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New developments within the local tourism industry

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After a long, snowy winter, many of us are eagerly anticipating the warmer weather. As we look forward to the spring and summer months, there are some new developments within the local tourism industry to celebrate.

Cape Air's recent announcement that it will begin seasonal service to Block Island (New Shoreham), Rhode Island, from T.F. Green Airport is welcome news. Beginning the Thursday before Memorial Day Weekend (May 22), the airline will offer daily flights between T.F. Green and the Block Island Airport. Passengers will be transported on newly-acquired Britten Norman Islanders, which are nine-passenger, twin-engine planes capable of landing on the island airport's short runway.

Travelers can also take advantage of the convenience of access to connecting flights on other carriers or the commuter rail service to Providence and Boston afforded by the InterLink intermodal train station, which is connected to the airport by an enclosed, moving skywalk.

The airline's arrival here will also likely benefit Warwick's hotels, restaurants, and other venues. Warwick's hotels, in fact, are continuing to see increased occupancy rates; last year saw an increase of over five percent over 2012 levels and a three percent spike in room rates. The latest figures available for January of this year, show that trend continues. All of this is good news for Warwick's 16 hotels and our community as a whole, when you consider that every room that's booked translates into roughly \$400 invested in the local economy.

Our Department of Tourism, Culture, and Development (TCD) continues to work closely with its hospitality industry partners to promote Warwick itself as a destination. A recent marketing campaign, "Stay in Warwick, See Rhode Island," targeting the Boston market was very successful. It capitalized on the fact that the MBTA arrives at the InterLink station and promoted the convenience of staying in Warwick while seeing all of the Ocean State.

The TCD is also busily preparing for a host of annual events that draw thousands of visitors to Warwick annually. I invite you to log on to www.visitwarwickri.com to learn more about these seasonal favorites, local accommodations, and other things to enjoy in our city and state.

Scott Avedisian is the mayor of Warwick and the chairman of the RIPTA board of directors.

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