February 1, 2016 (Providence, RI) — Referring to Governor Raimondo’s RhodeWorks proposal as the “best available option to raise the necessary funds to address Rhode Island’s unsustainable and unacceptable backlog of structurally deficient bridges”, Grow Smart RI today expressed resounding support for the plan to modernize Rhode Island’s infrastructure and enhance the state’s economic competitiveness in the process.

Since 1998, the business friendly policy research and advocacy organization has focused on promoting enduring and sustainable economic growth that capitalizes on Rhode Island’s many place-based assets.

“One of the principal ways we pursue this is by promoting responsible public investment in a 21st century transportation system that enhances our economy, safeguards the environment, and provides Rhode Islanders with healthy and affordable transportation choices,” stated Scott Wolf, Grow Smart RI’s Executive Director.

“User fees for transportation infrastructure investments, such as those proposed by the Governor, are consistent with existing policy in most nearby Northeastern states and would not represent a competitive disadvantage for Rhode Island, but instead provide a short and long term boost to the Rhode Island economy,” he added.

Calling the collection of user fees from heavy trucks “fair and equitable” due to their extensive wear and tear on the local road and bridge system, Wolf believes that the source of truck tolling revenue laid out in the RhodeWorks bill is favorable to Rhode Island. According to a RIDOT commissioned analysis, most of the revenue would be generated by out-of-state sources, versus exclusively relying on Rhode Island based sources - the latter being the case with other notable alternative proposals that have surfaced. While Grow Smart RI encourages robust legislative and public oversight to ensure effective spending by any government program, it believes that additional revenues for transportation are essential.

Wolf noted that the legislature has vetted the large truck tolling proposal since it was first introduced in June 2015 and that proposed refinements have earned it the support of both Senate and House leadership.

“Grow Smart RI commends the Raimondo Administration for taking a bold and holistic approach to transportation”, said Wolf. “Only by having a fully funded plan to fix our large backlog of structurally deficient bridges” he said, “can Rhode Island secure the resources and flexibility to improve our overall transportation system, including mass transit which is increasingly seen by the business community as a necessary ingredient for a vibrant urban economy”, he said.

About Us
Grow Smart Rhode Island provides statewide leadership for diverse public and private interests seeking sustainable and equitable economic growth. We promote such growth by advocating for compact development in revitalized urban, town, and village centers balanced with responsible stewardship of our region’s natural assets. We inform leaders, decision makers, and concerned citizens about the many benefits of compact development and asset stewardship and provide research and training on proven smart growth strategies. We convene broad coalitions that advocate policy reforms and specific projects designed to build communities where all people and businesses can thrive.