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## **Packet Related to S981, Partial Burial of Waterfront Power Lines**

1. FIPP, FPNA & JDA Letter supports S981 Sub A, 5/7/25
2. Sally Lapides, Residential Properties CEO: Letter supports S981, 5/8/25
3. FIPP Letter supports S981 Sub A, 5/8/25
4. FIPP Fact Sheet on economic benefits of burying power lines
5. RI Business Leaders support burying waterfront power lines
6. Prov. Jrl Oped: "Why can't we bury the waterfront power lines?" 2/27/22



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May 20, 2025

**Letter of Support for H5687 For Consideration  
by the House Municipal Government & Housing Committee**

Dear Chairman Casey,

I am writing today in support of H5687, which would start the process of burying the waterfront power lines in Providence and East Providence. As a long-time Providence resident and the owner of Residential Properties Ltd., Rhode Island's largest independent real estate company, I can speak about the positive impact that burying the lines would have on local businesses, the quality of life for residents of the State, and attracting new economic development in our Capital City.

Today India Point Park attracts nearby residents and people from other parts of the City, including thousands of people for the annual July 4<sup>th</sup> concert and fireworks. As the I-195 lands are developed, the Park could be part of a popular waterfront destination at the Head of the Bay that **attracts a segment of the millions of travelers who whizz by** on their way to the Cape and the Islands.

The Park should be attracting a larger state and regional population like Goddard and Colt State Parks. Why doesn't it? I suspect because **its visual beauty is obstructed** by overhead power lines. India Point Park is gorgeous, walkable to shops and restaurants in Fox Point and downtown Providence. It has a community boating center, paths, picnic areas, docks, the Brown Boat House and magnificent water views. The power lines mar the beauty of our largest expanse of city waterfront.

From a buyer's perspective, **power lines kill a sale**. Buyers comment on the impact of power lines on property values and the incidence of higher cancer rates. In both instances, proximity to power lines reduces property values. Our most expensive property assessments are always in places where the power lines are buried. Cooke and Manning Streets, with buried wires, have some of the highest property values in Providence. And the higher the property values, the higher the property taxes.

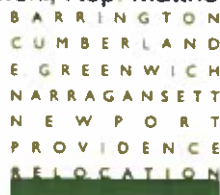
Ten years ago I toured Rhode Island with a **company considering relocating to our State**. Our time was limited, so we did half of the tour by boat which included looking at waterfront communities from Warwick Neck to Newport, Bristol, Barrington and East Providence, before docking at India Point Park. As we were disembarking, I heard someone comment about what an ugly obstruction the shoreline power lines were. After a sunny, warm day on our magnificent oceanfront, our visitors **ended their tour on a sour note**. It was surely not what I wanted them to remember about our city.

I strongly support burying the waterfront power lines and hope that you will support legislation to raise the remaining funds needed to get it done. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Sally E. Lapidès  
President/CEO

Cc: House Majority Leader Chris Blazewski, Rep. Matthew Dawson & Rep. Jenni Furtado





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**Statement Supporting H5687 Sub A: Partial Burial  
Of the Providence-East Providence Waterfront Power Lines,  
For Consideration by the House Municipal Govt & Housing Committee**

May 20, 2025

My name is David Riley, Co-Chair of Friends of India Point Park. Thank you, Chairman Casey, bill sponsors Dawson and Fortado, and Committee members, for this chance to express our support for H5687 SubA.

We have advocated burying the waterfront power lines for the last 23 years and are hopeful that this legislation will pass soon and burying the India Point Park power lines can start this year. ISO, the regional grid, will likely fund the second phase of relocating and updating the antiquated, 100-year-old Seekonk River crossing. We believe that crossing could and should be buried at a cost similar to replacing it with overhead lines high enough for masted vessels to safely pass under. Such an overhead crossing would scar our waterfront with even more conspicuous lines for another century.

**What's at stake tonight?** Nothing less than the **next 100 years** of our public waterfront. If we don't start burying these lines now, the 60 million people a year who use the I-195 gateway to Rhode Island will very likely see massive electrical towers dominating the Ocean State's only panoramic water views along its interstate highways for the foreseeable future.

What else is at stake? The chance to enhance our waterfront and reap major long term economic, environmental, and civic benefits, which other mid-size cities like Chattanooga, Louisville, and San Antonio have done over the last 20 years. Removing overhead power lines **boosts tourism and increases property values** of nearby areas by as much as 30%, thus increasing municipal tax bases.

Burying our waterfront power lines would enhance **four waterfront parks**: India Point, Corliss Landing, the Seekonk River pedestrian bridge park, and Bold Point in East Providence, parks used by an estimated 200,000 people a year. Many of them come from different parts of the Capitol Region. On any given summer day, the diversity of people enjoying India Pt. Pk. is unmistakable.

Some say this issue is "merely" about aesthetics, but in our post-industrial era **aesthetics and economics are often inseparable**. Is Waterfire an economic success or an aesthetic one? It's clearly both. So is burying power lines in waterfront green space. Every year 10 million people whizz through Providence on their way to the Cape and the Islands. If an enhanced waterfront were to attract 5% of them to stop and spend \$100 here, they would add **\$50 million a year** to our economy.

What would **burial cost**? RI Energy recently estimated that 2/3 of the cost of burying India Point Park's power lines has been raised by burial funds held in escrow which have accrued interest for 20 years. The remaining \$6.9 million needed would be raised by the two cities' ratepayers, which would cost the average Providence ratepayer \$77, or **\$2.14 a month** over three years, while the average East Providence ratepayer would pay \$0.89 a month over three years.

**Seventy organizations** have supported burial, including 11 governmental agencies and 17 business, 18 environmental, and 15 neighborhood groups, as well as 15 Prov. Journal editorials and op eds. The City Councils of Providence and East Providence have passed multiple resolutions urging burial over 20 years, including two passed in 2024 and 2025. As one of the 2,100 signers of our petition urging burial wrote, **"Providence's historic charm and the beauty of its waterfront are important parts of our heritage and our economy. The power lines depress both."**



May 20, 2025

Dear Mayors Smiley and DaSilva:

We are writing to express our support for H5687/S981Sub A, a bill that would facilitate the partial burial of the waterfront power lines through India Point Park. Thank you both for your leadership in getting Providence, East Providence, and RI Energy to work together to develop the current plan to bury the lines in the park and in East Providence, and to update and relocate the regional line's antiquated Seekonk River crossing built on 100-year-old lattice towers. We look forward to achieving this partial burial, after 23 years of advocacy on this issue.

If the Seekonk crossing is rebuilt overhead, it is important that it be built at heights that eliminate navigation safety hazards to the maritime community. In 2003 the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers revoked National Grid's permit to rebuild the Seekonk crossing at lower heights, which would have reduced the river's navigability.

Due to the danger of electrical arc to masted vessels in proximity to power lines, RI Energy should obtain a reliable estimate of the cost of building an overhead configuration south of the Seekonk's Redman pedestrian bridge which will allow safe navigation of ships that enter Narragansett Bay under the Newport Pell bridge. The need to maintain sufficient clearances of the transmission lines above the waterway, and the significant, incremental cost of doing so, may yet justify burying the line under the Seekonk River at ISO-NE's expense on behalf of ratepayers across New England. This would have the added benefit of enhancing the Seekonk River shoreline, and views of it from I-195, for the next 100 years.

We will support and urge our members to support this critical legislation during this session.

Sincerely,

David Riley, Co-Chair,  
Friends of India Pt. Pk.

Lily Bogosian, President,  
Fox Pt. Neighborhood Assn.

Sharon Steele, President,  
Jewelry District Assn.

cc: House Majority Leader Chris Blazewski, Rep. Stephen Casey, & Rep. Matthew Dawson





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## Economic Benefits of Burying Waterfront Power Lines: More Tourism & Higher Property Values

The high-voltage power lines on the Providence and East Providence waterfronts are a conspicuous impediment to the two cities capitalizing on their location at the head of Narragansett Bay. Other cities have shown that burying wires helps transform industrial backwaters into **popular waterfront destinations**.

### CREATING AN ATTRACTIVE WATERFRONT DESTINATION WILL ENCOURAGE TOURISM

In **Providence**, the Riverwalks and the removal of overhead utility lines created an attractive public space that set the stage for Waterfire, which draws more than 1 million visitors a year who add more than **\$100 million** to the City's economy. Removing the eyesore of the waterfront overhead wires would **entice some of the 10 million people who speed by 50n I-195** on their way to the Cape and the Islands every year to stop and spend some money in RI. If 5% of them were to spend \$100 here, they would **add \$50 million** to our economy.

**Chattanooga, Louisville, San Antonio** and other mid-size cities have buried shoreline wires and reaped major economic and civic benefits by creating attractive waterfront destinations that draw millions of people.

**CHATTANOOGA** buried high-voltage power lines in its riverfront parks, upgraded the area, and now hosts a million people a year at festivals featuring music, arts, wine, boat races, and parades.

"Burying utility lines is critical to the overall enjoyment of great public spaces." – *Jim Bowen, RiverCity Company, Chattanooga*

**LOUISVILLE** buried high-voltage wires and created Waterfront Park, which draws 1.5 million people to over 100 events a year: boat races, concerts, and festivals of fireworks, wine tasting, hot air balloons, etc.

"Waterfront Park has transformed a blighted industrial area into a **popular gathering spot**." -- *NY Times*

**SAN ANTONIO** buried utility lines on its Riverwalk, which draws about 5 million people a year to restaurants, boat rides and festivals, making it one of the **top tourist attractions in Texas** (Scenic America report).

### BOOSTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WILL RAISE PROPERTY VALUES

Proximity to high-voltage power lines can **depreciate property values by up to 30%**, according to multiple studies in the US and Canada, as reported in the *Journal of Real Estate Literature* and elsewhere. Burying these wires will improve the marketability of key waterfront parcels, raise their property values, and increase the tax base of Providence and East for the foreseeable future.



Overhead waterfront power lines (solid yellow line) will be highly visible from projected development parcels in Providence and E. Providence, reducing their property value.

Waterfront developers and businesses in **Providence** (the Procaccianti Group, Residential Properties, and others) have written letters urging burial because it "will be a major asset to the Providence Waterfront and the redevelopment of the new 195 land parcels."

In **East Providence**, the wires and looming towers are highly visible from the new Tockwotton Home and other developable parcels. The East Providence Waterfront Commission urges burial to create "**a more attractive waterfront for future high-quality private development**" and for current residents.

*Compiled by Friends of India Pt. Pk, 2025*



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## **RI Business Leaders Support Burying Power Lines On Providence/East Providence Waterfront**

India Point Park... fails to meet its full potential as a visitor destination due in part to the unsightliness and intrusion of the power lines.... Other cities that have buried waterfront power lines have reaped **huge benefits in increased programming and usage of waterfront areas**.

Providence-Warwick Convention & Visitors Bureau CEO Martha Sheridan

It is our experience that buried power lines **enhance property values and improve views**, which are critical components to successful real estate development. We strongly support burying the power lines in this key Providence district.

The Procaccianti Group, Peter Ziegler, VP for Asset Management

**Power lines kill a sale.** Buyers comment on the impact of power lines on either property values or the incidence of higher cancer rates. In both cases, proximity to power lines reduces property values. Our most expensive property assessments are always in places where power lines are buried.

Residential Properties President and CEO, Sally Lapides

Burying the wires will not only enhance our future project, but will be a **major asset** for the Providence waterfront and the redevelopment of the new I-195 parcels.

Churchill and Banks Exec. Vice President Richard Baccari II

We considered having a helicopter company do tours of Providence from India Point Park, but the power lines make that a no fly zone.... Continuing to improve the Park will **pay dividends for tourism** and attracting new businesses.

Rhode Island Seafood Festival Co-Founder TJ McNulty

We made a multi-million dollar investment in creating an international education organization at the old Tockwotton Home. When potential students and their parents visit, **the power lines often elicit negative comments**. Their photos of the area are shared globally (literally) and become a lasting and public image of Providence.

Roosevelt International Academy Managing Partner Ben Ben Tre

I hear first-hand from our residents and their families about their aversion to the towers and lines. The **mammoth towers are a blight on the developing East Bay landscape**. Moving them will provide new business development and job creation for the Providence and East Providence waterfronts.

Tockwotton on the Waterfront Exec. Director Kevin McKay

Burying the wires will create a more attractive **waterfront destination for tourists**, more business for local merchants, more sales tax revenue, and potentially more jobs, on top of the jobs created to bury the lines.

Wickenden Area Merchants Assn. President Vincent Scorziello  
WAMA represents 34 Wickenden area businesses

The power lines are an **eyesore** next to the \$52 million new Tockwotton on the Waterfront. Burying them will create a more attractive waterfront for future high-quality private development, as well as for current residents.

East Providence Waterfront District Commission  
Vice Chairman William Fazioli

*Compiled by Friends of India Point Park. (Bold added.)*