

OUR VIEW

The politics of a Shelter Island bus

Only on Shelter Island could advocacy for public transportation be considered politically incorrect.

That has been the general sentiment at Town Hall whenever the issue of the East End Shuttle — a coordinated bus and rail system proposed for all five East End towns — has come up. The board over the years has voted to support studying the concept, but no one at Town Hall has fully embraced it, at least not publicly.

This week the critics came out in force against town participation in a Peconic Bay Transportation Authority, a proposal with legs not only because of MTA taxes and service cuts but because the concept has been validated and vetted through the shuttle plan. They even spoke against a public vote on the issue and did so with tacit if not explicit support from Town Board members.

The town has a lot to learn about how a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) would work and what the town's rights would be to opt in or out of it. Little about this proposal is set in stone. The bill to authorize a referendum on the issue is currently being amended to bring Brookhaven Town into the plan. What next?

Before weighing in on the bill, the Town Board needs to learn more about the potential impacts and benefits of increased public transportation to Shelter Islanders. So far, they've only heard from critics who would deny those favoring public transportation any say in the matter, whether it involves a Shelter Island bus or not. We need to hear from local businesses, senior citizens and their caregivers as well as our current taxi services, to fully vet the pros and cons of this proposal.

And we need to hear from our elected state and county representatives who unanimously and fervently support this plan. RTA opponent Art Bloom may be a Republican by occupation, as he said Tuesday, but so are Ken LaValle and Ed Romaine, who do not see the Peconic Bay Transportation Authority as a joke.

Legitimate questions about paying for this system should be pursued but not with a bias against the proposal. Breaking away from the MTA involves fiscal risks and they need to be spelled out. But the notion that no one can manage those risks any better than the MTA flies in the face of that agency's own admissions. Any fiscal analysis should consider this: does it make more sense to pay \$60 million in taxes per year to the MTA for next to no service or the Volpe Center estimate of \$44 million for a vastly improved rail-bus system?

More debate is needed, and Town Board members will ultimately decide whether any of us have a say in this issue when they vote for or against a public referendum. Denying Islanders an independent vote on the issue, now *that* would be politically incorrect.



KATHARINE SCHROEDER PHOTO

The beach in winter

Protesters taking a break from the rally to save Orient Beach State Park enjoy the view of Shelter Island and beyond.

PROSE & COMMENTS

To those who care for a drug abuser

BY MARILYNN PYSHER, CTC COORDINATOR

Recently it has become clear that heroin is on our Island and that some of our young adults are involved with this highly addictive and dangerous drug. While CTC programs are focused on preventing substance abuse and other problem behaviors among youth, we wanted to share some thoughts/advice from drug abuse experts on how best to help your friend or loved one to seek and stay in recovery.

If they are currently using:

- First of all, no guilt or shame. You did not cause it, you cannot control it and you cannot cure it. If the person has become addicted, they have a progressive, deadly disease, a disease that they cannot control without the help of an ongoing recovery program.

- Denial is a major aspect of the problem, so do not participate in or support the denial by minimizing it or supporting the idea that

the individual can control it on their own — they can't.

- No amount of willpower will keep the user away from their drug of choice, so do not nag or beg them to straighten up — it only gives them another excuse to turn to a substance for relief.

- People who have become addicted will not seek recovery until they feel they have no other choice. This is called "hitting bottom." Getting to this point is critical for them to do the hard work necessary to stay clean and sober. Sometimes a skillful intervention conducted by a professional will result in a wake-up call that will cause the user to seek help, but it must still be the addict's decision.

- Do not become an enabler by rescuing the addict from the consequences of their behavior. While it is very difficult to watch someone you love suffer, it is only by expe-

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