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Safe and efficient transportation access is crucial to city's waterfront - by James Moran

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Anyone following development activity in Rhode Island knows that there have been significant development success stories in the city of East Providence's Waterfront District. From Kettle Point, with its new 62 condominiums, 228 apartments and 88,000 s/f medical office development; to the 156-resident Tockwotton Home assisted living community; to the new Live Nation/Waterfront Productions concert and special event entertainment venue at Bold Point; new development is having a regional economic impact throughout the District. Additionally, it is anticipated that current major investment at the Chevron property will lead, in the near future, to a large scale mixed-use development that will bring significant new revenue and prosperity to the city.

In addition to private development projects, new transportation related infrastructure projects remain critical to providing convenient and safe access to our waterfront from all points on the map for vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians. Access to the waterfront can also be enhanced with the inclusion of ferry and water taxi landing opportunities. The recently completed Waterfront Dr. creates the north/south access connections that are important for vehicular access to some of our most important development sites. To provide complete access to our waterfront from I-195, new freeway eastbound on-ramps and westbound off-ramps must be completed to ensure that our waterfront is developed to the fullest possible extent.

Without these two ramps, the ability to access or depart from the waterfront to Massachusetts and points east are much more challenging and time consuming. Developers who are seriously looking to develop important acreage along our waterfront have continued to stress that constructing the missing movements are essential in making their projects more marketable for financing and construction.

The city, in cooperation with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation, state legislators and waterfront development stakeholders will be convening in November to discuss ideas and measures that will help to identify funding sources to complete the design and construction of these new freeway ramps. The design currently stands at the 10% design phase with NEPA environmental documentation completed. Identifying and acquiring funds to complete design and construction of

these ramps will be challenging, but the city looks forward to working with parties at the local, state and federal level together with the many stakeholders who have an interest in the development of our waterfront, to devise a strategy for achieving this important transportation goal.

The city is eager to assist those looking to establish a new business or seeking to expand their existing business. Business owners, developers and other parties interested in learning more about our economic development programs and waterfront development initiatives, can visit the city's business website at www.eastprovidencebusiness.com or the city's Waterfront District website at www.eastprovidencewaterfront.com.

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