

# Route 520 plan must improve flow of traffic and protect pedestrians

Reference is made to a recent Viewpoint concerning an ongoing traffic study for the County Route 520 corridor, including recommendations for the Lincroft section of Middletown. The purpose of this study is to identify safety concerns and to make recommendations for realistic improvements that would correct problems while providing for the safe and efficient flow of traffic. The term "traffic" is intended to include both pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

Route 520 carries approximately 20,000 vehicles a day through Lincroft. This traffic includes commuters traveling to and from the Garden State Parkway and points west, Brookdale Community College students and residents of Lincroft and the surrounding areas. This traffic, combined with intersecting traffic at Swimming River, Middletown-Lincroft and Phalanx roads, results in persistent traffic delays that degrade air quality, strain driver patience and complicate access to area businesses. Such delays are also responsible for the unsafe diversion of traffic through nearby residential streets.

Monmouth County is very concerned with pedestrian and vehicular safety, and is advancing a design process for the Route 520 corridor that includes community participation. Contrary to the statements made in the Viewpoint letter, Monmouth County has not yet taken a position on the consultant's recommendations. The recommendations are only the initial part of a design process, which includes community outreach. The county conducted a public information meeting June 18 at Brookdale. At that meeting, the public was informed that the county would not take a position until public comments are received and evaluated. The time for receipt of comments will extend at least through Aug. 18.

The Route 520 corridor study is available for review at the Lincroft Library in Middletown, and at the Monmouth County Library's Eastern Branch in Shrewsbury. The report is also available online at the county's Web site, [www.visitmonmouth.com](http://www.visitmonmouth.com).

The Viewpoint author mischaracterizes the consultant's report as recommending a "road-widening proj-

ect." Although the report recommends construction of additional lanes at intersections, all such widening is limited to the immediate vicinity of two heavily congested signalized intersections. These are the intersections of 520 (Newman Springs Road), with Phalanx Road, and with Middletown-Lincroft and Swimming River roads.

The only widening proposed by the consultant on Newman Springs Road is an additional 400-foot-long eastbound lane at Phalanx Road, and an additional westbound lane extending from the driveway at the Lincroft Inn

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## *The proposals are focused on improving the capacity and safety of the intersections.*

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shopping area to a point approximately 500 feet west of Phalanx Road. Although these lanes proposed by the consultant would significantly reduce congestion and delays, they are more fairly characterized as improvements to overburdened intersections rather than as the construction of a multi-lane highway, as the author asserted.

The consultant also recommends construction of additional lanes on Swimming River Road and Middletown-Lincroft Road. This widening would occur entirely within an existing commercial area, which includes gas stations, stores, offices and the Lincroft Inn. The widening on Swimming River Road would extend less than 200 feet from the intersection. The widening along Middletown-Lincroft Road is the longest of the consultant's proposals, at about 900 feet, but is intended to provide alternate access to businesses on Newman Springs Road. This results from a recommendation to restrict direct-turning movements to and from certain businesses on Newman Springs Road to correct a safety problem identified through an analysis of crash data.

The consultant's proposals would reduce delays on Swimming River Road. These delays are the primary reason that drivers "shortcut" be-

tween Swimming River and Phalanx roads. The presence of such undesirable traffic on local streets is the direct result of congestion. Although the county and township have taken steps to control this problem through restrictive signing and police enforcement, such measures treat the symptoms, not the problem. The problem would be addressed by reducing delays at the intersection.

The consultant's proposals are focused on improving the capacity and safety of individual signalized intersections, and not on increasing the capacity of the approach roadways. Improving the capacity of the intersections clearly would relieve traffic jams.

The Viewpoint author unfortunately chose to use the recent tragic fatality on Laurel Avenue in Holmdel in an attempt to gain public support. She stated that despite the urging of the public, the county did nothing to improve pedestrian safety at that location. This is not true. The site was studied, and the county did implement pedestrian safety enhancements.

Monmouth County is responsible for over 400 miles of roadways. No one is more dedicated to protecting the safety of pedestrians and motorists than the professionals of the county. Because of the size of our system of roads, and because of the volume of traffic, it is a terrible fact that despite all precautions, fatalities sometimes occur. The events surrounding the Laurel Avenue fatality are unrelated to the issues being discussed in Lincroft. It is unconscionable that the author has chosen to use this family's tragedy in an attempt to manipulate public opinion.

A balanced and realistic plan for improvements along the Route 520 corridor must provide for pedestrian and vehicular safety, reduce or eliminate unnecessary delays, and provide adequate and safe access to businesses. These difficult problems require professional expertise combined with local input to resolve. Monmouth County initiated the process of community input with its recent meeting at Brookdale. We look forward to an open dialogue to develop a project that will best serve the interests of the community.

*Theodore A. Giannichini*  
MONMOUTH COUNTY ENGINEER