

## Living Room Conversation on Public Transportation in the Berkshires

### Outcomes:

We need to improve the design of our local public transportation,  
to make it more effective.

We need to pay attention to protecting our local quality of life,  
expanding it in sustainable ways, and preserving our local character.

We need affordable, timely, clean access to important destinations,  
including New York, Boston, Pittsfield, Albany, and the Pioneer Valley.

With regard to all of the above,  
we need to keep in mind, "How to do it well?"

### How We Got There:

#### *How to increase access from the Berkshires to NYC?*

##### *Background Data*

- 1) Metro transit authority currently has a proposal to extend the Wassauc line north. Undecided how far they will extend, possibly to Great Barrington.
- 2) Danbury to Housatonic is a different line.
- 3) Danbury is a private line, with government subsidies.

##### *Need more info...*

- 1) On how we'd get from Hillsdale to GB since there's mountain in the way.
- 2) Not sure how we would pay for train system.

### *Potential Solutions*

- 1) Adopt the current proposal to extend train line to Great Barrington, and go even further.... extend it up all the way to North Adams!
- 2) Extend Wassaic line to Pittsfield.
- 3) Extend Danbury line to Pittsfield.

### *Pros and Cons*

- 1) Railroad lines create concentrated activity & development around stations.
- 2) Sprawl is bad for environment, and worsens existing divides (class, educational, ethnic, etc.).Having RR lines would prevent further sprawl.
- 3) One of the problems with sprawl is increasing cost of infrastructure.
- 4) A benefits of higher density is less taxes (more cost-effective infrastructure.)
  
- 5) Some of us would love to go from Wassaic to S/N Berkshires by train.
- 6) Would be fun to go into city easily for fun stuff. At the same time, concern that if people can easily go into city for fun stuff, then this will become a bedroom community – less incentive for generating our own fun stuff here.
- 7) Concern that property prices could go up.
- 8) We would get more New Yorkers, and we already have too many...☺
- 9) Possibility to generate more diversity in area, by train access to the Berkshires. That can be a benefit.
  
- 10)Concerns re possible increase in drug gangs/ crime.
- 11)People not so likely to come to Berkshires by train if they don't live here, since you need a car to get anywhere once you are here.
- 12)On the other hand, having people come up on trains, rental car companies would sprout up, and we would have even more cars...
- 13)Concerns that our “quiet place” would be lost.

### ***How to protect the needs and quality of life of local residents?***

#### *Potential Solutions:*

- 1) Create a differential rate for the train; make fares exorbitant for out-of-towners, reasonable for residents.
- 2) Create measures to safeguard quality of life, protect property values from skyrocketing and making it even more unaffordable for locals.
  
- 3) Create 2-tier pricing system to keep drug dealers from flooding area.
- 4) Build a wall to protect the Berkshires! ☺
- 5) Build a train from here to North Adams, but NOT to NY.
  
- 6) Instead of a unidirectional throughfare, create a NETWORK of transport lines, with several “crossing points” where the different lines cross.

*Pros and Cons, Additional Data:*

- 1) Martha's Vineyard has a precedent of two different prices, one for coming in and one for going out.
- 2) Having a "throughfare" model has strong negative impacts on flow: a "network" model is more beneficial.

***How to improve our local transportation system?***

*Background data:*

- 1) Current bus system is inadequate (is not a network model).
- 2) Buses don't go to hill towns.
- 3) People work in hospitality industry in So. County, live in hilltowns as they can't afford to live in So. County, and don't have access to public transit.
- 4) Bus from GB to Pittsfield, doesn't let people get there for start of workday.

*Potential solutions:*

- 1) Create a local transport network of buses, having buses shuttle back and forth between towns (rather than going on a long slow "throughfare" route)
- 2) Have focus be, improving public transportation WITHIN Berkshire County.
- 3) Create practical way for people to take public transit from GB to Pittsfield, for example, for a 9 am court hearing.
- 4) Have a combination of many different kinds of public transport.
- 5) Make public transportation system NICE so people will WANT to ride on it.
  
- 6) Promote ridesharing possibilities such as Ride Buzz and Ride Share.
- 7) Promote widespread hitchhiking!

*More related data:*

- 5) Amherst has a 5-town bus system that is very effective, paid for by the revenues from the college.
- 6) India has a nationalized bus and train system
- 7) Also has many different classes and kinds of public transportation.
- 8) Highway lobby in U.S. is fueled by trucking industry.
- 9) Trolleys were invented by someone from Stockbridge, and for a time not allowed in Stockbridge.

***How to increase access from Berkshire County to Boston and Pioneer Valley?***

*Background data:*

- 1) Not being connected to Boston, disempowers us with regard to our own state government.
- 2) There is currently a bus/train from Pittsfield to Boston.
- 3) However it runs once a day, and arrives in the evening, so if you want to go for a daytime activity, you need to stay overnight.

*Solutions*

- 1) Create effective way to get to Boston, so we can influence our own state government, state associations. Include transportation to Pioneer Valley.

***Closing thoughts...***

*Background data:*

- 1) Some things can't be undone. We are already built in a scattered way. So regardless of how we improve transportation system, some people will need to drive to access it.
- 2) We need to think of where we live. Driving is ok, but not so much in the winter. Would be good to minimize how far we need to drive.

*Possible solutions:*

- 1) We need to balance quality of life issues, with isolation issues.
- 2) Create an easy, accessible, affordable system of public transportation, prioritizing travel WITHIN Berkshire County, and then working outward.
- 3) Have quality of life, as a priority, in whatever "solution" is created.