



Waunakee Rotary Club

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While some believe commuter rail in Dane County will solve congestion and pollution problems, others see it as "highway robbery."

Bill Richardson of the organization, "The Great Train Robbery," offered several arguments against commuter rail at the Jan. 14 Waunakee Rotary Club meeting.

Bill said he got involved in the movement when the county board began to show disdain for the constituents, and he admits he's a biased advocate for better bus service and roads. Bill said he's a Republican, and thus lonely.

For the past 10 years, the Transport 2020 plan has been under way, Bill said. But that "morphed" into a plan for trains until finally a group of elected officials voted to enact legislation in the wee hours of the night that created a Regional Transit Authority (RTA). The legislation was sandwiched into the state budget, and it was voted on without public input, Bill said.

The RTA is an unelected body charged with making transportation decisions and managing a half-cent sales tax.

"In my thinking, it's anti-democratic because it ignores public input," Bill said.

The Great Train Robbery organization contends that trains will cause more congestion, pollution and frustration. The nine 70- to 80-ton diesel locomotives starting and stopping while getting 1.25 gallons per mile 17 hours a day is bound to leave its own carbon footprint, Bill said.

Bill also believes that few people will use the trains because most commuters add trips onto their drive to and from work every day. The proposed rail route spans from Middleton to the Town of Burke and fails to provide the flexibility most commuters need.

Bill presented several alternatives to commuter rail that he believes will solve congestion and pollution, he said. They include:

- diverting traffic around the city of Madison.
- moving major employers into other areas of county.
- encouraging public and private telecommuting in the work place.
- varying work hours.
- bringing county roads to an A/B rating.
- allowing engineers, rather than politicians, to solve traffic and pollution problems.
- providing better bus service to the county's outlying areas.
- spending the gas tax as was intended.

Bill also argues that commuter rail will cost too much. Subsidies for bus service run about \$6.50 per passenger, according to the Transport 2020 study. But according to a study Bill cited, there would be about a \$43 per-passenger subsidy for rail.

According to literature Bill presented, rail would be 80 to 90 percent taxpayer supported while serving less than 5 percent of commuters.

The county board and other city leaders have made their appointments to the RTA, appointees who support rail, Bill said. The Dane County Cities and Villages Association has yet to appoint its member.

Bill said there is no legal guidance for the referendum question the RTA will soon pose to the voters to enact a half-cent sales tax. He noted it could simply ask, "Do you want better transportation choices?" – a question most would answer yes to.

Bill urged Rotarians to visit the Web site, www.thegreattrainrobbery for more information.

In other news:

- Harriet Statz pointed out an article about Bird, the club's foreign

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Calendar of Events:

- Feb. 5-7, Winter weekend for Rotary Exchange students
- Feb. 7, Super Bowl
- Feb. 20, Hypnotist show benefit for Waunakee Community Foundation
- May 17, Jachin Jordan Golf Outing a Bishop's Bay

exchange student, that appears in The Waunakee Tribune. She said the two outbound students both got their first choice of places to study. Derek Fuerstenberg will go Japan and Emma Hansen will go to Croatia this fall.

Guests: Lilly King, guest of Neil King; Sky Kim, guest of Jon Jordan; Becky Ohan and Jo Miller, guests of Ellen Schaaf; Rob Ketter, guest of John Cullen; Tim Murray, guest of Rotary; Sara Moffatt, guest of Shelley Moffatt; Genna Eaton, guest of Phil Willems.

Visiting Rotarians: None.

Birthdays: Jan. 22, Daniel Muxfeld; Jan. 26, Jim Meyer; Jan. 26, Mike Lawrence; Jan. 27, Pat Durden.

Anniversaries: None.

Prayers: Jan. 21, Susan Vergeront; Jan. 28, Leonard Allen; Feb. 4, Pat Durden.

Programs: Jan. 21, Mike Ableidinger on profile background checks; Jan. 28, Gordon Meffert and Mike Ableidinger classification talks; Feb. 4, club assembly.

Greeters: Jan. 21, Neil King and Ed Kruchten; Jan. 28, Neil Kruschek and Craig Larson; Feb. 4, Drew Lawrence and Mike Lawrence.