Rhode Island

Laying the groundwork for a self-driving vehicle rollout

State leaders in Rhode Island recently increased their efforts to attract companies developing innovative tech.

The state's Department of Transportation announced in January 2018 it would launch a pilot program to get self-driving vehicles on Rhode Island's roadways. The Transportation Innovation Partnership (TRIP) aims to allow private sector companies to develop and deploy SDV tech, with an eye to incorporating it into the existing state transportation system.

The TRIP's announcement came months after the Rhode Island Department of Transportation put out a request for proposals from companies interested in testing their vehicles on Rhode Island roadways. Department officials believe these measures will help keep the state at the cutting edge of technology and ready to take advantage of the safety and mobility improvements SDVs have to offer.

The TRIP program — which incorporates cyber security, safety and sustainability goals — seeks to leverage the self-driving vehicle industry to bring new jobs to the state. "We want Rhode Island to really be prepared for, rather than be reactive, to the changes," said Christos Xenophontos, assistant director for the department.

Rhode Island also took near-top marks in Fast Internet, beating all but three states in the category. Over 80 percent of households in the state have internet connections of at least 10 mbps, and 72 percent enjoy speeds of 25 mbps or more.

Sources: (RI DOT) (Patch) (Ecori)

WHAT DID WE DO RIGHT?

More than 80 percent of households enjoy internet speeds of at least 10 mbps.

WHAT CAN WE DO BETTER NEXT YEAR?

The state can ease regulations that overly restrict drone operators.

WHERE HAVE WE MOST IMPROVED?

The state attracted more than $178 per capita in venture capital — a 775-percent year-over-year increase that brought the state's grade up from a 'C+.'

Best & Brightest	C
Fast Internet	A
Grants Advanced Degrees	B+
Tech Workforce	B
Tax Friendly	C
Attracts Investment	B
Entrepreneurial Activity	B
Ridesharing	A
Short-Term Rentals	A-
Sustainable Policies	C
Self-Driving Vehicles	A
Drones	D

Grants Advanced Degrees

More than 13 percent of residents over the age of 24 have a diploma from an advanced program, outpacing most other states.
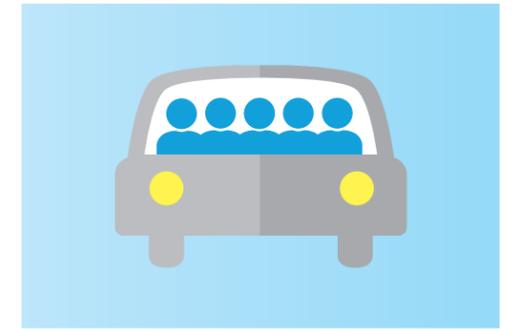
Tech Workforce

The state has an impressive share of technology jobs, with 38.19 per 1,000 people.

Entrepreneurial Activity

Small businesses added more than 60 jobs per 1,000 people.

Ridesharing

Ridesharing operates around the state largely free of burdensome regulation.

A Public Push with Private Help Propels Innovation and Job Growth in the Ocean State

In Rhode Island, a handful of new public and private endeavors are helping the state develop its highly-skilled workforce.

In the high school districts of Westerly, Providence and Newport, students have the opportunity to take part in a pilot program called Pathways in Technology Early College High School.

The program gives students the chance to earn a high school diploma and an associate's degree in a handful of skilled fields — simultaneously. The districts are working with local industry to develop programs that meet workforce demands, and businesses, in turn, provide mentoring for the students.

The Ocean State's tech workforce will get another boost with IT consulting firm Infosys, which plans to open a new design and innovation hub in Providence. The facility will bring 500 new jobs in the next five years. The Rhode Island Department of Commerce estimates that the company will generate $18 million in revenue for the state over the next 12 years.

Sources: (Providence Journal) (Infosys)