

## Fatal accident proves need to reduce traffic, speeding on Route 520

Posted by the [Asbury Park Press](#) on 11/8/06

BY CAROL BAKER  
AND ABE LITTENBERG

The Lincroft Village Green Association wishes to express its sympathy to the families of the two young people killed on Newman Springs Road (County Route 520) in Middletown Nov. 1. 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," the Asbury Park Press reported Nov. 2.

Driver error does not dismiss the responsibility of the township, Monmouth County and New Jersey to provide safe highways that encourage good driving behaviors. An accident like this is an unwelcome reminder that much needs to be done to improve traffic safety in the Lincroft section of Middletown.

There are two primary problems with traffic safety in Lincroft: congestion and speeding. No one likes the congestion. But, sadly, congestion is the only thing that slows down the speeders on Route 520. Various recommendations for improving conditions along Route 520 have been made by the Lincroft Task Force, past and present Middletown Township Committee members, Monmouth County Route 520 Corridor studies done in 2002 and revised in 2003, as well as numerous recommendations by our association 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 sidewalks away 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 (and reduce congestion). Connecting the Lincroft Grove shopping center lot to the Acme access road, and making the access road two-way. And prohibiting left turns from Route 520 into the Lincroft Grove center.

Various recommendations have been made to reduce the amount of traffic using Route 520 by providing alternate routes. These include:

Expanding Garden State Parkway Exit 105 to include direct access to and from Route 18 to the Parkway northbound. Allowing trucks access to the Parkway up to Exit 117, with a direct connection between Wayside Road (near the county landfill) and Exit 105. Creating a new full or partial Parkway exit at milepost 107 (Tinton Avenue). Extending Laird Road across Route 537 to a new Route 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 1990s? Blinking-light school speed limit signs were installed at Lincroft School. The county extended the 35 mph speed limit at Lincroft School west about a quarter of a mile to include the adjoining ball field area.

Recommendations were made by the county to the state Department of Transportation regarding a new Route 18 exit, improved and/or additional Parkway exits and extended

truck access to the Parkway. No action has been taken. The county will begin construction of a one-lane roundabout at the Brookdale Community College entrance in the spring.

Although these improvements are a step in the right direction, none reduces the speeding that is so common in both directions of Route 520 from its intersection with Phalanx Road to the Parkway entrance. Mayor Thomas Hall said of the Nov. 1 accident, as reported by the Press: "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 horrible 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 2 feet from the road.

When are the township, county and state going to do something about the safety of Route 520? 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. It is about time some of these recommendations are implemented

*Carol Baker and Abe Littenberg are co-presidents of the Lincroft Village Green Association, Middletown.*



**Police and firefighters investigate the scene of a fatal accident involving three vehicles on Newman Springs Road in Middletown Nov. 1. (STAFF PHOTO: BRADLEY J. PENNER)**