



STATE OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION - REGION ONE
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MARY E. IVEY
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

STANLEY GEE
ACTING COMMISSIONER

October 12, 2010

Mr. William H. Goergen
31 Providence Street
Albany, NY 12203

Re: PIN 17578.31 Washington Avenue Extension- Fuller Road

Dear Mr. Goergen:

Commissioner Gee asked me to respond to your letter of August 16, 2010 regarding various issues you raised with respect to the proposed relocation of the Washington Avenue-Fuller Road intersection. Please understand I cannot address issues that may be under the purview of SUNY Albany, Fuller Road Management or Albany County (or the City of Albany), so my response is limited to those areas we have financial or regulatory jurisdiction over.

The issue of addressing and directing storm water from SUNY property development is under the control of SUNY itself. As such that is an issue to be addressed by any SEQRA evaluations, mitigation proposals and permitting processes for that development. The County and the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) have every intention of addressing runoff from the highways under our respective jurisdictions in accordance with the latest regulations issued by Department of Environmental Conservation and using best practice methodology. As Mr. Franchini pointed out at the public information meeting you attended, our storm drainage is currently directed away from your neighborhood, to the north and east, and the new relocated intersection would be designed to accommodate drainage in the same manner. Indeed, we do not expect a significant increase in paved area as a result of the County's project so impacts to surface drainage volume from the highways should be minimal.

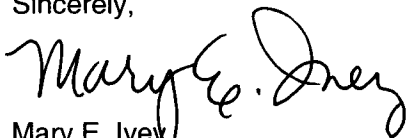
We understand your concerns regarding access along Fuller Road from side streets and driveways. The highway is under County, not State jurisdiction, thus introduction of traffic controls is primarily left to the County. We can say your concerns were similar to those brought up in almost every area where we have introduced roundabouts as an intersection treatment. Other States who broke ground on these types of facilities long before New York, have experienced similar initial public concerns. By and large, we have not seen any long-term detriment to traffic flow in any of these cases (gaps redistribute and remain available), but every situation is unique and monitoring the situation will no doubt be on the County's agenda after implementation; and we are always ready to offer technical advice if needed if problems arise. The roundabouts do slow traffic and are equally or more pedestrian friendly than intersections with multiple turning lanes. Reduced air pollution and new, and we believe safer, pedestrian – bike accommodations should be seen as a benefit to your neighborhood.

Regarding the issue of speed limits, I have to clarify one statement made at the public meeting you attended. Fuller Road is located both in the City of Albany and the Town of Guilderland. Based on Section 1643 of the State Vehicle and Traffic Law, the Town and the City set the speed limits for this highway. That right extends to County roads within their respective jurisdictions. We have not been asked to do any technical evaluation of the speed limits, but the County did so as part of their design of the reconstructed highway. We are currently advising the County on appropriate speeds to accommodate for facility design for the relocated Washington Avenue Extension intersection. Speed limits are usually set after the project is ready for opening based on technical evaluation by Department staff. From extensive experience we do know that reducing speed limits arbitrarily usually does not lead to lower actual speeds by drivers.

The possibility of building an additional connector between Central Avenue and Western Avenue was one of the arterial concepts of the 1960s for the City of Albany. This arterial extension would have connected Route 85 by the Harriman Campus to Central Avenue (also connecting to the long-abandoned I687 "bypass" through Colonie to I87). This was planned to complement the construction of the lower part of I87 between I90 and Western Avenue (dubbed the "Fuller Road Alternate" when built). Over the years, discussions have ensued to resurrect that project, most recently when the National Lead site was abandoned in the mid 90's; however, at this time there simply is no federal, State or local budget to pursue this, in whole or part. To be frank, it is hard to envision any budget scenario that would allow us to pursue this proposal given the growing backlog in simply repairing and rehabilitating the existing infrastructure. As Mr. Franchini pointed out at the public meeting, there is little that can be done to reject traffic from a public highway. Fuller Road's traffic growth is a result of land development patterns and is not unique to our area.

I want to close by saying NYSDOT supports the Washington Avenue – Fuller Road intersection relocation. We see it generating positive benefit to traffic flow, congestion reduction and air quality. We also believe we will be improving pedestrian and bicycle access and safety and facilitating the potential for more job growth within the Capital District. As I said above, we can and will provide technical support to the County, Town or City, as they or we deem necessary and (legally) appropriate to ensure any impacts to residences, businesses and travelers are addressed and mitigated.

Sincerely,



Mary E. Ivey
Regional Director

Cc: Senator Neil D. Breslin
Assemblyman John J. McEneny
Superintendent Kenneth D. Runion, Town of Guilderland
Acting Commissioner, S. Gee, NYSDOT
Mr. Donald Reeb