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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

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A N A C T

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

Introduced By: Representatives McGaw, Cotter, Cortvriend, Carson, Chippendale, and Casimiro

Date Introduced: March 05, 2024

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. [Effective July 1, 2024.]**

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) years
2 old. Unless fully inspected and meeting inspection requirements, the vehicle shall be maintained
3 solely for use in exhibitions, club activities, parades, and other functions of public interest. The
4 vehicle may also be used for limited enjoyment and purposes other than the previously mentioned
5 activities, but may not be used primarily for the transportation of passengers or goods over any
6 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" means a motorized bicycle that may be propelled by
30 human power or electric motor power, or by both, with an electric motor rated not more than two
31 (2) (S.A.E.) horsepower, that is capable of a maximum speed of not more than twenty-five miles
32 per hour (25 m.p.h.).

33 (h) "Electric personal assistive mobility device" ("EPAMD") is a self-balancing, non-
34 tandem two-wheeled (2) device, designed to transport only one person, with an electric propulsion

1 system that limits the maximum speed of the device to fifteen miles per hour (15 m.p.h.).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

26 (v) "Natural gas vehicle" means a vehicle operated by an engine fueled primarily by natural
27 gas.

28 (w) "Park trailer": A camping recreational vehicle that is eligible to be registered for
29 highway use and meets the following criteria: (1) Built on a single chassis mounted on wheels; and
30 (2) Certified by the manufacturer as complying with ANSI A119.5.

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

1 (y) "Pedal carriage" (also known as "quadricycles") means a nonmotorized bicycle with
2 four (4) or more wheels operated by one or more persons for the purpose of, or capable of,
3 transporting additional passengers in seats or on a platform made a part of or otherwise attached to
4 the pedal carriage. The term shall not include a bicycle with trainer or beginner wheels affixed to
5 it, 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, nor shall it include a tricycle built for a child or an adult
7 with a seat for only one operator and no passenger.

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

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

17 (bb) "School bus" means every motor vehicle owned by a public or governmental agency,
18 when operated for the transportation of children to or from school; or privately owned, when
19 operated for compensation for the transportation of children to or from school.

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

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

28 (ee) "Trackless trolley coach" means every motor vehicle that is propelled by electric
29 power obtained from overhead trolley wires, but not operated on rails.

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

34 (gg) "Vehicle" means every device in, upon, or by which any person or property is or may

1 be transported or drawn upon a highway, except devices used exclusively upon stationary rails or
2 tracks.

3 [\(hh\) "Kei car" or "Kei truck" means every motor vehicle of the keijidōsha class of imported](#)
4 [vehicles, including, but not limited to, mini-trucks, microvans and Kei cars imported pursuant to](#)
5 [49 U.S.C. § 30112\(b\)\(9\), having four \(4\) wheels, an engine displacement of six hundred sixty cubic](#)
6 [centimeters \(660cc\) or less, an overall length of one hundred thirty inches \(130"\) or less, an overall](#)
7 [height of seventy-eight inches \(78"\) or less, and an overall width of sixty inches \(60"\) or less.](#)

8 SECTION 2. Section 31-3-5 of the General Laws in Chapter 31-3 entitled "Registration of
9 Vehicles" is hereby amended to read as follows:

10 **31-3-5. Grounds for refusal of registration.**

11 The division of motor vehicles shall refuse registration or any transfer of registration upon
12 any of the following grounds:

13 (1) That the application contains any false or fraudulent statement, or that the applicant has
14 failed to furnish required information, or reasonable additional information requested by the
15 division of motor vehicles, or that the applicant is not entitled to the issuance of registration of the
16 vehicle under chapters 3 — 9 of this title;

17 (2) That the vehicle is mechanically unfit or unsafe to be operated upon the highways;

18 (3) That the division of motor vehicles has reasonable ground to believe that the vehicle is
19 a stolen or embezzled vehicle, or that the granting of registration would constitute a fraud against
20 the rightful owner;

21 (4) That the registration of the vehicle stands suspended or revoked for any reason as
22 provided in the motor vehicle laws of this state;

23 (5) That the vehicle has been reported by any city or town to the division of motor vehicles
24 as having unpaid fines in the aggregate amount of two hundred dollars (\$200) or more, including
25 any and all interest, penalties, or other monetary amount that may be imposed for failure to pay the
26 fines by a specified date; provided, the registration shall be issued upon presentation of proof of
27 payment of the outstanding fines, including any and all interest, penalties, or other monetary
28 amount owed to the cities or towns reporting the unpaid fines. When the division of motor vehicles
29 denies a registration to any person pursuant to this subsection, the city or town requesting the denial
30 of registration shall add a five-dollar (\$5.00) fee to the aggregate value of the sum of the fines and,
31 upon payment, shall transmit the fee to the division of motor vehicles. The provisions of this
32 subsection shall not apply to any vehicle owned by a rental company, as defined in § 31-34.1-1;

33 (6) That the vehicle does not comply with regulations promulgated pursuant to § 23-23-
34 5(18);

1 (7) That the vehicle does not comply with the provisions of chapter 47.1 of this title and
2 any rules and regulations promulgated under that chapter;

3 (8) That a commercial motor vehicle is being operated by a commercial motor carrier that
4 has been prohibited from operating in interstate commerce by a federal agency with authority to do
5 so under federal law; ~~or~~

6 (9) That the registered owner of a vehicle failed to pay the required toll amounts,
7 administrative fees, and fines as prescribed in § 24-12-37; or

8 (10) That the vehicle is a "Kei car" or "Kei truck". Provided, however, that the registrant
9 of any "Kei car" or "Kei truck" which was validly registered as of August 1, 2021, shall not be
10 denied renewal of that registration based solely on the vehicle type; and further, provided that, any
11 such registrations shall not be permitted to be transferred. "Kei cars" or "Kei trucks" shall be
12 prohibited from operation on limited access highways, state highways, or through highways as
13 defined in § 31-1-23 or on any public highway or roadway with a speed limit of more than thirty-
14 five miles per hour (35 mph). Nothing in this subsection, however, shall be construed to prohibit a
15 "Kei car" or "Kei truck" from crossing a public highway at an intersection where the public highway
16 to be crossed has a posted speed limit between thirty-five miles per hour (35 mph) and forty-five
17 miles per hour (45 mph); provided the public highway the "Kei car" or "Kei truck" is traveling on
18 and the public highway the "Kei car" or "Kei truck" is crossing the intersection toward both have a
19 speed limit no higher than thirty-five miles per hour (35 mph) and the intersection is controlled by
20 traffic signals or stop signs.

21 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

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

1 This act would include "Kei cars" or "Kei trucks" as having restricted public highway use
2 and those vehicles validly registered as of August 1, 2021, would not be denied renewal of that
3 registration based solely on the vehicle type.

4 This act would take effect on July 1, 2024.

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