

Long-term impact must be considered

The Monmouth County League of Women Voters is concerned about the changes proposed for Route 520. The Orth-Rogers Study, done for the Monmouth County Department of Engineering, addresses short-term traffic flow problems and engineering solutions, using data from accidents and several peak-hour backups. As a major east-west corridor in our county, this corridor needs to be evaluated for current traffic usage and for long-term impacts from future development.

The Planning Board should be asked to review the way in which this study fits with the Monmouth County Growth Management Guide. As the county department with expertise in land use and development, it is important that the Planning Board be involved in overall considerations of the integrity of this corridor. This would help ensure that long-term growth issues and protection of the adjacent Swimming River Reservoir are evaluated. An Environmental Impact Study to assess the impact of improvements on this corridor, and west through Holmdel and Marlboro, is needed.

This is primarily a residential corridor; more than traffic flow is involved. Environmental and quality-of-life issues must also be addressed. The Orth-Rogers Study, which focused on better traffic flow, does not seem to meet the new policy at the state Department of Transportation that calls for context sensitive "community-oriented" design. Does the solution consist just in moving the traffic faster, or is it to have a well-managed multifunctional corridor? This could include traffic calming, slower speeds in the vicinity of schools and recreation areas and more pedestrian and bicycle pathways with safe crossings.

Experience has shown that widening roads, and access to them, is a stopgap measure. Improvements encourage more people to use a road. Before long, more improvements become necessary. Increasing the flow-speed of traffic through the area may be an engineering solution, but it may also increase the severity of accidents. This current study looks at traffic issues until 2010. This is crisis management, not real planning.

As traffic to Brookdale Community College is increasing, perhaps the Phalanx Road entrance to the college should also be studied. Anticipated growth of Brookdale, land use changes and development further west along the corridor, impacts to the Swimming River Reservoir and congestion in the Route 35 area to the east all need to be considered, as do more flexible mass transit options. The Orth-Rogers Traffic Study is available at the Lincroft Public Library and Monmouth County Eastern Branch Library, as well as online at www.visitmonmouth.com and www.LincroftVillageGreen.org.

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