motor vehicle” also includes electric bicycles, electric motorize bicycles,
14 electric-powered motor scooters, motorized skateboards, and electric personal assistive mobility
15 devices as defined §31-1-3.

16 (5) “Person” means any natural person, corporation, unincorporated association, firm,
17 partnership, joint venture, joint stock association, or other entity or business organization of any
18 kind.

19 (6) “Personal wireless communication device” means a hand-held device through which
20 personal wireless services (commercial mobile services, unlicensed wireless services, and common
21 carrier wireless exchange access services) are transmitted, but does not include a global navigation
22 satellite receiver used for positioning, emergency notification, or navigation purposes.

23 (7) “Stopped” means not in motion.

24 (8) “Text message,” also referred to as short messaging service (SMS), means the process
25 by which users send, read, or receive messages on a wireless handset, including text messages,
26 instant messages, electronic messages, or e-mails, in order to communicate with any person or
27 device.

28 (9) [Deleted by P.L. 2025, ch. 401, § 1 and P.L. 2025, ch. 402, § 1.]

29 (10) “Wireless handset” means a portable electronic or computing device, including mobile
30 devices and personal digital assistants (PDAs), capable of transmitting data.

31 (b) No person shall use a wireless handset or personal wireless communication device to
32 compose, read, or send text messages, or for any other purpose while driving a motor vehicle on
33 any public street or public highway within the state of Rhode Island except for:

34 (1) Any law enforcement, public safety or police officers, emergency services officials,

1 first aid, emergency medical technicians and personnel, and fire safety officials in the performance
2 of duties arising out of, and in the course of, their employment as such;

3 (2) A person using a wireless handset to contact an individual listed in subsection (b)(1);

4 (3) A person using a wireless handset or personal wireless communication device inside a
5 motor vehicle while such motor vehicle is parked, standing, or stopped and is removed from the
6 flow of traffic, in accordance with applicable laws, rules, or ordinances, or is stopped due to the
7 inoperability of such motor vehicle;

8 (4) A person activating, viewing, or deactivating a global positioning or navigation device
9 or a global positioning or navigation application while the handset is mounted or otherwise affixed
10 to the vehicle to allow for hands-free operation; or

11 (5) The use of a personal wireless communication device in a hands-free manner, with a
12 hands-free accessory, or with the activation or deactivation of a feature or function of the personal
13 wireless communication device with the motion of a single swipe or tap of the finger of the driver.

14 (c) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit a person driving a motor vehicle
15 from utilizing a hands-free wireless handset.

16 The nonemergency use by pilot/escort vehicle drivers of portable electronic devices is
17 prohibited.

18 (d) Any person who violates any of the provisions of this section shall, upon conviction,
19 be subject to a fine of one hundred dollars (\$100); for a second conviction a person shall be subject
20 to a fine of one hundred fifty dollars (\$150); and for a third or subsequent conviction a person shall
21 be subject to a fine of two hundred fifty dollars (\$250). All violations arising out of this section
22 shall be heard in the Rhode Island traffic tribunal.

23 (e) If the offending operator elects to dispose of the charge without personally appearing
24 before the traffic tribunal, then in accordance with the provisions of § 31-41.1-3, the operator shall
25 execute the form indicated and return it to the traffic tribunal not later than twenty (20) days from
26 the date of the summons, either by mailing or delivering the form and summons, to the violation
27 section of the traffic tribunal, or to its designee, together with a check or money order in the amount
28 indicated by the fine schedule on the form in addition to any technology surcharge applied by the
29 traffic tribunal assessed in accordance with § 8-15-11.

30 SECTION 7. Legislative Findings:

31 The general assembly finds that:

32 (1) The use of powered wheeled devices such as motorized bicycles, motor scooters,
33 electric bicycles, and electric personal assistive mobility devices (EPAMDs) is increasing rapidly
34 and presents unique safety and regulatory challenges.

1 (2) Current laws regulating these devices are scattered throughout the general laws, causing
2 confusion among operators, law enforcement, and the public.

3 (3) Centralizing and clarifying the legal framework governing these devices will improve
4 safety, compliance, and enforcement while promoting efficient use of public ways.

5 SECTION 8. Title 31 of the General Laws entitled "MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES"
6 is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

7 CHAPTER 19.8

8 CONSOLIDATED REGULATION OF POWERED WHEELED DEVICES AND
9 MICROMOBILITY VEHICLES

10 **31-19.8-1. Motorcycles, motor-driven cycles, and motorized tricycles.**

11 (a) Definitions.

12 (1) "Motorcycle," "motor-driven cycle," and "motorized tricycle" are defined in § 31-1-3.

13 (b) Registration. Every motorcycle, motor-driven cycle, and motorized tricycle shall be
14 registered with the division of motor vehicles and display a valid registration plate in accordance
15 with chapter 3 of title 31, including § 31-3-2.2.

16 (c) Licensing.

17 (1) No person shall operate a motorcycle, motor-driven cycle, or motorized tricycle unless
18 holding a valid driver's license with a motorcycle endorsement or permit as required by § 31-10.1-
19 1.

20 (2) The administrator of the division of motor vehicles may issue restricted or provisional
21 licenses for motor-driven cycles or motorized tricycles as authorized by chapter 10.1 of title 31.

22 (d) Equipment.

23 Motorcycles, motor-driven cycles, and motorized tricycles shall be equipped with:

24 (1) At least one rearview mirror;

25 (2) Eye protection approved by the administrator; and

26 (3) Additional equipment as required by the administrator pursuant to § 31-10.1-4.

27 (e) Helmet requirements.

28 (1) Operators under twenty-one (21) years of age shall wear an approved helmet.

29 (2) Operators of any age must wear an approved helmet during the first twelve (12) months
30 after receiving their initial motorcycle license or endorsement.

31 (f) Passenger safety. Passengers must be seated on permanent seats with footrests and wear
32 helmets approved by the administrator.

33 (g) Operation and enforcement. Motorcycles, motor-driven cycles, and motorized tricycles
34 must comply with all applicable traffic laws, with violations subject to penalties under chapter 41.1

1 [of title 31.](#)

2 **31-19.8-2. Motorized bicycles and motor scooters.**

3 [\(a\) Definitions.](#)

4 [\(1\) “Motorized bicycle” and “motor scooter” are defined in § 31-1-3.](#)

5 [\(b\) Registration. Motorized bicycles and motor scooters must be registered pursuant to §](#)
6 [31-3-2.2, unless specifically exempted.](#)

7 [\(c\) Licensing.](#)

8 [\(1\) No person under sixteen \(16\) years of age may operate a motorized bicycle.](#)

9 [\(2\) Operators must hold a valid motor vehicle operator’s license; subject to exemption](#)
10 [pursuant to 31-10.1-1.](#)

11 [\(3\) Motorized bicycles with engine displacement over fifty cubic centimeters \(50 cc\) or](#)
12 [maximum speed over thirty miles per hour \(30 mph\) require a motorcycle endorsement pursuant to](#)
13 [chapter 31-10.1.](#)

14 [\(4\) Motor scooters are subject to licensing requirements for motorcycles or motor-driven](#)
15 [cycles.](#)

16 [\(d\) Equipment. Required equipment includes brakes and lights appropriate to the vehicle](#)
17 [type.](#)

18 [\(e\) Helmet requirements. Operators and passengers under twenty-one \(21\) years of age](#)
19 [shall wear a helmet approved by the administrator.](#)

20 [\(f\) Operation and enforcement. Motorized bicycles and motor scooters shall comply with](#)
21 [applicable traffic laws, with violations subject to penalties under chapter 41.1 of title 31.](#)

22 **31-19.8-3. Electric bicycles (E-bikes).**

23 [\(a\) Definitions.](#)

24 [\(1\) “Electric bicycle” and its classes are defined in § 31-19.7-1.](#)

25 [\(b\) Registration and licensing. E-bikes, pursuant to §31-3-2.2 are exempt from registration](#)
26 [and do not require a driver’s license. Operators must be at least sixteen \(16\) years old.](#)

27 [\(c\) Helmet requirements. Helmet use is required for operators and passengers under](#)
28 [twenty-one \(21\) years of age pursuant § 31-19.7-3.](#)

29 [\(d\) Operation and enforcement. E-bikes may be operated where permitted on roads, bike](#)
30 [lanes, and paths, with violations subject to penalties in chapter 41.1 of title 31.](#)

31 **31-19.8-4. Electric personal assistive mobility devices (EPAMDs).**

32 [\(a\) Definitions.](#)

33 [\(1\) “EPAMD” is defined in § 31-1-3.](#)

34 [\(b\) Registration and licensing. EPAMDs are exempt from registration, pursuant to § 31-3-](#)

1 [2.2; operators must be at least sixteen \(16\) years old and do not require a driver's license.](#)

2 [\(c\) Equipment and operation. Subject to local regulations and DMV safety rules; EPAMDs](#)
3 [have rights similar to bicycles on sidewalks and shared pathways, pursuant to §§ 31-19-11 and 31-](#)
4 [19-12.](#)

5 [\(d\) Enforcement. Violations subject to penalties under chapter 41.1 of title 31.](#)

6 **31-19.8-5. Local authority.**

7 [Local governments may adopt regulations consistent with this chapter regarding the](#)
8 [operation of powered wheeled devices on sidewalks, bike paths, and other public ways.](#)

9 **31-19.8-6. Powered wheeled device and micromobility vehicle information --**

10 **Department of motor vehicles website posting required.**

11 [\(a\) The division of motor vehicles shall maintain and make available to the public, in a](#)
12 [clear and conspicuous location on its official website, a centralized informational page](#)
13 [summarizing the laws and requirements applicable to powered wheeled devices and micromobility](#)
14 [vehicles regulated under title 31.](#)

15 [\(b\) The informational page required under subsection \(a\) of this section shall, at a](#)
16 [minimum, include for each applicable class of vehicle:](#)

17 [\(1\) The statutory definition of the vehicle type;](#)

18 [\(2\) Registration requirements, if any;](#)

19 [\(3\) Operator licensing or permit requirements, if any;](#)

20 [\(4\) Equipment requirements, including lighting and safety equipment;](#)

21 [\(5\) Helmet and passenger safety requirements, if applicable;](#)

22 [\(6\) Age restrictions on operation;](#)

23 [\(7\) General rules of operation; and](#)

24 [\(8\) Citations to the relevant sections of the general laws governing each requirement.](#)

25 [\(c\) The informational page shall distinguish among vehicle classes including, but not](#)
26 [limited to:](#)

27 [\(1\) Motorcycles;](#)

28 [\(2\) Motor-driven cycles;](#)

29 [\(3\) Motorized tricycles;](#)

30 [\(4\) Motorized bicycles;](#)

31 [\(5\) Motor scooters;](#)

32 [\(6\) Electric bicycles; and](#)

33 [\(7\) Electric personal assistive mobility devices \(EPAMDs\).](#)

34 [\(d\) The division shall ensure that the information posted pursuant to this section is kept](#)

1 current and updated in a timely manner following any amendment to the general laws or adoption
2 of regulations affecting the vehicles listed in subsection (c) of this section.

3 (e) Nothing in this section shall be construed to alter, expand, or limit any substantive
4 requirement of law. The informational materials provided pursuant to this section are intended
5 solely to improve public access, understanding, and compliance with existing law.

6 **31-19.8-7. Severability.**

7 If any provision of this chapter is held invalid, the remainder shall remain in full force and
8 effect.

9 SECTION 9. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES -- DEFINITIONS AND GENERAL CODE
PROVISIONS

1 This act would spell out the requirements for the operation of recreational vehicles, manual,
2 electric or gas powered. This act would also prohibit the use of a wireless handset such as mobile
3 devices and personal digital assistants, while operating an electric motorized bicycle, electric-
4 powered motor scooters, motorized skateboards, and electric personal assistive mobility devices. It
5 also would add a new class of electric bicycles and require sellers of the recreational vehicles to
6 notify customers of related state laws and require the division of motor vehicles to provide a
7 centralized informational page summarizing laws and requirements applicable to powered wheeled
8 devices and micromobility vehicles.

9 This act would take effect upon passage.

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