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Pawtucket-Central Falls Commuter Rail Station a game changer for city - by Donald Grebien

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Donald Grebien

On January 23rd, I proudly boarded a MBTA commuter rail train in Providence for the inaugural trip to our brand-new Pawtucket-Central Falls Commuter Rail Station and a wonderful grand opening ceremony with our many state and federal partners.

The dream of a modern new commuter rail station that would improve transportation for residents while sparking economic development was born more than seven years ago. Over that time, my administration has worked closely with our congressional delegation, the R.I. Department of Transportation, the city of Central Falls, and transit advocates to design the station and piece together the necessary funding to make the project a reality.

Seeing the new station open and serving nearly 400 passengers during the week is incredibly satisfying. The 200-car parking lot is already full on most days, and we're working with the R.I. Department of Transportation to add additional parking capacity.

The benefits of our new Pawtucket-Central Falls Commuter Rail Station are many. First, the station will improve our region's transportation infrastructure with a convenient new option for area residents to commute to Boston to the north and Providence, T.F. Green Airport, and Wickford Junction to the south. The station is also tightly integrated with R.I. Public Transit Authority bus routes and nearby bike lanes.

The new station has also created an economic boom, with 850 units of housing and some 80,000 s/f of retail space either now open or in development in the area adjacent to the facility. These multi-use projects are breathing life and vitality back into the area.

Projects like the residential and commercial development planned for 258 Pine St., the site of a previously abandoned and environmentally contaminated mill building. This approximately \$60 million project, which was recently given initial approval by our planning commission, would add 180-units of housing and retail/restaurant space directly adjacent to the new commuter rail station.

The district surrounding the station will also feature several new green spaces to provide recreation, shade, and improved stormwater management.

The opening of the Pawtucket-Central Falls Commuter Rail Station is a true game changer for our efforts to supercharge economic development and revitalization in Pawtucket. And we're already seeing the results.

While new projects like the commuter rail station referenced above often grab the headlines, equally important is maintaining our city's existing transportation infrastructure. As mayor, one of my top priorities has been upgrading our aging road infrastructure. Thanks to a recent \$2.5 million loan from R.I. Infrastructure Bank, we will make major progress repaving roads across the city starting this spring.

From a new commuter rail station to repaved roads, Pawtucket is leading the way investing in our transportation infrastructure. Investments that are spurring new commercial real estate projects and economic development in our city.

Donald Grebien is mayor of the city of Pawtucket, R.I.

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