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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: Senator V. Susan Sosnowski

Date Introduced: February 27, 2026

Referred To: Senate Special Legislation and Veterans Affairs

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1           SECTION 1. Sections 31-1-3 and 31-1-4 of the General Laws in Chapter 31-1 entitled  
2 "Definitions and General Code Provisions" are 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, to include trucks that have a gross vehicle weight of eight thousand  
22 eight hundred pounds (8,800 lbs.) or less.

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

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

30 (g) “Electric motorized bicycle”, also called an “electric bicycle”, as defined in § 31-19.7-  
31 1, means a two-wheel (2) vehicle that may be propelled by human power or electric motor power,  
32 or by both, with an electric motor rated not more than two (2) (S.A.E.) horsepower, that is capable  
33 of a maximum speed of not more than twenty-eight miles per hour (28 m.p.h.).

34 (h) “Electric personal assistive mobility device” (“EPAMD”) is a self-balancing, non-

1 tandem two-wheeled (2) device, designed to transport only one person, with an electric propulsion  
2 system that limits the maximum speed of the device to fifteen miles per hour (15 m.p.h.).

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

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

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

18 (l) “Kei car” or “Kei truck” means every motor vehicle of the keijidōsha class of imported  
19 vehicles, including, but not limited to, mini-trucks, microvans, and Kei cars imported pursuant to  
20 49 U.S.C. § 30112(b)(9), having four (4) wheels, an engine displacement of six hundred sixty cubic  
21 centimeters (660 cc) or less, an overall length of one hundred thirty inches (130”) or less, an overall  
22 height of seventy-eight inches (78”) or less, and an overall width of sixty inches (60”) or less.

23 (m) “Low-speed motor vehicle” or “low-speed vehicle” means a motor vehicle defined in  
24 49 C.F.R. § 571.3 as a vehicle that is four (4) wheeled, whose speed attainable in one mile is more  
25 than twenty miles per hour (20 m.p.h.) and not more than twenty-five miles per hour (25 m.p.h.)  
26 on a paved level surface, is electric, and whose gross vehicle weight rating is less than three  
27 thousand pounds (3,000 lbs.). All low-speed motor vehicles shall comply with the standards  
28 established in 49 C.F.R. § 571.500, as amended, and pursuant thereto, shall be equipped with  
29 headlamps, front and rear turn signal lamps, tail lamps, stop lamps, an exterior mirror mounted on  
30 the driver’s side of the vehicle and either an exterior mirror mounted on the passenger’s side of the  
31 vehicle or an interior mirror, a parking brake, a windshield that conforms to the federal standards  
32 on glazing materials, a vehicle identification number that conforms to the requirements of 49 C.F.R.  
33 pt. 565 for such numbers, a Type 1 or Type 2 seat belt assembly conforming to 49 C.F.R. § 571.209,  
34 installed at each designated seating position, and reflex reflectors; provided, that one reflector is

1 red on each side as far to the rear as practicable and one reflector is red on the rear. A low-speed  
2 motor vehicle that meets the requirements of 49 C.F.R. § 571.500, as amended, and is equipped as  
3 herein provided, may be registered in this state, subject to inspection and insurance requirements.

4 (n) "Motorcycle" means only those motor vehicles having not more than three (3) wheels  
5 in contact with the ground and a saddle on which the driver sits astride, except bicycles with helper  
6 motors as defined in subsection (p) of this section.

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

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

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

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

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

21 (t) "Motor scooter" means a motor-driven cycle with a motor rated not more than four and  
22 nine-tenths (4.9) horsepower and not greater than fifty cubic centimeters (50 cc) that is capable of  
23 a maximum speed of not more than thirty miles per hour (30 m.p.h.).

24 (u) "Motor vehicle" means every vehicle that is self-propelled or propelled by electric  
25 power obtained from overhead trolley wires, but not operated upon rails, except vehicles moved  
26 exclusively by human power, an EPAMD and electric motorized bicycles as defined in subsection  
27 (g) of this section, and motorized wheelchairs.

28 (v) "Motor vehicle for hire" means every motor vehicle other than jitneys, public buses,  
29 hearses, and motor vehicles used chiefly in connection with the conduct of funerals, to transport  
30 persons for compensation in any form, or motor vehicles rented for transporting persons either with  
31 or without furnishing an operator.

32 (w) "Natural gas vehicle" means a vehicle operated by an engine fueled primarily by  
33 natural gas.

34 (x) "Park trailer": A camping recreational vehicle that is eligible to be registered for

1 highway use and meets the following criteria: (1) Built on a single chassis mounted on wheels; and  
2 (2) Certified by the manufacturer as complying with ANSI A119.5.

3 (y) "Passenger van" means every motor vehicle capable of carrying ten (10) to fourteen  
4 (14) passengers plus an operator and used for personal use or on a not-for-hire basis. Passenger  
5 vans may be used for vanpools, transporting passengers to and from work locations, provided that  
6 the operator receives no remuneration other than free use of the vehicle.

7 (z) "Pedal carriage" (also known as "quadricycles") means a nonmotorized bicycle with  
8 four (4) or more wheels operated by one or more persons for the purpose of, or capable of,  
9 transporting additional passengers in seats or on a platform made a part of or otherwise attached to  
10 the pedal carriage. The term shall not include a bicycle with trainer or beginner wheels affixed to  
11 it, nor shall it include a wheelchair or other vehicle with the purpose of operation by or for the  
12 transportation of a person with a disability, nor shall it include a tricycle built for a child or an adult  
13 with a seat for only one operator and no passenger.

14 (aa) "Pick-up camper": A camping recreational vehicle consisting of a roof, floor, and sides  
15 designed to be loaded onto and unloaded from the back of a pick-up truck.

16 (bb) "Rickshaw" (also known as "pedi cab") means a nonmotorized bicycle with three (3)  
17 wheels operated by one person for the purpose of, or capable of, transporting additional passengers  
18 in seats or on a platform made a part of, or otherwise attached to, the rickshaw. This definition shall  
19 not include a bicycle built for two (2) where the operators are seated one behind the other, nor shall  
20 it include the operation of a bicycle with trainer or beginner wheels affixed thereto, nor shall it  
21 include a wheelchair or other vehicle with the purpose of operation by or for the transportation of  
22 a person with a disability.

23 (cc) "School bus" means every motor vehicle owned by a public or governmental agency,  
24 when operated for the transportation of children to or from school; or privately owned, when  
25 operated for compensation for the transportation of children to or from school.

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

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

34 (ff) "Trackless trolley coach" means every motor vehicle that is propelled by electric power

1 obtained from overhead trolley wires, but not operated on rails.

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

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

9 **31-1-4. Trucks and tractors.**

10 (a) "Covered heavy-duty tow and recovery vehicle" means a vehicle that is transporting a  
11 disabled vehicle from the place where the vehicle became disabled to the nearest appropriate repair  
12 facility; and, provided the vehicle has a gross vehicle weight that is equal to or exceeds the gross  
13 vehicle weight of the disabled vehicle being transported.

14 (b) "Farm tractor" means every motor vehicle designed and used primarily as a farm  
15 implement, for drawing plows, mowing machines, and other implements of husbandry or farm  
16 vehicles.

17 (c) "Tow cars and tow trucks" means every motor vehicle ordinarily used for the purpose  
18 of towing or removing motor vehicles or assisting disabled motor vehicles.

19 (d)(1) "Trailer transporter towing unit" means a power unit that is not used to carry property  
20 when operating in a towaway trailer transporter combination.

21 (2) "Towaway trailer transporter combination" means a combination of vehicles consisting  
22 of a trailer transporter towing unit and two (2) trailers or semitrailers:

23 (i) With a total weight that does not exceed twenty-six thousand pounds (26,000 lbs.); and

24 (ii) In which the trailers or semitrailers carry no property and constitute inventory property  
25 of a manufacturer, distributor, or dealer of the trailers or semitrailers.

26 (e) "Truck" means every motor vehicle designed, used, or maintained primarily for the  
27 transportation of property. The administrator of the division of motor vehicles shall determine, in  
28 case of doubt, if a motor vehicle is subject to registration as a truck. [Provided however, any truck  
29 with a gross vehicle weight of eight thousand eight hundred pounds \(8,800 lbs.\) or less may be  
30 registered as an automobile and issued passenger plates.](#)

31 (f) "Truck tractor" means a non-cargo-carrying power unit that operates in combination  
32 with a semi-trailer or trailer, except that a truck tractor and a semi-trailer or trailer engaged in the  
33 transportation of automobiles may transport motor vehicles on part of the power unit.

1 SECTION 2. 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

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- 1           This act would allow any truck with a gross vehicle weight of eight thousand eight hundred
- 2 pounds (8,800 lbs.) or less to be registered as an automobile and issued passenger plates.
- 3           This act would take effect upon passage.

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