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President's message: Road improvements change traffic

July 05, 2012 - Northern New England

For those of us who have lived in New Hampshire long enough we can remember the days of traveling to and from the seacoast to the Manchester area. Single lane in each direction. Daytime running lights on. It was slow and it was dangerous. Now, years later the infrastructure that was laid in place on the Rte. 101 project has changed people's perception of southern New Hampshire. I met a guy who works in Stratham and lives in Ridge (for those outside of the state, that is a 90 minute drive). No one would consider that 20 years ago. The infrastructure laid in place then changes the way we think about real estate, location and commuting today.

Already we are seeing new traffic patterns arise from improvements that have been made in the past few years. Out on the coast the new high speed toll booths have cured a Friday and Sunday traffic problem that was tedious at best. There are still Maine tolls to deal with but, as Rte. 95 has become easier, Rte. 1 traffic has eased. This has laid the ground work for the second home market in Maine and New Hampshire as some more hassles are saved on the vacation trips. In Manchester the new airport access road will help commuters from the Nashua area get to parts of the airport much more quickly. Also, parts of Bedford and Merrimack have been opened up to Everett Turnpike access for the first time ever. Users here will certainly benefit from the improvements with easier distribution as well as commute time for employees.

Rte. 93. While far from complete the improvements from Salem to Manchester are already helping traffic patterns. Perhaps you remember driving home from Boston and thinking you were almost home and out of the traffic, only to be stopped short at exit 5 because of traffic back up off the ramp. The improved lanes there will only help patterns in the future. And while the project is far from over, about \$250 million far from over, the benefits we will see from this widening and the ease of traffic flow will certainly be seen in the future.

A bit farther north, the Hooksett Tolls are getting a redo. In years to come weekend lake traffic will be a thing of the past. Ok, I cannot be right all of the time, but it will be greatly eased.

Years ago people viewed the coming of the new century as a milestone. Movies depicted the early 2000s as having flying cars. We have yet to reach that level of ease of commuting and distribution. However think of how traffic patterns have changed and what that has meant for the residential, office and industrial markets. It is easy to see how the improvements to a highway helps the retail located at the end of an exit ramp, but ask around and find out where people are commuting from and see how it changes over the next 20 years.

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