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Local mass transit reform long overdue

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I've been meaning to do a column about procrastination, but I keep putting it off.

As pitiful as that attempt at humor may be, it's actually a prelude to something I think is much more serious, which we can no longer afford to put off with grandiose hopes that it doesn't need to be dealt with immediately. This is true on a local, national and global scale.

Initially, we have no alternative but to accept the fact that we are unable, as a nation, to fully control our destiny relative to the energy needs we face on a daily basis.

The harsh reality is that we have run out of time. There is no more procrastination. We can no longer be ostrich-like in our approach to observing what is around. In a negligence case, we often use the concept that each of us are responsible to see what can be seen, and the failure to adequately observe something that can be seen constitutes negligence.

Observing this standard, I believe we are "ripe for summary judgment," because there is no question of fact relative to the concerns I am addressing within this column.

Nationally, as well as locally, we must take immediate steps to fully protect ourselves from the inevitable leverage that the rest of the world ultimately could gain over us. We now must prepare ourselves for a variety of potential outcomes.

For the purposes of trying to squeeze in this column today, while in the midst of a protracted trial, I merely will look at what we are dealing with on a local level, and allow others, hopefully, to save the planet in the interim.

One of my fondest childhood memories is riding the subway when I was about 5 years old to visit my Aunt Rose and Uncle Raoul. It's one of the few childhood memories I can now use as a reference point that I urge you to consider: The fact is that we need a light rail system, mass transportation, ride sharing, bicycles, mopeds, Vespas and more plain old walking if we are to survive the next 20 years as an independent nation. Of even more urgency is the need to immediately incorporate such concepts into our local agenda.

The enormous energy generated each day by the oceans' wave action, and in some areas even the tides, is likely well beyond the amount of energy needed to fill the enormous gap in our energy supply. That, in and of itself, might negate our suffering each day as we go to get gas, each time paying more than the last. Of course it is finally becoming obvious — albeit two or three decades too late — that wind energy is something we must use as soon as we can. Some very, very well-known and highly respected people paid a lot of attention to this fact recently, as have at least a few people on the national level.

Tom Golisano has become very involved in boosting wind energy, as has multibillionaire T. Boone Pickens. I've liked Tom

Golisano for a long time, and I enjoyed having him on my radio show years ago. He is a visionary and, although we all have differences of opinion, I have very few friends who agree on everything we discuss — true friends have their own individual and unique perspectives and do not change them on a moment's notice merely to satisfy opposing viewpoints of their acquaintances.

Pickens is launching a massive PR campaign about his new vision for wind energy, and the steps he is taking personally to advance the cause.

We need more than the current bus situation we have here in our area. The old canal bed beneath Broad Street still has part of the subway track. The light rail system, which goes from Charlotte all the way down to the Amtrak station in Rochester, could be revived. If neither of these are realistic, then we must, and I emphasize the word "must," find alternate transportation for our community. The incentives to do so are multifaceted and urgent.

As an aside, we have a city in which more and more entertainment venues are cropping up on a daily basis, most of them involving the ingestion of alcohol along with either a meal, a concert, a club venue, music of many varieties or just plain everyday socializing. Nonetheless, we still have a grave shortage of a safe and legal way to travel to the next venue and, ultimately, return home at the end of such a fun evening.

I don't pretend to have the answers, but hopefully am providing incentives to action. We must force ourselves to contemplate the questions we face immediately.

Those of you who follow this column, my radio shows of the past 12 years or any of the editorials I have placed in other media (in print or on the airwaves) know I sincerely believe we must find a way to finalize this last missing link in our community. I have unlimited respect and optimism for its potential, which we can achieve together.

It's Sunday night, I'm trying to get this column done on time. I'm going to return now to preparing for the rest of my trial. It is likely it will be over by the time you read this column.

But the truth remains: We have to discuss this. The problem must be addressed, and it will not go away when we stick our heads in the sand. Spend a few minutes brainstorming this on your own, and urge our community leaders to do so as well. It will not be easy, but it must happen.

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