



15 August 2009

From: Michael L. Sena
To: Nick Bradley
Traffic Technology International
Ref: Commuting_V2
Re: Proposed Article

GIVE COMMUTING A REST

If you lived here, you would be home now.

THese words have stuck in my memory since I first read them thirty-five years ago. They were printed on a sign posted on Storrow Drive in Boston, Massachusetts at the edge of a high rise, high rent apartment complex. The sign stared commuters in the face every day, taunting them as they struggled with the daily grind of traffic congestion at one of the principal bottlenecks in the city's transportation network. I believe the sign is still there.

Commuting is about making tradeoffs. You can decide where to live, shop, recreate and where to send your children to school, but deciding where and when to work may be difficult or impossible, and work-related traffic congestion is what gives us the most headaches. To give commuting a rest, we need to develop a strategy that will make commuting more bearable. A simple and effective way to do this is to change route, mode and time of travel, and to do it on a continuous basis.

Change your route. Get off the motorway or the interstate and drive the local roads. It may take you just as long to make the journey, but you will usually be driving at a normal local road pace. Find an alternate route by logging on to one of the Internet routing web sites and changing the parameters from *fastest* to *shortest* to *cheapest*. Compare the results to your normal route and give them a try on a day when you do not have any early morning appointments, or when you can leave work a bit early.

Change your time of travel, but not by giving up more of your time to your employer and congestion. Since the start of the workday is fairly constant, we gain little by giving up sleep and morning time with our families by trying to get a jump on traffic and leaving before the rooster crows. Eventually, the congestion period catches up with us and we spend as much time in the car as we did when we left earlier, and we end up spending more time at work as well.

Change your mode by taking the train or bus a few days a week if these possibilities exist for you. In some places in the world, public transportation is an option of last resort, used only by those who do not have the means to drive their own car. In other places, it is a totally viable option, although one that may make the journey longer or make it less comfortable than driving our own car.

Finally, use every opportunity to work from home, and mix in vacation days, if you can, to ease the congestion load on the week. This is the ultimate way to beat traffic, by just not getting into it. Think of it as a way of pacing yourself to be able to stay the course and finish the race, rather than crashing and burning along the way.