

Freedom Matters

A Weekly Newsletter

Dane County, Wisconsin

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We are a free people in a republic, under a constitution which limits the powers of government to those necessary to secure the unalienable rights of each person to their life, liberty and property. Yet, when a legislature is in session, no one's life, liberty or property is safe. It's the curse of a democracy. That's why we have a republic instead. *Freedom Matters* dedicates itself to the fight to restore our republic. Most of the press and courts fail to do so. They've forgotten that freedom matters.

22 Twain

by Bob Bowman

In a certain comedy movie of some years ago, a sign looms out of the fog bearing a house address — 22 Twain. That fictional address was a pun, and one that uncannily expresses the level of thinking that favors commuter rail in Madison.

Every fact is against commuter rail. Mainly, too few people ride it. Thus, except in the very most densely populated cities, it fails to solve traffic problems. So, it is a waste to build it in Madison. Worse, it is the road to bankruptcy to build it here.

The horrendous cost of commuter rail is true even for a tacky commuter rail, like the clunker proposed for Madison. Transport 2020 plans to use existing track in Madison, which is in such bad repair that high speed rail is not an option. Put out of your mind those sleek aerodynamic trains of fairyland dreams, that whisk you from home to work like superman. Faster than a speeding bullet? No. Slower than a shambling bullock. That's Transport 2020's train.

For those clunky slow trains, Transport 2020 cites capital costs of a fifth of a billion dollars. If underestimated, like other commuter rail projects, a more likely cost is a third of a billion. Based on transit projects involving the names Parsons and Brinckerhoff (the Transport 2020's hired guns), the real capital costs might be over half a billion. And that's just for the "minimal operable segment." The full "local preferred alternative" (LPA) in Transport 2020 is described but **never priced**. *Figure a billion or more for the LPA.*

In sum, the proposed commuter rail in Madison is a system which will fail to move people, fail to reduce street congestion, and will bankrupt city and county. Still, in a perverse way, it *will* move people. It will drive them out of high cost Dane, and they'll commute from adjacent counties, to work in Madison.

So, if the railophiles get their way, and build their commuter rail in Madison, they will embark the city

and the county on a rat race to find the tax base and densified population to pay for it, and to ride it. If the citizens of Madison think they have congestion and budget woes now, rail will worsen it, big time.

How ironic. Folks like Falk, Cieslewicz, Sierra Clubbers, and 1000 Friends rail against "sprawl," but the rail they rail in favor of will do them in. Rail would create a congested central city, like Manhattan or Los Angeles, and the beautiful Madison that they pretend to love will no longer exist.

So why are these folks so dead set to build commuter rail? It's not rational to build it, so what is the source of their irrationality about it? It seems they are ideologs. Neo-Malthusian ideologs. Those whose agenda is "sustainable development." They are pro-rail only because they are anti-automobile. They see cars as causing unsustainable consumption.

You ask: What are Neo-Malthusians? Thomas Malthus, in 1798, proposed that the human birthrate exceeded the rate of resource replenishment, leading to eventual exhaustion of the means for survival. Well, Malthus' theory may work with animals. No matter, for in the 200+ years of history since 1798, his theory has failed, applied to humans.

Yet, Malthus' theory is claimed as true for humans, re a Club of Rome report titled "The Limits of Growth" (1972). That led to the idea of sustainable development, defined in Gro Harlem Brundtland's report *Our Common Future* (the U.N. World Commission on Environment and Development). Her definition is: *"development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."*

Henry Lamb noted that sustainable development is called "smart growth" in current U.S. politics. By whatever name, it's an idea too cute to work. It's a pun, as is two-two twain, except it's dangerous, because its proponents pretend it is real.

More on this, next issue.

Readers' Bulletin Board. e-mail us your comments. Include your name, for publication by *Freedom Matters*

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