

COMMENTARY

Weston 'couldn't be a better neighbor'

At least as long as you don't actually want to go there

"This will ruin your property values?" I asked the woman from Weston, our state's richest community.

"Absolutely," she replied. "This will increase crime?"

"Yes."

"This will destroy your town's identity as a sumptuous rural haven?"

"I think so," she said. "I'm very worried."

What impending civic menace could cause this woman to worry so?

A prison? A Wal-Mart? An invasion of the Radio City Rockettes led by Boston Mayor Tom Menino?

Brace yourself, gentle reader. The woman, like so many of her fellow townpeople in Weston, is losing sleep over the proposed construction of a regional bicycle trail.

And you thought you had problems.

Six of seven communities — Belmont, Waltham, Wayland, Sud-

bury, Hudson and Berlin — have already signed on to the Wayside Rail Trail, a 25-mile pathway that will cut through those towns.

In those communities, the response has generally been enthusiastic.

In Weston, where they're voting on it at Town Meeting Monday, they're about to call in the National Guard.

Through letters to the Town Critter & Tab, Weston's paper of record, bicycle trail opponents are pouring out their anger and frustration.

"I would never feel the same degree of safety entering my home with so many people having direct access to my property," one trail-hater declares fitfully.

"People will use our land as rest room facilities," sighs another. "And we will be within easy reach of spray paint cans, car thieves and worse."

"Just imagine if you were an abutter," says a third. "Did you move to Weston to have literally hundreds of thousands of strangers pass by your backyard each year?"

Not to mention all those car thieves in that brutish pack. Why, they're liable to pedal up to your

backyard, tuck your Mercedes under their arm, and off they go!

A fourth writer says, "I do not suggest that we build a fence around Weston."

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No, of course not. A fence would be so, well, so Waltham. How about a moat filled with hungry alligators instead?

You see, it's not just the bicycle trail that has these people on edge. As a student of Weston's zeitgeist — its essence, if you will — I can't help but think the bicycle trail is emblematic of a much deeper anxie-

ty. swells. But then I run across letters to the editor like the one entitled, "How much more neighborly can we be in Weston?"

The writer in this case seems puzzled. She says supporters of the trail want to approve this civic monstrosity out of a sense of neighborliness.

However, she says, "as far as the neighborly issue is concerned, Weston couldn't be a better neighbor to its surrounding communities."

How so?

"Residents of Lincoln, Wayland, Wellesley, Waltham, and other nearby towns access our roadways every day to reach the Mass Pike and Route 128," she writes. "How much more neighborly can we be?"

Gosh, I never saw it that way. They let us use their roads.

If you think about it, their trees also generate oxygen that presumably wafts over into Waltham, Wellesley, even Newton or other places where residents just suck it up. And never so much as a "thank you" from any of them. The ingrates.

(Tom Moroney is a columnist for the Community Newspaper Company.)

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OPINION