

RI POLITICS

R.I. advocates backing separate bill to make crash data public

The Department of Transportation refuses to release traffic accident data, but the Providence Streets Coalition says 42 other states make such information public

By [Edward Fitzpatrick](#) Globe Staff, Updated January 27, 2026, 5:55 a.m.



Dylan Giles, operations manager for the Providence Streets Coalition, speaks during a May 2025 State House news conference in favor of legislation overhauling the state's Access to Public Records Act. EDWARD FITZPATRICK

PROVIDENCE — With an overhaul of the [Access to Public Records Act stymied](#) in recent years, advocates are backing a separate bill that would force the state Department of Transportation to [release statewide crash data](#).

Senator Meghan E. Kallman, a Pawtucket Democrat, on Monday said she plans to introduce legislation that would make the traffic accident data available to the public.

“The public is entitled to data that reflects the safety of Rhode Island streets,” Kallman said. “That is our reality. We get to know about that and use that to make a better reality.”

Making crash data public will remain one of the 49 changes sought in the overhaul bill that Senator Louis P. DiPalma, a Middletown Democrat, is introducing for the fourth

consecutive year. Representative Jason Knight, a Barrington Democrat [running for attorney general](#), is sponsoring [the House version](#) of that overhaul legislation this year.

But the overhaul bill has repeatedly failed while facing [opposition from Governor Daniel J. McKee's administration](#). Advocates said they wanted to break out the crash data provision into a separate bill, hoping to secure passage this year.

Dylan Giles, operations manager for the [Providence Streets Coalition](#), said that while some elements of the overhaul legislation faced stiff opposition, the proposal to release crash data has enjoyed broader support.

“We continue to believe that this is information that should be public and is made public in 42 states,” Giles said. States such as Massachusetts go a step further and put the crash data on [an online dashboard](#) so people can easily see where traffic accidents are happening in their cities and towns, he said.

The Department of Transportation collects crash data for Rhode Island's 39 cities and towns, but it has refused to make that information public. The department argues that crash data is not a public record under state law and that federal law prohibits “the discovery of crash data in litigation.”

After a public records complaint in 2023, Attorney General Peter F. Neronha's office [issued an opinion](#), saying the Department of Transportation did not violate the Access to Public Records Act by withholding the crash data from a citizen. Under current law, a public body does not have to make something available under the Access to Public Records Act that it would not have to produce in litigation, the attorney general's office said.

But there is no evidence that the Department of Transportation must keep crash data secret, and other states do release such data, the attorney general's office said.

Neronha's office said, "We strongly encourage DOT to consider whether it may be in the public interest to disclose the requested information," and it reminded public bodies that "the APRA is a floor and not a ceiling."

Giles said the public interest in crash data is obvious. In November 2023, the Providence Streets Coalition released [a map of reported collisions](#) in Providence in which [pedestrians and cyclists were hit by cars over a 13-year period](#). That information is often consulted by concerned neighbors, public officials, and journalists, he said.

But that map was only possible because the coalition was able to get crash data directly from the Providence Police Department, Giles said. Other police departments have told the coalition they cannot provide similar crash data, he said, but the data for other municipalities would be available from the Department of Transportation, if it would release it.

Giles said releasing that information would help other cities and towns make their roads safer, and it would help the state as it pursues a "[Vision Zero](#)" strategy to eliminate fatalities and serious crashes.

"When we can visualize and pinpoint where the hot spots are, that allows us to advocate to make the roads safer, and work with cities and towns to make changes that we know will save lives," he said.

Giles noted that safety improvements are being made on North Main Street in Providence, which saw four fatal accidents in the span of about 18 months in 2023 and 2024. He gave credit to Providence City Council member [Sue AnderBois](#) for leading a [task force](#) that has worked with the Department of Transportation to make that stretch of road safer for pedestrians, bus riders, and bicyclists.

DiPalma said he will keep the crash data provision in his proposed overhaul of the Access to Public Records Act. But putting that proposal in a separate bill will give advocates "a second bite at the apple," he said.

DiPalma said cities and towns provide crash data to the Department of Transportation, and the department should make that data available to the public. “It just makes sense,” he said. “It’s the right thing to do.”

Edward Fitzpatrick can be reached at edward.fitzpatrick@globe.com. Follow him [@FitzProv](#).

[Show comments](#)

©2026 Boston Globe Media Partners, LLC