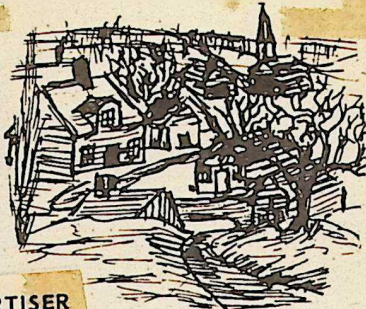


Village View

by Andrea Leonard



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A crying need in the Town of Barnstable -- indeed, in the County of Barnstable -- is for convenient and inexpensive public transportation to serve everyone.

Difficulties present themselves immediately because the town is made up of so many little villages, neighborhoods and commercial centers.

People want to go in all different directions at different times of the day and night; there's no pattern to where people want to go.

A bus route has been proposed to pick up passengers at various way-stations in the villages, between Mashpee Circle and Hyannis.

This may be in service shortly and may help many who have no alternate transportation, or those who might drive their own cars into the village and board a bus there for Hyannis.

For many, however, the bus won't be practical. I think of half-a-dozen reasons a bus won't accomplish what I want when I want it.

I won't leave from near my home -- it's over a mile from the village center. I wouldn't mind walking to the village in nice weather, but in rain, cold, snow, or even when I've gotten a late start, I'll drive.

It won't return at the hour -- which varies -- I'll want to return. Neither will it take me to my office. Another half-mile walk will face me when I get off the bus.

It'll prohibit doing errands en route, or a side-trip to another village. This irregular pattern happens to be a personal need, for in addition to my regular job, I have part-time work over in Barnstable where I go once or twice a week. I'm not unique in this.

Back in my own village, I'll still need transportation to my residence. I might be carrying a couple of bags of groceries, a briefcase of papers, a pair of shoes just repaired, the mail and newspapers. Without a car, the burden would be more than an inconvenience.

Fortunately, I have a car. Because I'm serious about conservation, about saving energy in every way possible, and feel guilty about traveling over the road in a six-passenger automobile in solitary splendor five days a week -- if convenient and inexpensive public transportation were available, I'd use it.

In fact, if I could manage without it, I'd sell my car and use public transportation exclusively. I think lots of people would.

Savings would be considerable. Auto insurance, depreciation, maintenance, repairs -- over and above initial cost -- would be eliminated. My budget would look a lot healthier in these days of inflation without automobile expenses.

To earn a living, however, I must get around. There's no work for me within walking distance of my home.

Is there a solution?

Other parts of the world have found solutions. One place, in particular, has a system that might work well here. I don't know the legal and political ramifications, but these could be explored.

ies but is relatively low; perhaps 10¢ or 20¢ for a short ride and 35¢ or 40¢ for a longer one.

The publicos do have certain restrictions. Their areas are limited. If we were to institute such a plan here, for instance, some cars would serve Cotuit and Santuit, as far as the center of Marstons Mills, eastbound, and to Mashpee Circle, westbound.

A passenger from Cotuit, wishing to go to Hyannis, would change in the Mills. Cars from the Mills would serve Newtown, Race Lane, Route 28 to the Centerville lights, and Osterville.

Osterville cars would serve Wianno, Oyster Harbors, Centerville, Craigville, and West Barnstable Road to Race Lane.

Centerville cars would serve Craigville, West Hyannis Port, Phinney's Lane and Old Stage Road areas, into Hyannis. This would include the Community College.

Connections could be made at various principal stopping places with cars serving West Barnstable and Barnstable as well as the neighborhoods between. All cars would pick up passengers on return trips, and get as many passenger-miles per trip as possible.

In addition to a small identifying light at atop the roof, each car would carry a special license plate, -- in Puerto Rico they are yellow -- and drivers would be specially licensed (and presumably pass more stringent drivers' tests and carry adequate insurance) to assure passenger safety.

Someone in Cotuit, say, who wanted to go to West Barnstable would go to the Mills for a 10¢ fare, change cars for Race Lane for another 10¢ fare, and be picked up there by a car from West Barnstable, making the whole trip for 40¢ or 50¢.

He would share his ride with, perhaps, four other passengers, maximum at any one time. The car would stop anywhere, en route, to take on or discharge passengers, as long as there was room. The driver would go out of his way to drop passengers wherever they wished to go.

That is, if a person wanted to go directly to West Barnstable, the shortest route would be via Route 149; however, if another passenger wanted to go to Dr. Leach's, the car would go east on Race Lane, drop that passenger at the vet's, and proceed on West Barnstable Rd.

Someone else, waiting at Route 6 overpass, might be headed for Barnstable Village. He'd take the place of the person who got out at Dr. Leach's, and after dropping you at the Village Store, he'd be carried to the intersection of Routes 132 and 6A. There a Barnstable car would pick him up -- in due time -- and transport him to the Court House, perhaps.

This system works amazingly well for Puerto Ricans. Lots of men support families, driving publicos. Lots of other people don't have unnecessary auto expenses.

For the most part, these public cars are broadly patronized; people go wherever they want without inconvenience and without spending a lot of money for personal transportation.

Would such a plan work in Barnstable? For all of Cape Cod? I believe it could.

The only way we'll ever find out is to try