

Glastonbury Town Center Initiative asked students applying for the David Cox Memorial Scholarship to write an essay sharing constructive ideas about transportation and parking in Town Center. A few broad themes emerged from their essays.

First, many students thought better use might be made of parking lots on the periphery of Town Center. Perhaps less surprising, there was a consensus that more could be done to encourage bike use. And most unexpectedly, more applicants suggested a bus/trolley service looping around the central business district, and perhaps farther out, than any other solution. Following is an expanded selection, with attribution, of these ideas and others.

Jordan Mailly characterizes Glastonbury as a spread-out town with a few clusters of popular areas, such as the Fountain Green and Somerset Square. This kind of development, he thinks, would be well served by a shuttle bus.

As an employee in Town Center, Austin Larabee, has found himself parking farther and farther away from his job. He sees potential synergy between a trolley and peripheral parking lots. For example, if a trolley could ferry employees to their jobs from parking at Riverfront Park, it would free up parking closer to businesses for customers.

Angela McCarthy also believes it would help if, at least some people, parked in more distant lots. To introduce citizens to the idea, she proposes athletic events originating at the Fountain Green or Riverfront Park, with athletes assigned to different commuter lots. She also believes residents might be incentivized with rewards at local businesses.

Ethan Descoteaux would like to see a parking garage, but also points to lots, such as the library's, that might be used outside of their regular business hours. He also suggests a trolley service. He points to the meet-and-mingle aspect of trolley service as an added benefit. Public transportation is inherently social.

Lianna Creedon, this year's scholarship winner, makes a strong case for a shuttle bus, which she believes businesses would sponsor. She notes that many parents work and that not all teens are old enough or have the money for their own car. Transportation that is more inclusive would also be good for business.

Nicole Thurz would like to see a garage and a town-wide bus service, with reasoning akin to Ms. Creedon's. Students whose parents work out of the home and who don't have a car, or teens too young to drive, are often stranded at home. Nicole wants a shuttle bus that stops in the Buckingham in East Glastonbury, which she observes would free up a lot of time for parents. She calls, like Ms. Creedon, for transportation between GHS and Town Center, and raises the possibility of the GHS activity bus dropping students off downtown after school.

Many of the students hope for stronger support for biking with more racks and dedicated bike lanes. Both Britney Augeri and John Murphy call for more bike lanes, and perhaps a bike-share or loan program.

As Town Center and the surrounding business district continue to grow, parking and traffic will become even more of a challenge. Is it time for public transportation? Would suburban Glastonbury drivers use a more distant lot, or a parking garage? It's certainly all worth discussing, Kudos to the students for taking the time to think about these issues.