

OPINION

KRAUSE: BAKER LEAVES LYNN ADRIFT

BY STEVE KRAUSE | May 17, 2018



(File photo)

If you're looking for evidence that politicians are tone deaf when it comes to what's really important to people, you'd have found some in a conference room of the Daily Item last week when Gov. Charlie Baker began listing reasons the state will discontinue the Lynn ferry this summer.

If you heard the conversation, or read the story, you'd swear Baker just doesn't get it. For someone who could practically throw a rock from the front of his house and hit the "Entering Lynn" sign on Lynn Shore Drive (OK, he'd have to have a good arm and an equally good sense of direction, but you get the idea) he doesn't seem to have a clue that his neighbors see the ferry as a means of economic development. Moreover, it doesn't seem as if he wants to.

The Lynn-to-Boston ferry has been a godsend to people who have been looking for ways to escape the daily gridlock that is rush-hour traffic. He cited statistics stating that only an average of 30 people a day rode it last summer, but did not provide any context for that figure. He didn't say, for example, that until June of last year, we didn't even know whether there would be a ferry, so is part of that average being figured during a time when perhaps half to three-fourths of the potential passengers weren't even aware it was there? And he doesn't say that in 2016 there wasn't a ferry, further putting it out of the minds of people. He's no neophyte when it comes to these things. He knows how they work.

And I don't want to hear about money. The oldest trick in the book, if you want to justify inaction, is to 1) talk about how much money it costs; and 2) talk about it such byzantine terms that our eyes glaze over. His job — the way I see it — isn't to find excuses not to act. It's to find ways he can be effective, and help struggling communities.

And even though Lynn has worked very hard to reinvent itself, it's still at an incredible disadvantage when it comes to meeting its objectives. If you need an examples of how good transportation options help cities grow, go across the General Edwards Bridge into Revere. Point the car toward Ocean Avenue, and look at all the construction that's gone up on a part of the road that used to be an abject wasteland.

These are lots that, at various times, have been used as extra parking spaces for Wonderland Station, but were made redundant by the seven-story parking garage; by a carnival that has found a new home on the southern end of the Revere Beach strip; and even a street-hockey rink.

Now they are potential revenue sources for the city — all made possible because Wonderland Station in Revere is an MBTA transportation hub.

Lynn has plenty of land on which to build the same multi-use facilities. What it doesn't have is any convenient transportation access to Boston. And I'm not just talking about the downtown either. Even getting to Logan Airport is a project.

I can remember optimism teeming through the city 25 years ago when talk started heating up about a Blue Line expansion. It would be here now, if that had ever been acted upon. But something always got in the way. There was never talk of "how can we get this done?" It was always "here's why we can't do it."

Nothing's changed, has it?

Not having convenient transportation access to Boston means developers cannot charge market rates for property, which means there's little chance of all these projects coming to fruition unless there are some definite signals that things are going to change.

The ferry might not have been much, but it was a start. Today, a ferry. Tomorrow, maybe a dedicated Silver Line bus. Perhaps someday, finally, rapid transit.

As of right now, though, nothing.

At this juncture, Lynn doesn't have any advocates with the political cachet to match. Brendan Crighton is earnest, but is new to the state senate. Ditto Dan Cahill in the state legislature. And we're still waiting to fill the vacancy left when Crighton moved over to the senate. Oh for the days when Thomas W. McGee was the Speaker of the House and Walter J. Boverini was the Senate Majority Leader.

When you get down to cases, we thought we had a rare opportunity with a governor who lives so close to the city's borders, but apparently we were under an illusion. It doesn't appear Lynn will get any help from the corner office



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Steve Krause is the Item's sports editor. He joined paper in 1979 as a copy editor and later created a music column, called Midnight Ramblings, which ran through 1985. After leaving the paper for a year, he returned in 1988 as a reporter and editor in Sports, and was named sports editor in 1998.

Krause won awards for writing in 1985 from United Press International, and again in 2001 from the Associated Press. He is a member of the Harry Agganis Foundation Hall of Fame, a past winner of the Moynihan Lumber Scholar-Athlete Community Service Award, and was the 2012 recipient of the Jack Grinold Media Award for MasterSports, an organization that conducts high school and college coaches' clinics. He lives in Lynn, is active on Facebook, and can be found on Twitter [@itemkrause](#).

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