

Concerns over Rapp Road DEIS and the Proposed Projects

1 message

Art Storey <abstorey77@gmail.com>

Fri, May 1, 2020 at 4:08 PM

To: Kovalchikk@togny.org

I am writing to express my concerns over the Rapp Road Traffic Impact Study, as part of my overall opposition to the project. My primary interests here regard the Consultant's assessment of current traffic conditions and of their evaluations regarding the impact of the proposed project additions on future traffic flows in our Town.

1. **CURRENT CONDITIONS** - The Maser Consultants submitted a voluminous analysis of current (based primarily on 2019 data) and projected future traffic conditions - with and without the proposed builds. Their assessment of current and near-term future traffic flows does not accurately relate to what most of us residents now see on a daily basis. While their assessment is purportedly based on selected State Department of Transportation (DOT) data, they don't seem to reflect the typical, realistic situations which are all too common ... things like school bus stops, turning traffic, construction, accidents, emergency vehicle traffic, distracted drivers, and the unexpected events which are very much a part of our normal driving experiences here. These events are especially disruptive during rush hours and peak loading conditions, and they should have a major impact on developing realistic Level of Service (LOS) assessments. Were CDTA (Transit Authority), Guilderland School Bus, and other agency traffic observations considered? They would seem to be a very practical means for assessing real traffic conditions, because their scheduling processes are highly dependent upon realistic flow observations at different times of the year and day.

The evening rush hour is typically more "mall-traffic" impacted than the morning rush hour. It also lasts much more than an hour, due to school let-outs and various staggered business schedules. While the Consultant indicates a evening rush-hour LOS (Level of Service) of "D" (35-55 seconds per vehicle), I personally have rarely experienced that light a flow driving west on US 20 at around 4:45 PM. Waiting more than "one cycle" at the Johnson/Rapp Road signal is fairly common, and each cycle is typically over 2 minutes long. I've received numerous validations of my timing assessment from neighbors and friends who are rush hour travelers.

2. **2022 and 2025 BUILD PROJECTIONS** - Generally, the Consultant indicates minimal impacts of all three of the project additions on traffic. That is based in large part on their assumptions that the Mall and Costco flows will be primarily contained within Mall related roadways. Nevertheless, increased amounts of traffic can be expected to appear on Western and Washington Avenues, the Northway "stub" (South of I-90), and local crossroads, to access and depart from an enlarged facilities. The increased traffic associated with the sizable proposed residential additions will, if accepted, further load those thoroughfares.

Another, common situation, that is not evident in the study is that when current traffic loading on the in-bound Norway "Crossgates Ramp" becomes heavily congested, highway signage often advises "Lot Full" and directs drivers to utilize Western Avenue for Mall entrance. South/West bound traffic entering the Mall via this ramp often causes extensive right lane stoppages on the Northway, with back-ups frequently extending up to the I-90 ramps. Minor rear-end collisions often result.

The consultant's distribution estimates do not seem to recognize this situation which results in a very appreciable shifting of traffic from the Loop paths to the Western Avenue distribution category. This situation can also occur without being directed as such by Northway signage. If the southbound back-up for the ramp occurs, many drivers will decide to proceed on to Western Ave just to avoid the wait. Therefore the Consultant's distribution factors do not accurately reflect this spill-over condition which often occurs during the Mall's busy periods. West-bound Western Avenue traffic will substantially increase during such times.

3. **ALBANY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD RESPONSE** - Resolution of items identified by the Albany County Planning Board, in their March 13, 2020 letter seem very reasonable, especially regarding safety and intersection placement issues.

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Rapp Road Project Impacts on The Town - Letter in Opposition

Inbox x



Art Storey <abstorey77@gmail.com>

11:04 AM (1
hour ago)

to Kovalchikk

This is a related follow-up to comments I submitted on May 1 regarding the proposed Rapp Road projects currently being reviewed by the Town. I've been a resident here for 41 years and I'm concerned about how the Town is developing.

- The original Crossgates Mall Project was developed in the early 1980s. It was to be the largest mall in the Capital Region and many of us Town residents took active roles in debating it's acceptance. As a result, numerous concessions were negotiated in order to accommodate citizen concerns. During the 1980s I felt that the Pyramid organization did a good job being a responsible corporate citizen, in that they were generally responsive to our needs.

In 1994, Crossgates expanded it's main building to nearly twice its initial size. Pyramid Corporation, its owner, also developed another mall center on the North side of Washington Ave, Crossgates Commons, which is located within Albany City limits. Collectively, these ventures clearly created a sizable "mall city" ... by far the largest such complex in the Capital Region. The eastern portion of Guilderland had become a commercial endeavor. The residential areas and the older Stuyvesant Plaza of Mckownville were clearly eclipsed by the Pyramid projects. In time, Pyramid more or less dropped out of the "good neighbor" position it had previously held. It assumed more of a non-responsive corporate landlord role. Older local businesses suffered and many closed down.

So, when Pyramid recently proposed adding additional, separate commercial properties to their portfolio, it should come as no surprise, that they apparently felt entitled to build them.

Why does such a huge portion of Guilderland and the Pine Bush Area have to be defined as a mall-center? Why are we picking up such a disproportionately large share of the Capital Region's commercial growth?

- Secondly, as we all watch in-store shopping being replaced by on-line purchasing methods, we have to wonder, what will become of these brick-and-mortar malls 20 years from now. Once in-ground structures are build, it is hard to replace them for other purposes. This situation has plagued many American cities and it seems reasonable to assume that the problem will accelerate as more people shop on-line. Interestingly, Costco, probably the primary commercial "attraction" in this new proposal, has an excellent on-line retail site. Before adding

real estate to the landscape, it makes a lot of sense to await, or let an existing Crossgate tenant be bought-out, for space in the current Mall.

- And, lastly. Does this have to be an all-or-nothing decision? Is there no room for a balanced approach allowing for reasonable, selective resolution? That would certainly seem like a rational approach to handling these proposals.

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