

PERSPECTIVES

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Speed 2003: *Rapid transit*

It's 2003, and Lane Transit District's new bus rapid transit vehicle is hurtling along 11th Avenue toward Springfield. Suddenly a fresh-scrubbed Keanu Reeves leaps on board. "A terrorist has planted a bomb on this bus rapid transit," he deadpans in his best concerned-L.A.-stoner-dude voice. For some reason, he's also using a terrible English accent. "Apparently, the terrorist has some concerns about the system — concerns that we have to answer. If the bus rapid transit goes below 55 miles per hour, we're toast, dude. There'll be a progressive train wreck."

Our driver, a happy-go-lucky Sandra Bullock, doesn't seem fazed. "With this new line, it'll be no problem to keep our speed."

A couple of passengers giggle from the back of the bus. A lady near the front speaks. "What concerns could there be? This is a great system. It offers faster service and an easy commute for the same price I used to pay for regular buses. I've stopped driving my car to my job at Syman-tec."

Reeves' cell phone rings. It's the terrorist. "Your bus rapid transit line may be convenient, and it may have been funded by government dollars, rather than by taxes on the citizens of Eugene and Springfield," the cigarette-and-whisky-voiced arch enemy says.

"But really, do you want to get to Springfield any faster?"

"That's not funny," Bullock says. "I live in Springfield. Don't fan the flames of city rivalry — the federal courthouse battle made things bad enough."

"Silence!" the terrorist says. "Here's the first concern: Why haven't local governments focused on getting OUT of town as much as on getting AROUND town? It's cheap and easy to get to Springfield, but it costs a fortune to fly out of Eugene, and there're only two fast train routes to Portland per day. Why not run a line PAST Springfield, to the mountains? Where's the bus rapid transit line to the beach? Some of us like to surf, you know."

Reeves seems confused. "Yeah, some of us like to surf! Oh wait, I'm trying to stop the bad guy. Is that right?" The passengers all nod and smile. Reeves gazes dumbly at Bullock.

The lady at the front speaks up again. "Uh, why not tell the terrorist that the state is looking into faster alternative transit options? The last governor was working on a high-speed line through to Seattle. Eugene is always working to lure more airlines to stop here. We're a growing city, and this bus rapid transit line helps that process along. Riding on it, I feel like I live in a big city."

Reeves is stoked. "Yeah, bud-

dy," he says into the phone. "We're trying!"

The terrorist is not impressed. "What about the trees?" the voice on the phone yells. "Trees had to be cut down for this project. That makes me want to protest."

By this time, Reeves is chatting up Bullock at the front of the bus rapid transit vehicle ("You live in Springfield? Really? So do I..."). He's not even paying attention to the terrorist on the phone.

Another passenger picks up the phone and speaks. "Look, we like the new bus rapid transit line. Environmental concerns were taken into account. These vehicles meet the new clean-air standards, which don't go into effect until 2004. It's responsible development; looking to our future transportation needs without destroying nodally developed neighborhoods or building some West Eugene Parkway boondoggle. It stops at the University of Oregon, so there are actually empty parking spaces on campus now. And it didn't threaten WIS-TEC's existence. Everyone is happy."

The terrorist doesn't

know what to say. "Well, um, maybe people just like their cars. I don't know. Or maybe we just wanted to give Reeves a hard time. He can't act, you know." Laughter can be heard on the cell phone.

Suddenly, the vehicle comes to a stop: downtown Springfield. Reeves and Bullock get off arm in arm and decide to do some antique shopping. The passengers file off and happily go about their business. The ride was so fast, there was no time for a bomb to go off. But as it turns out, there was

no bomb, just some pranksters. Sitting at the very back of the bus rapid transit vehicle is the Emerald editorial board, laughing and holding the cell phone it used to make the terrorist call.

Editor's note: The preceding depiction was totally fictitious. Concerns aside, we congratulate LTD and the cities of Eugene and Springfield on a great plan. We can't wait until 2003.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.

Leftfield

by Frank Silva

I will support equal rights...

IF YOU'RE ON THE RIGHT... YOU'RE EQUAL!

Frank Silva 1/2001