

In a Recent “My View” titled *Commuter rail expansion has left the station*, the author equates the expansion of the commuter rail line from Lakeville/Middleborough to Buzzards Bay with the state’s many large infrastructure rail projects. I think this is an inaccurate relationship.

I agree with the author when he states that it is unwise to spend “billions of dollars to build and hundreds of millions of dollars every year to operate” new systems that require new infrastructure at the same time we are not maintaining what we have.

But I contend that what he describes is very different from extending service on existing track from the Lakeville/Middleborough station to Wareham and Buzzards Bay. The extension will involve sending existing cars and staff only 18 miles beyond where the commuter line now ends. And no new infrastructure will be needed.

The track has already been upgraded to support commuter-speed trains. Crossings and signals have also been upgraded over the past few years to meet commuter standards. And yet this state asset for passengers is currently used only by the CapeFLYER on weekends during the summer months.

Why not use existing, underutilized infrastructure, and in the process meet state mandates such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions and “increasing the share of travel by means other than the single occupancy vehicle”?

I would also suggest that there is a difference between building new infrastructure in undeveloped areas and extending an existing rail line to an area that has positioned itself for managed growth.

The Village of Buzzards Bay, Bourne’s Downtown, has taken several actions over the last half-dozen years to invite development and redevelopment. Residents voted overwhelmingly for a new Downtown District Zoning By-law that encourages mixed use, greater density, and other smart growth principles while discouraging single-family residences on large lots. They also voted in favor of a by-law establishing standards for architectural design and signs. And the Town received approval for a Growth Incentive Zone from the Cape Cod Commission.

These major actions position Bourne’s Downtown to prevent suburban sprawl. And on-going studies report that Buzzards Bay will not need a 1,000 car parking lot, as suggested previously. In fact, it is predicted that existing parking will meet initial commuter needs.

Bourne’s Downtown has the potential to become a model for Transit Oriented Development. In TOD areas, people, primarily young professionals and empty-nesters, can live, work and play without getting into cars. With the broadband infrastructure running the length of Main Street in Buzzards Bay, residents can work at home – dramatically reducing the incidence of commuter congestion and related emissions. And when they do need to go to their offices, commuter train will be no more than a ten-minute walk away.

These new TOD area residents will also create demands for new, basic services – dry cleaners, shoe repair, food stores, *etc.* – that will increase the commercial tax base, relieving some of the tax pressure on all Bourne residents. Again, with the new Downtown zoning by-law, these services can easily be offered in the mixed use buildings envisioned for Main Street.

The “My View” author concludes by stating that the “train has left the station.” I, and others, welcome the idea – but in our vision the train is leaving the Lakeville/Middleborough station and heading to Buzzards Bay.

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