

EDITORIAL

Too late for 28?

Pressures to commercialize Route 28 in the Town of Barnstable have been building (and have met resistance) since the highway was constructed approximately fifty years ago. Every decade or so, some pressure has been relieved when small sections were rezoned for commercial use, but now an active, foresighted, and determined group of dedicated people proposes a moratorium on all building fronting on Route 28.

Twenty years ago or more, Barnstable County Commissioners studied double-barrelling Route 28 to make a parkway between Falmouth and Yarmouth to handle anticipated traffic in the future. Expense of the project seemed prohibitive even though land-acquisition costs at that time would not have been enormous. Road construction estimates killed the plan. Maps and engineering studies still gather dust in county archives.

Since then, land prices have quadrupled and road construction costs more than tripled. Parkway require broad acreage for barriers between highways and bordering residential property, barriers to muffle sound and screen traffic from sight; they also require adequate space at interchanges for on/off ramps.

To appreciate Route 28's carrying capacity, you must do more than drive it now and then; you must spend 30 minutes alongside the highway. You must stop, look, and listen. You must ask, would I want to live here?

Together with steady streams of passenger cars, the road carries a burden of heavy trucks, monsters that roar and grind while moving sand and gravel, lumber, asphalt, heavy machinery, fuel, groceries and household goods of all descriptions. Almost every commodity arriving on the Cape to feed, house, clothe, entertain, and supply our myriad needs and desires crosses the canal by truck, moves between major delivery points over either Route 28 or Route 6. Route 6 is sufficiently barriered that bordering residential areas are not greatly disturbed. So, also, is Route 28 from Buzzards Bay to

Falmouth. Not so, though, in Barnstable or other down-Cape towns.

Several possible solutions may be considered. Reinstate rail service to transport most materials now coming over the road. Purchase modern locomotives to minimize noise. Upgrade the railbed to accommodate anticipated load.

Or, build (perhaps in the Plymouth woods?) a transfer station where heavy trucks or freight cars may off-load supplies to small vans for point-to-point delivery to Cape commercial areas.

Ban heavy trucks from Routes 28 and 6-A, and from residential streets in Barnstable except for point-to-point home deliveries. Require special permits for those.

Alternatively, use railway flat-cars to "piggy-back" leviathans of the highways, preventing serious and rapid deterioration of roads never built for them, and reducing noise pollution.

While a moratorium on commercial building on Route 28 in the Town of Barnstable is justified, limiting residential construction in areas we hope will remain residentially zoned seems counter-productive.

Consider traffic congestion, this past summer, on Route 28 between Old Stage Road and Phinney's Lane. Here, only right-turn-exits-and-entrances to and from parking areas should be permitted. Exits and entrances should be limited to a single one on each side of the road to enable traffic to flow steadily. From the rear of parking areas, traffic should be funnelled to feeders leading back to Route 28 at major intersections.

Don't say it can't be done. Don't say it's too expensive. Don't say it's too late. Consider the horrendous alternatives!

The section of Route 28 that carries all types of vehicles between Mashpee and Yarmouth town lines is a pressure cooker with no safety valve, set over high heat, but it is not too late to turn the burner switch to simmer.