

VINEYARD

Island of Martha's Vineyard, seven miles off southeast coast of Massachusetts. Winter population, 11,868; in summer, 70,000. Twenty miles from city of New Bedford, 80 miles from Boston and 150 miles from New York.



GAZETTE

Devoted to the interest of the six towns on the Island of Martha's Vineyard, viz.: Edgartown, Oak Bluffs, Tisbury (Vineyard Haven), West Tisbury, Chilmark and Gay Head. These, with Gosnold, constitute Dukes County.

Established 1846.

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VINEYARD GAZETTE, MARTHA'S VINEYARD, MASS., FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 1994

Thirty Pages (Two Sections).

Cutting the Volume of Traffic on Island: Slower Speeds and Higher Car Costs

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Special to the Vineyard Gazette

PEOPLE IN ALL SOCIETIES travel on average about 70 minutes per day: farmers walking to their fields, children riding to school, workers commuting to offices, and commuters driving to shops. Yet, our basic animal instinct is to expand territory. Larger territory means larger opportunities, including wider access to markets, beaches, fish, and social contacts.

Because the mean time people travel each day is fixed, presumably by deep biology, the way we maximize range is to maximize speed, subject to the constraints of our travel budget. Paralleling the law of constant travel time, studies of many societies suggest that on average we spend about 13 per cent of our income on travel.

In travel what matters is inclusive speed, the distance divided by the total time from point of departure to final destination.

We walk three miles per hour. Thus, a pedestrian society radiates about 1.5 to 2 miles and incorporates an area of about 8-10 square miles. Exactly the size of a traditional village.

Shifting one's feet from the ground to bicycle pedals roughly triples speed. From Oak Bluffs one can easily cycle to and from Vineyard Haven or, with more effort, Edgartown and remain within the daily time budget.

Cars have operated in America at an average speed of about 25 miles per hour since 1920. Congestion, traffic lights, and other forms of friction exactly offset wider, smoother roads and other gimmicks meant to accelerate.

Compared to walking, cars expand our range in linear space about eight-fold. From most parts of

Martha's Vineyard, a car offers access to the entire Island (100 square miles), within the magic time budget.

The fact is that the scale of the Vineyard is ideally suited for the auto. The car made possible the settlement of up-Island. Until Henry Ford's success, when travel from Five Corners to Beechbung Corner needed four hours, Chilmark was empty.

Since Ford, Americans use their cars about one hour each day, no matter what their income. Cars win over public buses and trains because they enable you to go from A to Z without wasting time and changes of mode of travel. In practice, distance matters less than waiting time and mode change, which must be minimized to stay in time.

America has 250 million people and 200 million motor vehicles. The basic formula is one driver, one car. If the human population of the Vineyard at the peak in the summer approaches 100,000, the car numbers will follow in tandem. Subtract the children, and make your estimate of how cars will eventually populate the island: 50,000 or more, if unchecked.

The growth in car numbers already damages the beauty and peaceful mood of the Island, which are its greatest assets. We also feel hints of congestion enough to limit auto utility, for businesses, residents, and vacationers, but to no purpose. What to do? Proposals will work only if they recognize the laws of travel outlined above.

The key to limiting cars is in selectively reducing their average speed and raising their cost. So some people switch to buses, group taxis, bicycles, and feet, and the cars as well as public transit that remain hum

Cars have high inclusive speed if you can find a parking space. Limiting parking is the most promising way to limit cars on Martha's Vineyard.

We should consider proposals to make it essentially impossible to park in public areas on the Island without a permit sticker from Memorial Day through Labor Day. A sticker would be available for a minimal amount to any car registered on the Island, easing the way for year-round residents.

For a car from off-Island, a sticker would cost steeply, say \$500. The charge has to be high enough to pressure the travel budget. A driver visiting for a week might choose to buy the permit. Many brief visitors who now bring cars to the Island would no longer. Commercial vehicles could be exempted.

Local police would need to enforce the strict parking rules and to ticket violations with commensurately high penalties in money and/or time. Stringent limits on the growth of the rental car fleet would also be required. These fleets also need parking or garage areas, which the towns could effectively restrict.

Parking sticker revenues could finance bus service, extension and maintenance of bike paths, and other public goods. The Steamship Authority could sell the stickers exclusively on the Cape, at a site remote from Woods Hole and Falmouth, with ample parking.

The sticker policy and the reduction of vehicles per capita on the Island would concentrate short-term visitors in the towns, where the shops are. Merchants should be happy.

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