



**Testimony of David Cohen, Promet Marine
In Support of the Rhode Island Working Waterfronts Protection Act (H-5617)**

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In 1990, the City of Providence completed the Providence Industrial Waterfront Plan. Recommending that the area along Allens Avenue be zoned for industrial use and protected from incompatible residential uses, the plan wisely concluded that the, “preservation and promotion of the Providence industrial waterfront as an important marine industrial district will respond to the demands of the marketplace and provide an assurance that the unique and limited resources of the waterfront are preserved to support the expanding needs of the region.”

We believe industrial waterfront property continues to need this protection.

Thanks in large part to this decision 19 years ago, the Port of Providence and the area’s working-waterfront businesses are thriving. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed a \$65 million dollar dredging project to ensure continued 40-foot-deep-water access to the port. With easy access to railways and highways, and a hub location able to serve a broad market, the Port of Providence is now one of the top 50 ports in the US.

This means jobs! Providence working-waterfront businesses directly employ hundreds of people and are responsible for thousands more related jobs, such as tradesmen, truck drivers and service technicians. These blue-collar jobs, rapidly disappearing elsewhere in Rhode Island, provide good salaries and benefits.

Our region’s congested highways are also creating demand for new shipping options, such as short-sea shipping. The Port of Providence is uniquely positioned to benefit from this emerging shipping method, which moves goods via waterways on smaller ships and barges from larger ports to smaller feeder ports.

In August 2007, several area companies came together to form the Providence Working Waterfront Alliance to protect the industrial zone on Allens Avenue. We were responding to the City of Providence’s 2020 Comprehensive Plan which completely eliminated any reference to the industrial nature of Allens Ave or to its water dependent use. Alliance members believe the entire port of Providence, including the Allen’s Avenue corridor and the contiguous Motiva Terminal, is a vital regional economic resource that must be protected from mixed uses that are incompatible with an industrial waterfront.

Allens Avenue is the only neighborhood of the city subjected to an explicit, dramatic land use classification change despite the overwhelming opposition of property owners and businesses in the area. Providence harbor has been a center of shipping and commerce for more than 150 years.



Several of our companies have operated continuously here for more than 100 years. The character and zoning of this neighborhood is both industrial and working waterfront. It is isolated from the rest of the city by I-95 and virtually every stakeholder on the avenue is against converting it to a mixed use of residence, hotels, and restaurants.

We have a dynamic port in Providence with national trends, like short sea shipping, very much in our future. We have deep water as a result of dredging and a highly desirable geography for distributing fuel oil, gasoline, coal, cement and highway deicing salt and for exporting scrap iron. We have tried to draw attention to these assets and to strengthen the bonds of all working waterfront ports throughout the state -- Providence, East Providence, Quonset/Davisville, Newport, and Galilee. We are the Ocean State. That is our strength. Let's not throw it away.