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## **East Providence is working to improve it's transportation infrastructure - by Roberto DaSilva**

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Roberto DaSilva

High quality transportation infrastructure is a vital public asset that encourages economic investment in our communities. In addition, providing a reliable and safe transportation network that promotes transit choices which will address climate concerns is a top priority of East Providence.

The overall condition of transportation infrastructure in R.I. through the early part of the 21st century was one of steady decline, with roadways and bridges aging and maintenance and replacement often deferred. However, working closely with a variety of stakeholders in recent years, including the R.I. Department of Transportation (RIDOT) and the R.I. Public Transit Authority (RIPTA), the city has realized significant success in improving and replacing important transportation infrastructure which will support the transportation needs of our community well into the future. State funded projects in East Providence, including the repair or replacement of a number of important bridges, have been instrumental in making our city a great place to locate or expand a business as well as a wonderful place to live and raise a family.

Waterfront Dr., which includes the completed segments of the Dexter Rd. Connector and Warren Ave. Connector, plays a vital part in connecting two major transportation infrastructure projects that are currently underway in the city. Improvements to the I-195 Washington Bridge, including the installation of a new westbound waterfront exit ramp and the construction of a new Henderson Bridge crossing will promote greater transportation efficiency within our Waterfront District and ensure that the economic growth that we are experiencing within the Waterfront District is fully supported.

The city and state are also working on plans to support multimodal transportation projects. With the approval of the 2022-2031 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), Minor Amendment #2, East Providence will be the beneficiary of accelerated transportation projects that will improve vehicular traffic efficiency, expand and enhance bus transit, and increase pedestrian and bicycle transportation options. The city will be working cooperatively with RIDOT in the design and construction of Phase 2 of the Henderson Bridge project that will deliver an improved connection from Massasoit Ave. to Broadway and beyond to Pawtucket Ave. It is anticipated that this next phase will include multimodal improvements that will greatly enhance bus transit and bicycle connections within the city that could eventually lead to interconnectivity with other bicycle networks in the city, including the East Bay Bike Path and the Ten Mile River Greenway.

Amendment #2 also includes authorization for construction of the remaining segments of the Ten Mile River Greenway connecting Hunts Mills to Kimberly Ann Rock Athletic complex in Rumford. Building this final connection as a part of the originally conceived greenway plan will provide an uninterrupted scenic pedestrian and bicycle connection between the historic and beautiful Hunts Mills Park and Pawtucket's Daggett Ave. Athletic Field.

Increasing access to the Waterfront, as well as investing in bus, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure will further enable economic development in East Providence and support a higher quality of life for residents through increased transportation options.

Roberto DaSilva is the mayor of the city of East Providence, R.I.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540