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Quonset is well-positioned to receive additional auto imports - by Steven J. King

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Steven J. King

Quonset Business Park's Port of Davisville supports nearly 1,700 jobs and \$374.3 million in economic activity for Rhode Island annually. In the last 20 years, the Port has increased its annual imports by 745% and is home to one of the largest auto importers in North America.

The Quonset Development Corp., which manages the port, anticipates that auto imports at the Port of Davisville will increase by as much as 25%, or about 4,000 vehicles per month, as a result of the realignment of shipping traffic due to the collapse of the Key Bridge outside Baltimore Harbor.

The additional imports each month would equate to an additional 50,000 autos per year – though it is too soon to know exactly how long the change might last.

Quonset is well-positioned to support the increase in cargo largely due to the critical infrastructure investments made over the years at the Business Park with the support of governor Dan McKee, the Rhode Island General Assembly and our state's Congressional delegation.

The investments are part of the Port of Davisville Master Plan, a \$234 million infrastructure development project to replace the infrastructure originally built by the U.S. Navy during and after World War II. The upgrades will provide a new 50-year service life to the port's infrastructure.

At Pier 1, we are replacing thousands of 80-year-old wooden pilings with concrete and steel pilings. Construction at Pier 2 was completed in 2022 and extended the pier by 232 ft., creating an additional berthing space to accommodate the larger ships, including roll-on/roll-off (RO/RO) carrier ships delivering automobiles, that call on Davisville.

Our philosophy at Quonset is that opportunity, plus preparedness, equals success. Because the implementation of the port master plan is well underway, we were well-prepared to handle the extra cargo diverted from Baltimore. The influx of shipments also positions Quonset to build new relationships that bring the potential for new business in the future.

We are pleased to provide new partners access to world-class infrastructure and the Quonset "Can Do!" spirit. We will not miss this opportunity to expand our position as one of North America's Top 10 Auto Importers.

Steven J. King, PE, is the managing director of the Quonset Development Corp., North Kingstown, R.I.