

# The Herald News

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## GUEST OPINION: Strong transportation in Fall River a prescription for good health

By **David S. Weed**

Posted Mar 23, 2013 @ 05:02 PM

Fundamentally, transportation is about access to jobs and housing, economic competitiveness, convenience and quality of life, and our environment. We know we need a good transportation system, one that encourages economic development, makes our lives easier and better, and does not harm the environment. This is as true about Fall River as it is about any community.

Transportation is also about our health. Research shows again and again that people who take public transit — in our case SRTA buses — walk many times further each day than those using cars. On average, those walking from home, school or work to the bus stop come close to achieving the 22 minutes per day of moderate physical activity recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In Fall River, we are seeing more and more people using bicycles to get where they are going. Whether they cycle by choice or are forced to ride by the rising price of gasoline, bicycling is a mode of transportation, not just a recreational activity. The creation of new cycling infrastructure, as seen in the Veterans Memorial Bridge, the planned Quequechan River Rail Trail and improvements to Plymouth Avenue and Eastern Avenue, will soon provide important commuter links, connecting campuses of BCC and UMass and the City's three high schools.

Increased walking and biking has a direct impact on health, resulting a lowered body mass index and decreased risk of obesity and hypertension, each of which can lead to a host of costly health outcomes. According to a 2012 report from Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, reducing the frequency of these conditions offers the possibility of saving billions in health care costs.

But that's not all. For every new trip made by public transit, on foot, or by bike, emissions will be reduced and air quality improved, resulting in better health outcomes for people with respiratory conditions like asthma. It also means fewer injuries and deaths from automobile traffic accidents.

We're making progress in Fall River, with projects such as the upcoming improvements to the Route 79/Interstate 195 interchange. We're also completing construction on a new bus terminal downtown. But changes still need to be made to encourage bus ridership and to get people out of their automobiles.

If we want to make public transit, walking, and biking attractive to Fall River's residents, it is critical that we invest in a 21st century transportation system today. For the health of the Commonwealth and Fall River, the time for action is now. That is why the Steering Committee of Partners for a Healthier Community is calling on the Massachusetts Legislature to invest in walking, biking, and public transit and to advance health equity with a long term solution to our state's transportation needs during the current session. Our health depends on it.

*David S. Weed, Psy.D., is executive director of Greater Fall River Partners for a Healthier Community, Inc.*

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slamond

2 days ago

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Health and bicycling have nothing to do with transportation. We need an improved local road and highway system, lower taxes and more jobs so people can afford their own cars.

And to afford the freedom that comes with owning one.

Government 'Transportation' spending is code for padding the pensions of state workers.

Smitty

2 days ago

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Weed, stop peddling the local transit system. It's not all that good, and the only way it's going to get better--since they won't make the riders pay for the bigger share of it--is on the backs of the taxpayers. People who own cars still do a lot of walking--enough to stay healthy. Your blather is a simple attempt to push SERTA--that's how transparent it is.

SouthCoast Optimist

2 days ago

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Investment = taxes ..... there seems to be an all out push on raising taxes. The president wants higher taxes, the new health care law means higher payments and taxes, the governor wants higher taxes, Senator Warren wants a \$22 minimum wage (her words), the legislature wants higher taxes and people like Mr. Weed want higher taxes locally. There will be nothing left of the tax paying middle class when these people are done with us. Enough.

cmmsnse

1 day ago

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You want to increase ridership? Cut out the vouchers for cab fare to and from methadone clinics, Charlton and St. Anne's ER's. Make the druggies pay. Make people on welfare, EBT, etc. take public transportation instead of taxi's. Then they can get as well walking to and from the bus stops. Increase use in this manner and that may cause an increase in routes. Charge riders a fair fare. Taxpayers are tired of subsidizing the lazy and the drug addled. if the train comes that will be more subsidies.

Linda Rapoza

1 hour ago

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David Weed was the man behind the push for needle-exchange in this city. That should give everyone a clearer picture of what the kooks in this city view as 'health-care'.

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