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Quonset Points: Planes, trains, automobiles (and ships)

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Things are moving at Quonset -- literally. The vibrancy of the Quonset Business Park has a lot to do with its unmatched transportation infrastructure. The facility supports a steady stream of trains, planes, automobiles and ships coming in and out to perform a wide variety of services.

At any given moment, a ship might be docked at port, a rail delivery might be arriving, a ferry might be loading passengers, and a plane could be taking off. Not to mention, the 8,800 workers coming to and from their jobs at 168 resident companies.

As recent developments show, products, parts and people - nearly anything, of nearly any size - can be moved, and moved fast, across the country or even the world, to and from Quonset.

New strides in every form of transportation featured at the Park come regularly, continuing to advance the efficiency and accessibility of the business park to all industries.

Just last month Quonset-based auto importer North Atlantic Distribution (NORAD) said it would team up with Ford Motor Co. to bring vehicles via rail through the Port of Davisville at Quonset Point. The initial agreement calls for importing 25,000 vehicles a year by the Norfolk & Southern Railroad line.

As many as 75,000 Ford vehicles could eventually be distributed from Quonset annually, adding to the current automakers who distribute through Quonset. Those include Volkswagen/Audi of North America, Subaru of New England and Bentley Motorcars. NORAD has also processed vehicles for Chrysler, Saab, Nissan, Peugeot, Fiat and Maserati.

Every such advancement brings the promise for new jobs as well, and the recent agreement with Ford brought in an additional 25 jobs at NORAD. There are plans to hire more people, many of them skilled workers, who can complete the cars and trucks before they are distributed.

The Port of Davisville is one of North America's largest importers of automobiles by ship. Roughly 2 million automobiles have been processed here since it opened in the 1980s. The facility's current storage capacity is over 23,000 units, with accessory buildings covering more than 150,000 s/f.

The Port boasts 4,500 linear feet of berthing space, consisting of two 1,200-foot-long piers, a bulkhead, 29-foot channel draft, on-dock rail and a 14-acre lay-down area.

And that's just the shipping area. The Quonset Airport, managed by the Rhode Island Airport Corp. and operated by Landmark Aviation, has a 7,500-foot runway, a staffed control tower and an Instrument Landing System.

Meanwhile, on the ground, we have a rail system that features approximately 14 miles of track in two branches. The service is provided by Seaview Transportation Co., Inc.

Car traffic is smooth as well, with access from the business park to I-95 via a four-lane, limited-access highway.

Looking for a boat ride to Martha's Vineyard? Quonset offers high-speed ferry service to and from Oak Bluffs, provided by Rhode Island Fast Ferry, Inc.

And there are bus stops as well, provided by the Rhode Island Public Transportation Authority.

Currently, there are stops at Electric Boat, The Gateway (which houses Kohl's, Lowes, Dave's Marketplace and more), and on Post Road, on the border of the business park.

We strive to make the business park run as smoothly as possible, and part of that requires easy access and convenient methods of transportation. We want people and cargo to come and go with maximum ease.

It's also important that there are plenty of options. The best way to transport a wind turbine, for example, might not be the best way to deliver a shipment of cars or bring in a group of workers for a business meeting. But with the cutting-edge combination of planes, trains, automobiles and boats, we offer a world-class business park and port with virtually unlimited points and modes of access. Steven King, PE, is the managing director of the Quonset Development Corp., North Kingstown.

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