

## **Roundabout approved to alleviate college traffic**

At Brookdale entrance on county Route 520

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FREEHOLD BUREAU

MIDDLETOWN — Carol Baker tries to schedule trips to the grocery store around the start of classes at Brookdale Community College to avoid the traffic on Newman Springs Road.

"I can't make the left into the Acme when cars are coming westbound to Brookdale," said Baker, who lives in the Lincroft section. "It's pretty mobbed. That is what we live with here."

The Monmouth County Board of Freeholders recently approved a project designed to alleviate congestion along Newman Springs Road. The board voted Thursday to authorize county engineers to receive bids to build a roundabout — which is smaller than a circle, with slower-moving traffic — at Brookdale's entrance on Newman Springs Road, which also is county Route 520.

The project, the result of a 24-month study of a four-mile stretch of Route 520, is the first to advance from several studies to improve Newman Springs Road traffic flow. County engineers are considering ways to improve traffic flow along Route 520 from the Holmdel boundary at Crawfords Corner Everett Road to Shrewsbury Avenue in Red Bank.

Construction of the roundabout is slated to start by the middle of September, said Monmouth County Engineer Joseph M. Ettore.

The \$1,272,000 project is expected to be completed in three to four months, Ettore said. The county plans to build a temporary bypass road on Brookdale's property to keep traffic flowing during construction.

Building the roundabout will enable the county to remove the traffic signal in front of Brookdale, Ettore said. Eliminating the signal will help prevent traffic westbound on Newman Springs Road from backing up, making it easier for motorists such as Carol Baker to make left turns off the county road.

The project will improve safety and traffic flow in front of the college. A roundabout decreases the potential for head-on and right angle collisions, Ettore said.

The roundabout also "lessens the severity of crashes due to the reduced speed of cars," Ettore said.

The roundabout is designed for traffic to flow at 20 mph, and traffic entering the roundabout has to yield to the right.

The project was designed with an exit ramp into Brookdale for traffic traveling east on Newman Springs Road so vehicles will not have to enter the roundabout, Ettore said. There also will be a ramp for traffic leaving the college heading eastbound on Newman Springs Road.

Improvements to Route 520 have been under consideration for years, Ettore said.

In 2002, hundreds of people turned out at a meeting to urge county officials to reject a consultant's preliminary recommendation to widen Route 520. Members of the Lincroft Village Green Association, a residents group, did their own research and found an expert in roundabouts, Michael J. Wallwork, president of a traffic engineering firm in Orange Park, Fla. The county had considered several alternatives for the Newman Springs Road entrance into Brookdale, including building a jug handle, said Ettore, who credited the Village Green Association for proposing the roundabout.

"We were skeptical," Ettore said.

But after several engineering studies and other research, the county became comfortable with the idea, Ettore said. The state Department of Transportation also is considering roundabouts for some roads that are busier than Route 520, Ettore has said.