

# Mass Transit Is A Need for Many

By Anil Shrivastava Musafir

My friend Joe decided to cut back to one car in retirement because the cost of operating an extra vehicle was very expensive. One day Joe went across the border to buy his medicine since that was 65% cheaper in Canada. While returning home, Joe met with an accident that kept him stranded in Detroit. Joe's wife could not pick him up since they did not have an extra vehicle. Joe and his wife bought a second car as a backup for unexpected events. They pay close to \$10,000 a year on car loan, insurance and registration which takes a toll on their retirement income.

Our cleaning lady, Brenda lost her income for four months this year because her car became inoperable and she could not afford another vehicle. Recently Brenda bought a used car after receiving her tax return from the IRS which she used towards down payment for the vehicle. Though Brenda is back to work now, her automobile payments (including insurance, gas and repairs) don't leave her much to live on. She has moved with her daughter to afford a living.

On a brutally cold winter evening, I found Duane walking on I-75 in the middle of nowhere almost frozen to death. He had gone to Flint from Pontiac for a job interview borrowing his aunt's car. The car broke down and no one would give him a ride back. He had already walked ten miles and had another twenty to go. I dropped him to his place and saved his life.

Americans in metro areas are dependent on automobiles due to the absence of mass transportation. This situation necessitates them to have automobiles for every member of their family. In addition, automobiles contribute more than half of the carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxides, and almost a quarter of the

hydrocarbons emitted into our air causing global warming.

Some folks argue that mass transit is not practical because of the suburban sprawl which is designed to provide personal space to all individuals. I agree, but there are many folks like Joe, Brenda and Duane who would like to curb car use for economic and environmental reasons. I personally prefer to use mass transit for going to the airport, medical appointments or downtown events. Others could use that for commuting to work and going to schools. The fact remains, "if you build them, they will come."

As of today, transit in major American cities does not exist with the exception of New York, Boston, Washington DC and San Francisco. America's dependence on its automobiles is reinforced by a shortage of alternative forms of transport. The Congress and the President are not doing anything about this either. The government is paralyzed due to partisanship. Unfortunately, the American public seems to care more about same-sex marriage, abortion rights, and transgender bathrooms than mass transit and infrastructure. This may be due to years of social engineering by Hollywood and media.

Whatever be the truth, it's time for us and our leaders to address real issues in the upcoming election instead of dwelling on futile pursuits. If not, we'll be stuck in the same rut.

