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Take the train

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Three decades ago, when we were seeking federal funds for Tri-Rail, we were dealing with Daniel Patrick Moynihan, an astute and mentally gifted senator who helped pry some federal transportation dollars from the concrete-pouring highway builders. His observation was, "If we don't spend some money on mass transportation, we will soon need 40 lanes on I-95 between Miami and Fort Lauderdale." Well, we are working on the 40 lanes. The latest "improvement" is to add toll lanes to I-95.

Meanwhile, mass transit progress languishes. Sure, Tri-Rail has been double-tracked, which is a welcome addition. The state is "studying" the acquisition of the Florida East Coast corridor for mass transit. It runs through the downtown business districts of all the East Coast cities and would be much more convenient for many more citizens.

The east-west light rail between West Broward, downtown, the airport and Port Everglades is still just talk. The space in the center of I-595 is now being filled with an additional lane, which is an improvement, but rapid rail would be better. The sooner we build any of these projects, the more affordable they will be. The naysayers will have "boondoggle" on the tip of their tongue, but they said the same about the Federal Highway Kenney Tunnel, I-595 construction, the Sawgrass Expressway and I-75 extension.

The traffic problem is not going to heal itself. It will be less painful if we prepare for it. All the governing bodies in South Florida need to get their act together on this. Some of the federal "stimulus" money might be a source for such a transportation project. It would also create many jobs, which are sorely needed.

Cecil Beach, Fort Lauderdale

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