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Supermarket will create traffic nightmare

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The Item of Millburn and Short Hills

After two years and many hearings, Stop & Shop's application is - as we knew from the beginning - all about the significant increase in traffic and reduced safety. It's also about how Stop & Shop's plan fails to adequately manage a very sizable influx of cars and trucks.

Some 5,241 cars will enter and exit from the site on weekdays, according to Stop & Shop. The objectors' experts peg that number at 7,080. All truck traffic - up to 180 vehicles, including many tractor trailers - will enter and leave the site directly opposite Glenwood Drive. The proposed supermarket is out of scale with businesses in the area and the expected car traffic far exceeds Millburn's conditional use ordinance calling for no more than 2,500 vehicles per day either entering or exiting an access driveway.

Yet, Stop & Shop's engineers claim the traffic plan won't cause a "substantial traffic impact." Residents for Traffic Safety remains extremely skeptical of a plan that the Zoning Board's traffic expert found to have serious deficiencies.

We believe that, besides the sheer volume of new vehicles generated, Stop & Shop's traffic plan is defective for a number of reasons:

The plan only looks at the stretch of Millburn Avenue where the supermarket would be built - rather than its impact on the entire roadway system, including the intersections of Millburn and Morris avenues and Millburn and Short Hills avenues, and local roads such as Farley place. Traffic flow along Millburn Avenue and at these intersections - already often bottle-necked - will be even further slowed.

Greater wait times at the corner of Millburn and Short Hills avenues will reduce the current level of service (LOS) to an E level. Millburn Avenue at Morris Avenue is already LOS F, which means that volume exceeds capacity.

Not only will drivers using these streets be inconvenienced, but the township's emergency vehicles will experience more difficulty reaching destinations. Each year there are about 18,000 police, 2,000 fire and 1,500 First Aid Squad calls, many requiring vehicles to use the western end of Millburn Avenue.

Another critical flaw is the absence of a traffic signal at the site's Morris Avenue driveway. While the plans allow cars to enter this driveway from either direction, they can only exit to the west. As a result,

shoppers coming from the Springfield area will enter that driveway, but very likely will exit the site onto Millburn Avenue, then turn right onto Short Hills Avenue to return to Morris Avenue - further tying up Millburn Avenue traffic.

The proposed traffic signal at Baltusrol Way is good for Stop & Shop, but not so good for the Glenwood neighborhood; it will draw more vehicles to that residential street, changing the character of the street and neighborhood - and not for the better.

The loading dock plan is problematic from both an access/egress standpoint and from the limited truck mobility within the loading area. When exiting to the left onto Millburn Avenue, larger tractor trailers will cross the centerline, which Stop & Shop has acknowledged, further tying up traffic. Moreover, there has been no clear answer to where trucks will go when the loading docks are full. Into the Glenwood neighborhood? Or into downtown Millburn, then turning right onto Main Street - creating more backups - as Stop & Shop's expert testified?

The overall effect on businesses in that section of Millburn Avenue will surely be negative. While the streetscape would look much improved, pedestrians on Millburn Avenue cannot enter the supermarket from the street side because the entrance faces the parking lot behind the store.

All of the above will have a detrimental effect on the quality of life in the Glenwood residential and business area, as well as a more subtle effect on the township's reputation as a premier suburban place to live. And we will be left to contend with the reality of Stop & Shop's dubious and flawed plan. The welfare of our community must be protected.

Editor's note: Residents for Traffic Safety is a grassroots organization which informs and updates township residents about traffic issues related to the Stop & Shop development. To learn more, visit the website www.residentsfortrafficsafety.org.

- See more at:

http://www.northjersey.com/news/opinions/232112321_Supermarket_will_create_traffic_nightmare.html?page=all#sthash.PMIbhANz.dpuf