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Where the Good News Is for New Haven Line Commuters: Cameron on Transportation

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Does reading this column depress you? That's what I've heard from a few faithful readers.

But in opining on transportation issues, my goal is to get you thinking. So this week, just to cheer us all up a bit, I'm only going to comment on good news. (Trust me, it's taken a while to accumulate these cheerier dispatches, but here goes.)

Faster times at DMV

A friend of mine who runs a limousine company said he recently went to the DMV expecting to waste a day

on paperwork, but got out of there in record time. Given the horror stories last summer of long lines and never-ending computer problems, that is good news.

Food trucks at the station

When the Fairfield Metro station was built on the Metro-North line it was supposed to be part of a P3 (public-private-partnership) complete with offices, a hotel and full passenger amenities. But the deal fell apart when financing dried up, leaving the state Department of Transportation to build the station.

The station ended up not having a waiting room, bathrooms or even a Porta-Potty. But the state DOT is now considering bringing food trucks into the parking lot to serve commuters. Care for an empanada with your morning coffee?

Plans for a New Station on Wall Street in Norwalk

As “the train guy,” I thought I knew everything about the New Haven Railroad. But until a reader in Norwalk told me, I never knew there once was a train station in the old downtown at Wall Street. There are plans underway to rejuvenate the station, adjacent to 2,000 new housing units, the bus station and the under-utilized Yankee Doodle garage.

Other recent "Cameron on Transportation" Columns on Metro-North:

- [A Train Station in East Bridgeport Would Be a \\$300M Waste of Money](#) (March 30)
- [Metro-North Could Learn a Lot from Amtrak](#) (Feb. 24)
- [CT's Problem with Turning Commuter Drivers into Train Riders Is Lack of Station Parking](#) (Feb. 10)
- [How a 10% ConnDOT Cut Would Affect Connecticut: Cameron on Transportation](#) (Jan. 20)
- [Predictions for Planes, Trains & Automobile Traffic in 2017: Cameron on Transportation](#) (Jan. 14)

The project won't be an easy sell, considering the state DOT says its not interested since the location is just a mile from the South Norwalk station. Funny, because DOT officials didn't offer that as an excuse when Gov. Dannel Malloy promised Bridgeport [a new \\$300 million Barnum train station](#) just a mile from its downtown station.

Donald Trump likes trains

Our new president recently met with a group of airline CEOs, regaling them with promises to rehab old airports and streamline air traffic control. But he also used the occasion to lament the lack of high-speed

trains in America.

“You go to China, you go to Japan, they have fast trains all over the place,” Trump said. It remains to be seen if Trump will keep his campaign pledge to spend \$1 trillion on infrastructure or how much of it will go to rail versus roads, but it seems our new president is pro-trains.

High-speed trains in Connecticut

There has been plenty of hype surrounding the Federal Railroad Administration’s plans to build a high-speed rail line along the Connecticut coast. But fuzzy drawings of potential routes along (or atop) I-95 have raised plenty of concerns for local officials. I attended an FRA briefing last week in Darien where many of those fears were lessened.

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The FRA says it doesn’t know where it will build these tracks. It may all be moot, considering opposition to the plan from Malloy, the state DOT commissioner and most of our Congressional delegation. The plan would require state approval and funding to move forward.

So, there you go. Good news, or at least hopeful signs of improvement on the transportation front.

What do you see in your daily commute? Any rays of sunshine?

Jim Cameron has been a Darien resident for 25 years. He is the founder of the Commuter Action Group and also serves on the Darien RTM and as program director for Darien TV79. The opinions expressed in this column are only his own. You can reach him at CommuterActionGroup@gmail.com

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