

The Lincroft Village Green Association wishes to express its deepest sympathy to the families of the two young people killed in the tragic accident that occurred on Newman Springs Road (CR520) on Wednesday, November 1st. Although the accident is still under investigation, “the road was wet and police believe the car was traveling too fast for the surface condition of the road” (Asbury Park Press, Nov. 1, 2006). Driver error does not dismiss the responsibility of the township, county, and state to provide safe highways that encourage good driving behavior. An accident like this is an unwelcome reminder that much needs to be done to improve traffic safety in Lincroft.

There are two primary problems with the traffic safety in Lincroft: congestion and speeding. No one likes the congestion, but congestion is the only thing that slows down the speeders on CR520.

Various recommendations for improving conditions along CR520 have been made by the Lincroft Task Force (Middletown Township organization), past and present Middletown township committee members, and Monmouth County CR520 Corridor Studies done in 2002 and revised in 2003, as well as numerous recommendations by the LVGA and local residents. These include:

- Constructing landscaped center islands
- Lowering the speed limit
- Installing blinking lights and additional speed limit signs
- Painting reduced speed warnings on all roads leading into Lincroft
- Constructing more prominent crosswalks
- Relocating existing sidewalks farther from the road and planting trees as a buffer between traffic and pedestrians
- Replacing traffic-light intersections with roundabouts, which have been shown to increase traffic flow (less congestion), to have fewer conflict points (reduction in number of accidents), and to slow the speed
- Connecting the Lincroft Grove shopping center lot to the Acme access road, making the access road 2-way, and prohibiting left turns from CR520 into the Lincroft Grove

In addition, recommendations have been made to reduce the amount of traffic on CR520 by providing alternate routes. These include:

- Expanding the GSP Exit 105 to give direct access to and from Rt. 18 to GSP North
- Allowing trucks access to the GSP up to exit 117 with a direct connection between Wayside Road (near County landfill) and exit 105
- Creating a new full or partial GSP exit at milepost 107 (Tinton Ave.)
- Extending Laird Road across CR537 to a new Rt. 18 exit (Laird Road intersects with Phalanx Road, which leads to Lincroft.)

So what has been done since the first round of recommendations began in the late 90's? Blinking-light school speed limit signs were installed at Lincroft School. The county extended the 35 MPH speed limit at Lincroft School west about one-fourth mile to include the adjoining ball field area. Recommendations were made by the county to the

State Department of Transportation regarding a new Rt. 18 exit, improved and/or additional GSP exits, and extended truck access to the GSP. (No action has been taken.) The county will begin the construction of a one-lane roundabout at the Brookdale entrance in the spring.

Although these improvements are a step in the right direction, NONE of them reduces the speeding that is so common in both directions of CR520 from its intersection with Phalanx Road to the GSP entrance. An article in the October 9, 2002, edition of The Independent referred to a statement from former Mayor Parkinson: "Parkinson said that the way the road is currently designed, it's a straight run from Exit 109 on the Garden State Parkway through the Lincroft section of the township, and the design of the road as it is lends itself to highway driving patterns. . . . We need changes now to slow down traffic . . ." Mayor Parkinson was speaking out against a previous proposal to widen the road but clearly felt that the conditions then (and now) encourage highway driving patterns, i.e., excessive speed.

The current mayor of Middletown, Mayor Hall, made the following comments regarding Wednesday's accident, as reported by the Asbury Park Press on Nov. 1, 2006: "The speed limit of the heavily traveled Newman Springs Road will be re-examined because of this morning's fatal accident there. . . . Traffic safety is one of the biggest issues facing Middletown, and speeding is a concern."

The accident on Newman Springs Road was horribly tragic with the loss of two lives. However, it was fortunate that the school bus that was involved had no passengers. The newspapers did not mention that an hour earlier numerous children would have been standing on a nearby corner waiting for a school bus. There could have been pedestrians walking on sidewalks that are only two feet from the road. When are the township, county, and state going to do something about the safety of CR520? The need to slow traffic down, to divert traffic from crowded roadways to less crowded ones, and to implement other measures that will make life safer for motorists and pedestrians in Lincroft is well established. We think it is about time that some of these recommendations are implemented.

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(The Lincroft Village Green Association is a non-profit civic group with a membership of over 600 Lincroft residents.)