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Climb aboard passenger rail Q-C to Chicago

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I like trains. Always have. Unfortunately, trains have fallen on hard times. When we moved to the Quad-Cities in mid-1970s, there was still a daily train to Chicago. It was great for going to Cubs games in an era in which all games at Wrigley Field were day games. But in 1978, passenger service was discontinued.

One of the reasons for the demise of passenger trains is that folks seem to think that they need to drive everywhere, unless, of course, they fly. That might get them where they want to go, but not in style. Does anyone really think that being subjected to airline food (if you are fortunate enough to be on a flight where food is still served) or stopping at one of the fast food places at the DeKalb Oasis is traveling in style?

And so for aesthetic reasons (as well as for other reasons), I was pleased to hear that the Quad Cities Passenger Rail Coalition was formed to garner support for resumption of passenger rail service between the Quad-Cities and Chicago. The coalition maintains a website at www.quadcitychamber.com/qcrail. If you feel about trains the way I do, click on their Web site and add your name to the list of supporters.

As far as I am concerned, aesthetic reasons alone are sufficient to justify reintroducing passenger rail service between the Quad-Cities and Chicago. There are other reasons as well -- reasons that in the overall scheme of things are probably more significant. Traveling by train is hands-down the most fuel-efficient method of traveling (other than walking or riding a bicycle, which are great for short distances but won't get you to Chicago in a timely manner).

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I realize that saving fuel is not something a lot of folks think about. It ought to be. Our heavy dependence on imported oil leaves us at the mercy of the oil-producing countries whose oil is essential for keeping America humming -- countries that don't necessarily have our best interests in mind.

Then there is global warming. The scientific community is unanimous in stating that our heavy use of fossil fuels such as oil contributes to global warming. Granted, global warming

might not be something that everyone thinks about. It ought to be. As we gear up for another devastatingly hot summer, the signs of global warming are increasingly difficult to ignore.

This is not in any way to suggest that we should lock ourselves in our houses and never go anywhere. Life must go on. It is to suggest, however, that we need to be attuned to ways of living lives that are more fuel efficient, particularly with respect to fossil fuels.

That's where trains come in. The beauty of passenger rail service is that it enables us to get to where we want to go while being more environmentally responsible. That alone is reason enough to be supportive of passenger rail service.

Will we get passenger rail service between the Quad Cities and Chicago? Not if we don't support it. But if we all get behind the Quad Cities Passenger Rail Coalition and let folks in Springfield, Washington and elsewhere know that it is something that is important to us, there is reason for optimism.

The coalition's goal is to have passenger rail service in the Quad-Cities within two years. They believe it can be done. Let's all pitch in to help make that dream a reality.