

When It Comes to Climate Resilience, Let's Not Be Like the Kids In the House in Horror Movies

Article By:

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Some of you remember summer visits to the Drive-In to see the horror movies that dominated the 1980s. You remember the villain lurking outside the house and screaming at the oblivious occupants to get out, which they never ever did. Movie after movie, those kids never got the picture.

That brings me to today's report of conclusions by MIT and Tulane researchers that in less than 50 years it will often be the case that Greater Boston's rapid transit system will be underwater some of the time. As we saw in social media videos of the New York subway a few weeks ago, many other cities face the same imminent threat.

The MIT and Tulane researchers propose a framework for assessing the climate resilience of any transit system anywhere. But we already know the end of that movie, don't we? And, for those of you who think 50 years is a long time, the same study reports that as soon as 2030, the MBTA Blue, Red and Orange lines will be completely inundated by storm waters. And we all know that major infrastructure projects take many many years to design, permit, and construct. Even emergency repairs can take months if not years.

If you haven't already gotten so depressed that you've stopped reading, please know that funding alone is insufficient to defend ourselves.

Our environmental regulations, written long before we had any appreciation of the effects of a Green House Gas supercharged climate, make it difficult, if not downright impossible, to protect our coastlines from the inevitable effects of climate change. That means loss of life, billions of dollars in property damage and long-term disruption of critically important infrastructure. We've already seen that tragic movie too.

We need the Executive and Legislative Branches of our Federal and State Governments, and NGOs, and other stakeholders to not be those kids in the house in the horror movie. It is long past time to revise our laws and regulations to permit, if not encourage, projects to improve our coastal resilience. For too long this has been falsely framed as a choice between environmental protection and profit. Stakeholders need to come together now to develop and advocate for 21st century solutions to the vulnerability of our coastline. We know the villain is at the door and it isn't going away. Let's get to work.

"[Its conclusions were dire](#). As soon as 2030, a 100-year storm would completely inundate the Blue Line and large portions of the Red and Orange lines, researchers found. By 2070, a 100-year storm would flood nearly the entire network, sparing only some sections of the Green and Orange lines, with "system connectivity" reduced to just 9 percent."

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