More than 3.5 million people visit the city of Newport each year. Over two-thirds of these people and their vehicles enter the city from the North and the West, arriving in Newport via Farewell Street after winding through part or all of the Pell Bridge Interchange. This complex series of ramps and approaches were built in the late 1960's and were intended to provide a seamless open highway connection between the Pell Bridge and Route 24. Hailed by public opinion, the Pell Bridge Interchange plans were abandoned and construction was never completed. In addition to the confusing ramps, the interchange sprawls across 25 acres of land and bisects local traffic patterns, resulting in confused motorists and clogged intersections. Disappointed by ever increasing traffic pressures, The Foundation For Newport commissioned a plan in 1997 to study traffic and congestion problems in the city. The study was carried out by the planning group W.T.G. Warner, Todd and Gaffney. The office of William D. Warner Architects and Planners provided design services to finalize the conceptual plans and provide formal recommendations. This team sought to reconfigure the interchange, re-think how traffic moves into the city and develop appropriate gateways to the historic city. The 1997 Newport Harborfront Plan Report identified the following goals for this area.

**Goals**

1. Reverse the growing traffic congestion in Newport
2. Intercept visitors to the city and provide alternative transportation opportunities: Develop an intermodal hub at the interchange
3. Provide safe, convenient, and low cost parking for passengers and interstate busses
4. Develop reliable and safe public transportation systems that encourage both residents and visitors to get out of their vehicles (light rail, rubber tired CNG trolleys, water taxis, etc.)
5. Identify and create a hierarchy of roadways for moving vehicles. Re-establish lost city streets and create new city streets in scale with the surroundings
6. Create new development opportunities by identifying development parcels within the 25 acres of R.O.W. land
The City of Newport is a primary provider for the tourism industry in Rhode Island, with historic mansion tours alone attracting over 860,000 visitors a year to the area. Congestion from visitors' automobile traffic is growing at an alarming rate, and threatens the very tourism at its source. In 1996, the Foundation for Newport engaged Warner-Todd-Gaffney (a partnership associated with WDWAP) to prepare a master plan that addressed these issues. We were guided by the following goals:

- Reverse the growth of traffic congestion.
- Improve access to the water along the Harbortfront.
- Intercept visitors' traffic and provide an attractive and reliable system of public transportation.
- Improve the quality of public attractions.
- Find alternatives to the use of valuable waterfront in parking lots.
- Define ways future development can be in scale with the surrounding historic architecture.

**Plan Proposals:**

**Pell Bridge Gateway:** Reconfigure unfinished ramps & roadways leading from Pell Bridge by creating a functional gateway. Demolish 4-lane “freeway to nowhere” east of the bridge; reconnect Cornell Highway to Forewall Street.

**Pell Bridge Transportation Center:** Establish a transportation center to intercept Newport visitors, consisting of 1,000-car parking garage and combined trolley & tour-bus station.

**Economic Benefits:** Redesigned ramp system frees up nearly 23 acres of right-of-way (ROW) land for development.

**Improve Rail and Trolley Corridor:** Connecting the Pell Bridge and the waterfront.

**Marine Transportation Center at Long Wharf:** strengthens existing Gateway Center.

**Establish Water Taxi Harbort Circulator Service:** to connect wharves, Fort Amans, and other destinations.

**Transform America’s Cup Avenue to Tree-lined Boulevard with Center Greenway:** Reconnect pedestrian and bike streets with harbortfront. Create small development sites.

**Harbortfront Pier Improvements:** Waterfront docks, walkway paving, landscaping, period lighting for Bannister’s Wharf, Anne Street Pier, Howard Wharf, King Park & Fort Adams.

**Lower Thames Street:** Bury overhead wires. Add street trees, brick crosswalks, period lighting & benches.