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## New DOT Proposals Offer Better Hope For Improving Route 22 Intersection

We're gratified that the state Department of Transportation (DOT) has backed away from its proposal, first advanced last year, to do a complete makeover of the area around the intersection of Route 22 and Park Avenue-Bonnie Burn Road in Scotch Plains and, instead, has come forth with some alternatives that could alleviate rush hour traffic congestion without transforming the peripheries of downtown Scotch Plains and the Watchung Reservation into an unsightly concrete and macadam junction.

After its initial plan to build a brand new four-lane bridge — complete with jughandles, the loss of a number of properties in Scotch Plains and Watchung and a \$16.5 million price tag — was met with little optimism by local officials, DOT officials and their consultants went back to the drawing board and came up with two alternatives, which they presented to the public last week. And unlike the big new bridge notion, their new ideas were greeted by many who attended the presentation with at least an open mind.

Rush hour traffic across the Route 22 bridge connecting Park Avenue to the south with Bonnie Burn and New Providence Roads to the north is heavy during the morning drive and, to a lesser extent, during the evening rush hour.

Due to the inefficient design of the intersection of Bonnie Burn and New Providence, vehicles traversing the bridge with the intent of turning left on Bonnie Burn often find the wait to turn to be lengthy, especially since there are no traffic lanes set aside for left turns. As a result, traffic backs up onto the bridge and onto the approaches to the overpass, including eastbound Route 22, Park Avenue and Mountain Avenue, with Park Avenue often backed up with vehicles as far south as the Fanwood border.

Park Avenue, especially, has become a favored north-south thoroughfare, not only for drivers from our immediate area but also those from Clark, Rahway, Colonia and Edison. It's clear that something needs to be done to streamline traffic flows. The new DOT proposals seem, at first glance, to adequately address that need without resorting to a wholesale change that would completely alter the look and character of the area. The two new approaches — dubbed Alternatives 8 and 9 — call for a long-overdue revamping of the intersections at both ends of the bridge. Under

Alternative 8, currently-nonexistent left turn lanes would be created so that northbound drivers crossing Route 22 could easily turn onto Bonnie Burn Road instead of having to wait for a gap in the oncoming traffic from New Providence Road.

The other approaches to the intersection would also be widened so vehicles spend less time sitting at red lights and are able to get through the area quickly. Alternative 9 calls not only for the expansion of the Bonnie Burn-New Providence intersection but also a similar revamping of the southern intersection with Park Avenue. This plan would also replace the existing bridge with a new, wider structure located in the same spot.

Although the big new bridge plan would provide the greatest traffic relief, it would also result in a wholesale change in the area's appearance. Ten buildings would be leveled to make room for a new bridge, two jughandles from Route 22, a jughandle at the Bonnie Burn-New Providence intersection and new access ramps to and from Blue Star Shopping Center and into downtown Scotch Plains from Route 22. Given that the traffic problems being addressed by these proposals occur primarily during the morning and evening rush hours — not throughout the day — DOT's original proposal seems akin to ridding one's house of a mouse with a submachine gun.

Alternatives 8 and 9, on the other hand, are both less-costly — \$2.3 million and \$7.7 million, respectively — and would result in little change to the overall lay of the land in the area. Based on an impressive series of computerized simulations of traffic patterns under the new schemes that DOT showed last week, it seems to us that either of these plans would likely solve the problems for the next few decades. DOT is urging the Scotch Plains and Watchung governments to approve the project as soon as possible, but we'd like to see more discussions such as the forum held last week before final action is taken.

With the initial plan for a big new bridge seemingly comatose, the two latest DOT proposals — and perhaps further revisions to come — offer a much better starting point for serious discussions between the state government and local officials and residents as to how to alleviate a vexing traffic problem.

## Hopefully, Republican Voters Will Go to Polls With Clear, Not Distorted, Picture of Facts

By PAUL J. PEYTON  
*Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times*

One of the most negative campaigns in recent memory is now in its final week. This Tuesday, June 26, voters will decide the future political livelihoods of Bob Franks and Bret Schundler.

The two-month Republican Primary Gubernatorial race was launched following the decision by Acting Governor Donald T. DiFrancesco to exit the contest and bring in Mr. Franks.

While Mr. Franks called Mr. Schundler a hypocrite for trying to compare himself to former President Ronald Reagan, the Jersey City Mayor has used computer imagery to liken Mr. Franks to "Pinocchio," claiming Mr. Franks lied about the Mayor's record.

Let's face the facts. It is untrue that Mayor Schundler raised taxes 79 percent in Jersey City since 1994, as the Franks' campaign literature has charged. It's also not accurate for the Schundler Campaign to say that as a state Assemblyman, Mr. Franks voted in favor of former Governor Jim Florio's tax hikes 90 percent of the time.

Does anyone care that Mr. Schundler was a Democrat and worked for Gary Hart's campaign in 1994? And why are

Jim Florio's tax hikes of 1990 being brought back to life again? That was a decade ago. Voters care about the future, not about the distant past.

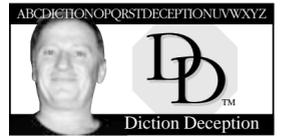
There is true fact here, though. This race is extremely close. And, unlike last year, money is no object on either side.

Each candidate should focus on the clear campaign issues this year: property taxes — especially the school tax, urban sprawl and traffic congestion. Then, of course, there is that \$1 billion state deficit.

When it comes down to it, both Mr. Franks and Mr. Schundler have been popular with the GOP. Mr. Franks is well known in the party for his years in the Assembly and Congress, as a GOP State Chairman and, of course, his terrific run for the United States Senate last November.

Mr. Schundler has long been considered a rising star in the GOP, after his amazing victory to capture the mayorship in a city where Democrats outnumber Republicans 11 to 1.

This Primary campaign is likely to become even more aggressive as it heads into the final weekend. Hopefully, voters will go to the polls with a clear — not distorted — picture of how these two candidates stand on the issues.



Below are four arcane words, each with four definitions — only one is correct. The others are made up. Are you sharp enough to discern this deception of diction?

If you can guess one correctly — good guess. If you get two — well-read individual. If you get three — word expert. If you get all four — You must have a lot of free time!

All words and correct definitions come from the board game **Diction Deception**.

**Answers to last week's arcane words.**

1. Scorse — To trade or barter
2. Vrille — In aviation, a spinning nose dive
3. Thews — Muscular power
4. Grobian — A person of rude or clownish manners

### RHIGOSIS

1. A nose cold
2. Lower back pain
3. An ear ache
4. The sensation of cold

### TERTULIA

1. A social gathering
2. The back of an animal
3. A non-poisonous plant spider most commonly found in the southeast United States
4. A trident; three-pronged pitch fork

### FOVEOLATE

1. To ravel or curl up
2. To salivate or foam at the mouth
3. Marked by minute depressions
4. To burst into flames

### EPULOTIC

1. Having a healing power
2. Having a tendency to tremble or shiver
3. Wise; sagacious
4. Decisive or final

Answers will appear in the next issue.

## Westfield Should Be Thankful for Wide Array of Restaurants

I would like to take issue with Westfield Leader writer, Michelle H. LePoidevin's June 14 characterization of the restaurants on Elm Street as "an over-glorified version of the food court at Bridgewater Commons."

Westfielders should commend the hard-working restaurant owners, wait staff and kitchen workers who have provided the town's residents with a broad array of popular dining options. None of the sit-down restaurants mentioned in the article is part of a national chain and I don't see how they contribute towards the loss of the "Colonial, mom and pop appeal."

Is Ms. LePoidevin suggesting that we free up some liquor licenses to recreate a few eighteenth century taverns? Maybe we can ride our horses down Elm Street and not take up so many parking spaces.

Robert G. John  
Westfield

### Deadlines

General News - Friday 4pm  
Weekend Sports - Monday 12pm  
Classifieds - Tuesday 2pm

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Photos - B/W and Color  
No Panoramic or Polaroid  
Typed, not handwritten  
Upper and lower case  
Need name & daytime phone  
For our complete editorial policies request a copy of our Policy Guide

## Lekas Building Deserves A Round Of Applause For Architecture

I, like so many others, lamented the removal of the Excellent Diner from its place on North Avenue. It was a wonderful combination of food and friendship that will always remain in my memory. It was also a wonderful piece of architecture which, in fact, was a key reason for its getting a new home in Germany.

For years after it was gone, the only architectural replacement was an ugly hole in the ground. After all, what could possibly go there?

What a pleasant surprise it has been watching the Lekas Building as it nears completion. In an age when virtually any architectural detail is deemed extraneous, this building pours it on. When large new houses use brick facing only on the front, with siding on the other three sides, this building seemingly wraps itself in wood and stone.

I'm not an architectural critic and wouldn't know the names of the elements involved in this building. But it does seem pleasing to the eye in its abundance of whimsy. Both owner and architect appear to have had fun in figuring out how to maximize a small area. It brings a lot of visual interest to a spot that is often seen given the parking lot vista view from the post office.

Frankly, I have no idea what's going into that building, but the building itself deserves a round of applause. Good show!

Robin Fry  
Westfield

**More Letters on Page 5**

## Good of Entire Town Must Prevail Over Concerns of One Neighborhood

I'm writing regarding comments from letters in your June 7th issue. In regard to Mr. Senter's letter, parking deck or not it will not effect large trucks traveling on a county road nor will it stop United Parcel or other delivery trucks from parking illegally or impeding traffic, as was the case on June 4.

To Mr. Henry of the same date, to the suggestion that we should penalize commuters by hiking the rates "till the demand falls off." I might offer the suggestion of making people move out of their residences and close businesses so not so many cars travel the streets and need parking. Maybe we should have a gated community and not let outsiders in either. Equally impractical suggestions.

A Ms. Newton writes about the "lack of wheelchair accessibility downtown,"

alluding to the need for more handicap spaces. A deck could solve this need immediately if designed to accommodate them.

We need to eliminate as many cars parked on the downtown streets, in fire zones (Trader Joe's/Prudential Securities - 11 cars daily) and loading zones to increase safety and allow safe passage of traffic and pedestrians.

Commuters and shoppers are currently parked up and down Elm Street, Prospect Street, Boulevard and Mountain Avenue. They even park on my street, one block outside the downtown area. I worry about fire trucks and EMS getting through, about our children being able to walk safely on the sidewalk. I embrace a deck on both Elm Street and at the south side train station.

We purchased our current home just over three years ago grateful to be within walking distance of two schools, a park and the downtown area. We did it knowing that a parking deck would/should be built at a future date somewhere downtown. My husband has lived almost his entire life in this town, his dad graduated from WHS with his grandparents living on Rahway Avenue for many years. I love the stories about the Crawford apple farm, the "Westfield" airport, the soda fountain at Woolworth's and all the nostalgia that is just that - nostalgia.

This is a prosperous, vibrant 21st century town. We have traffic lights, paved streets and other things that help us daily through our town. A consultant report does not make up the fact that there are close to 50 food businesses in the downtown area as well as many offices and retail stores. This "colonial" town hasn't been colonial since the hitching posts were removed. The constant reference to nostalgia belongs in the past. This isn't a theme park. This is a forward moving, forward thinking town that still wants to be shining when our children come back to raise their families. The only way to assure it will still be here in all it's glory is to be pro-active and think ahead here and now. With good design, proper planning, use of our own Architectural Review Board and our Historic Preservation Commission guiding us we cannot fail.

The good of the entire town must prevail, must be given priority over the concerns of just one neighborhood.

Debby Burslem  
Westfield

## Town School Board Needs to Revisit Placement of Girls Athletic Complex

Unappreciated and overburdened by a mountain of endless decisions, it seems the location of the girls athletic complex, GAC, didn't receive the attention it deserves.

What we know is the town's traffic calming study clearly states that the present field house area is very dangerous indeed, with over 10,000 vehicles using Rahway Avenue daily.

During a recent three-year period, Rahway Avenue had over 111 accidents with 35 injuries. A Town Task Force on traffic safety noted that cars rarely yielded to pedestrians. Passengers are discharged on the street regardless of the signs. An elevated roadway will connect the two crosswalks that go from the present Field House to the Edison parking lot. But this is too far away from the GAC Rahway Avenue site where passengers will be discharged at will, causing a chaotic and dangerous situation twice as bad as it is today.

With the Task Force statistics in mind, it is unconscionable to double the length of this danger zone when there are other sites available which would serve the students and community in a far safer and beneficial way. These other sites were never presented as options to the Planning Board.

In 1986, a similar project was contemplated, and the school board and Planning Board agreed that the Lincoln School side was better, however, the funds were not available.

This site in back of Lincoln School would provide a safe parking lot for parents to pick the girls up at the end of practice or for weekend events. It would also provide a restroom on the far side of the field.

As the Assistant Superintendent stated, it could also incorporate a badly needed storage facility for equipment that is presently scattered about.

There is an 8-1/2 percent premium to put the facility on the Lincoln side, but the Assistant Superintendent said that funds are currently available. This would relieve additional pressures on Rahway Avenue.

An additional benefit of another location is that the street view of the field would not be blocked by the structure on Rahway Avenue. This would be important for safety and security reasons.

Many if not most of the girls using the facility will not be using the football field or track. Many use Edison or Tamaques for practices and events.

The Edison parking lot may be the most logical for safety reasons. The Edison location would allow the girls who use the Athletic Field or trainer's room to cross on the elevated roadway. There's no measurable additional cost because the utility hookup would be similar.

The WHS principal, Dr. Petix, the Athletic Director, Ed Tranchina, and Roger Love on the Boosters Advisory Committee all stated the Field House area is very dangerous now and putting the facility on Rahway Avenue would only make the area more dangerous.

Councilman Neil Sullivan stated that the Planning Board was never made aware of any other potential sites and the President of the Planning Board, Robert Newell, stated that the Planning Board granted a courtesy variance to the school board and he too was unaware of other potential sites.

Mayor Gregory McDermott stated a traffic and safety study should be made by the school board. By not doing this study the school board is setting the table for disaster and their dinner guests are the very children they are trying to accommodate.

By choosing the Rahway Avenue site, it is a blatant disregard for the findings of the Task Force and shows a lack of cooperation with the mayor and his Traffic and Safety Committee in their efforts to make this a safer town.

Isn't it time for the mayor and the Town Council to stand up and urge the school board to revisit their decision on the location of the GAC facility?

Like Dr. Foley said, "It hasn't been built yet!"

Andrew Coukos  
Westfield

