

# Traffic In Newtown Is Priority For New Civic Group

By Andrew J. Semeister,

I'd like to address comments regarding traffic made by both members of the Newtown Board of Supervisors and representatives from BPG at the Sept. 6 public workshop. Our civic association, Individuals Concerned For Newtown Square,

has retained the consultant services of F. Tavani and Associates, Inc. (FTA) to review past and future traffic studies conducted for Newtown Township and any traffic studies provided by developers. FTA Incorporated is a full service Traffic Engineering and Planning corporation and has extensive experience in the Delaware Valley and throughout Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

FTA has conducted a review of the 2007 Newtown Square Master Plan Traffic Study (NS MPTS) conducted by McMahon for Newtown Township. Based on its review, I have asked FTA to address two of the comments made at the Sept. 6 public workshop - one regarding the total costs of the improvements thus far identified in the NS MPTS and one comparing the resultant traffic from the By-Right Plan and the Town Center Plan.

A letter to the Board of Supervisors outlining FTA's response to these two comments focused on the four major components identified by McMahon, namely:

- Construction costs
- Engineering fees
- Utilities relocation costs
- Costs of acquiring rights of way and property (identified as "Challenges")

McMahon mentions no less than 30 times that the dollar estimates provided are just for (1) above and that they are rough order of magnitude only. Given that understanding, the range of costs for the options for (1) provided by McMahon for 2017 is \$16.8 to \$22 million. Assuming conventional estimating factors for (2) and (3), the total cost for the first three components above was estimated by FTA to likely be \$30 million.

However, the cost of acquiring rights of way and property is an unknown since it not only includes the costs of the properties involved but the costs of potential legal actions and time delays to complete the improvements themselves. Thus,

when (4) is considered, the total costs of the traffic improvements recom-

mended (which still leave large portions of the study area with saturated levels of service (LOS)) are unknown.

Furthermore, even if Herculean efforts as stated by McMahon in the conclusions section of their study; namely, "implementing the current lane geometry of Rte100/Rte30 in Exton on Rte3/Rte252 in Newtown Square the (traffic problems at this) intersection would be greatly improved but would continue to operate with some delay since the traffic volumes are, and will continue to be, higher."

Thus, the improvements recommended in the McMahon study are inadequate to fully address the traffic problems created by the developments already approved and exacerbated by BPG's Town Center or By-Right development that are various stages of planning. Furthermore, the McMahon study states numerous times that many of these improvements are riddled with "challenges" in attempting to acquire rights of way and property.

Clearly, any attempt to obtain State support for a project the size of Rte100/Rte30 (that would still be inadequate to solve our traffic problems) would be unjustifiable from both a technical and financial standpoint given these unknown costs.

Also, attempts to obtain State support for making improvements to any of the State roads in the study that will still not resolve our saturated traffic conditions in the Newtown Square area are again a waste of technical and financial resources. The result of all the approved developments are bad enough without adding an entity the size of a Town Center with continuous traffic from approximately 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. right in the immediate vicinity of Route 3/Route 252.

The McMahon traffic study indicated the disruption and financial impact to those property owners directly affected by the "improvements" and implies an unknown financial impact on Newtown Township. What

is does not mention is the potential resultant financial impacts on all Newtown residents and the likely impacts on the health, safety, and welfare of Newtown Square residents mainly along the North and West corridors of the Route 3/Route 252 intersection.

It is our understanding that the Governor has recognized the significance of the existing traffic problems in our area as well as the potential for overwhelming and costly traffic solutions just to accommodate further development projects in the Newtown Square area.

He has wisely called for the Township to provide data and information needed to better define the problem, refine the order of magnitude cost estimates of the 2007 McMahon study, and to get handle on the likely costs of acquiring rights of way and property required to properly address the traffic problems. Our traffic engineer, FTA, will also receive the new data and information for review and analysis.

We all can now see the wisdom of the Newtown Township Board of Supervisors in prudently evaluating the request for allowing a change to the zoning at the Ellis Preserve to permit the construction of a Town Center at the intersection of Route 3/Route 252.

This is especially so since they have already approved the Shoppes at Marville Town Center and it is less than two miles west of this intersection. It also appears equipped to handle the traffic in that area and should not significantly add to the traffic problems in Newtown Square per se. Kudos for the Board of Supervisors and our Governor, Ed Rendell, for not rushing into a decision for funding an ill-fated set of traffic improvements that would destroy our Township for the price of some dollars in revenue.

Mr. Semeister is president of Individuals Concerned For Newtown Square. The group can be reached at P.O. Box 405, Newtown Square, PA 19073.