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## **Quonset breaks ground on Mill Creek Rail Yard - by Steven King**

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Steven King

World class infrastructure has been the foundation of Quonset Business Park's success. Today, Quonset hosts over 12,200 jobs at more than 200 companies and is recognized statewide as the leading engine of economic development and job creation in Rhode Island. To maintain momentum at the Business Park, we needed essential upgrades to our freight rail infrastructure to support rail car volume which has tripled at Quonset since 2007.

Last month, we broke ground on \$4 million improvements at the Mill Creek Rail Yard, thanks to the efforts of Rhode Island's Congressional delegation. The project is funded by a \$3 million Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation, as well as a \$1 million match from Quonset Development Corp. (QDC).

Senator Jack Reed, senator Sheldon Whitehouse, congressman James Langevin and congressman David Cicilline were integral to this significant upgrade, which will accommodate the storage of up to 58 rail cars by constructing two sidings with 5,700 linear feet of track with six turnouts.

To celebrate the occasion, instead of the traditional shovels being driven into the ground, senator Reed, congressman Langevin, congressman Cicilline, North Kingstown town councilor Kim Page and state representative Julie Casimiro joined us to drive the first spikes into the wooden rails.

The celebration was a symbol of the partnership that made this project possible, from the federal and state levels to our partnership with the town of North Kingstown. Over the years Rhode Island's Congressional Delegation has helped secure millions of dollars in federal grants to enhance, improve, and expand the infrastructure at Quonset. Those monies added to the investments made by the state of Rhode Island and QDC combine for over \$750 million. These funds have been invested to create world-class infrastructure that has been crucial to transform the business park into a center for job creation and economic development. This public sector investment has been rewarded with nearly \$3 billion of investment by the private sector in industrial, manufacturing, warehouse, transport, and other businesses. Collaboration at all levels of government has paid enormous dividends.

This project is another example of that collaboration. Once completed, the Quonset rail system will have expanded capacity to service the Park and leverage the multimodal connections to the Port of Davisville, the Quonset State Airport, the National Freight Highway System, and the M-95 Marine Highway, allowing seamless transitions between rail, ground, marine and air transportation modes.

Quonset's rail system is an economic driver for Rhode Island. With our partners at Seaview Railroad, who manage the 14 miles of freight rail lines throughout the Park, Seaview moved 6,315 rail cars of cargo in 2019. Quonset companies Toray Plastics, North Atlantic Distribution, BB&S Treated Lumber of New England, Ocean State Oil, Crestwood Energy and others use our rail system to help employ more than 1,000 people at Quonset. With the completion of the Mill Creek Rail Yard, we can continue this momentum.

Improvements like the \$4 million Mill Creek Rail Yard project are just one example of how infrastructure investments at Quonset pay off for Rhode Island.

Our recent proposal to invest \$78.5 million of federal relief money in the Port of Davisville would help preserve existing international businesses while positioning the state to take advantage of opportunities for new green jobs, economic growth and environmental stewardship in the rapidly expanding offshore wind industry.

Quonset has a long history of working with our partners in government to build the infrastructure necessary to compete in the global marketplace. Over the years, Quonset has turned \$700 million in public infrastructure funding into nearly \$3 billion in investment from private companies. The continued upgrades to our rail and port infrastructure will allow the QDC team to make smart investments in the future of Rhode Island's economy.

Steven King, PE, is the managing director of the Quonset Development Corp., North Kingstown, RI.

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