

Salt Pond Home Owners Association

c/o Legum and Norman, Inc.
C4 Edgewater Sea Colony East
Bethany Beach, DE 19930

April 18, 2007

TO: Carolann Wicks, P.E.
Secretary of Transportation

The Salt Pond Homeowners Association (SPHA) is pleased to submit the following comments to be included in the formal record of DelDOT's Capital Transportation Program (CTP) review which will be conducted on Wednesday April 18, 2007. These reply to DelDOT's Public Notice seeking suggestions for transportation projects and/or services to be considered for the proposed CTP for Fiscal Years 2007-20012.

The SPHA submitted comments at the CTP workshop in 2005 and 2006 concerning the safety conditions on SR 360 and SR 357. At the same workshops, Sussex County Council, in its Sept. 8, 2005 and Sept 7, 2006 Capital Transportation Improvement Program requests, also identified unsafe conditions and requested improving the intersection of SR 360 (Fred Hudson) and SR 357 (Cedar Neck) roads. Our legislators Sen. Bunting and Rep. Hocker corresponded with DelDOT, identified their public safety concerns and requested action.

The comments herein include a review of the residential and commercial growth and the negative impact these have caused to these roads, including their intersection at the Salt Pond and Bethany Lakes communities. We seek state and local government cooperation to undertake a traffic study and review the safety issues that now exist given the existing and planned commercial and residential activities along these roads.

The SPHA represents more than 500 home owners who use SR 360 and SR 357 regularly for transportation and recreation. We request that SR 360 and SR 357 be identified in the CTP for early consideration for improvements to assure that the public safety issues described are addressed and corrected.

BACKGROUND

On September 9, 2004, during the capital improvement workshop, oral comments identified the dangerous conditions that exist on SR 360 due to narrow shoulders and heavy traffic commercial vehicles, autos, recreational cyclists and pedestrians. At that time our concern addressed SR 360, a 1.25 mile east-west segment in the Bethany Beach

area between US 1 and SR 357 (Cedar Neck Road). **There were two traffic fatalities on SR 360 in 2004.**

On October 14, 2004 we submitted a DelDOT pipeline project nomination identifying in more detail the problems that need correction and some proposed solutions. The narrow shoulders along SR 360 are a hazard not only for pedestrian and cyclists, but also for autos. The road is used by autos and commercial traffic as a **high speed short cut** between US 1 and Cedar Neck Road.

During 2005 and 2006 there were exchanges of letters between DelDOT and the SPHA. Secretary Hayward's January 24, 2005 reply, among other things, committed to ask the traffic studies group to investigate our concerns. Our May 24, 2005 letter identified additional actions the SPHA took to advance the project. It also provided further comments, an update on activities and sought further guidance from DelDOT. Subsequent exchanges among our legislators, the SPHA and DelDOT during 2006 brought the issue to the attention of the new Secretary of Transportation.

We are pleased to say that our initial pleas for assistance with a bike path to US 1 and the beach are being addressed. At a March 1, 2007 meeting DelDOT officials proposed a plan to work with the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) to build a path through Fresh Pond State parkland to enable cyclists to reach US 1 and the beach. We look forward to our next meeting on this proposal.

However, safety hazards and traffic congestion brought by additional residential and commercial growth in the area continue to concern residents. For example, there is planned a new 8+ acre shopping center (Salt Pond Plaza) at the intersection of SR 360 and SR 357 that will further aggravate traffic congestion on these roads and on the Salt Pond internal roads. Thus we seek cooperation between DelDOT and local governments to find creative solutions to provide for safety and minimize traffic congestion in the area.

BASIS FOR EARLY ACTION

The impact of current and future traffic patterns and circulation are of concern. Problems could be alleviated, if improvements are planned for State and Salt Pond private roads bordering the Salt Pond Plaza. Road planning should be done in parallel with the known commercial and residential plans. However, to our knowledge, no improvements are planned for the State roads in the immediate future. The SPHA is very concerned that its hundreds of residents and visitors (including the golfers who play the Salt Pond public course) and the many thousands of others who will shop at Salt Pond Plaza will have major problems utilizing the existing roads. Emergency Medical Service and Fire Department vehicles now have difficulty using these roads in emergencies.

Moreover, the community seems to be caught in the middle between local and state government actions. We understand that DelDOT has apparently not authorized the use of SR 360 and SR 357 (external roads) as access roads in and out of the Salt Pond Plaza shopping center. The Park Plaza site plan indicates that Salt Pond roads (internal roads)

will also be the only access roads in and out of the shopping center. Meanwhile, local government has limited authority to regulate the use of these private roads by the shopping center. **Thus, the community is on its own to negotiate with the developer for the safety, convenience and liability of its residents. Such a result seems inconsistent with local and state government public interest obligations.**

External roads. Traffic has increased significantly with heavy development on Cedar Neck (SR 357) and Fred Hudson (SR 360) roads in the last 3 years. For example, Toll brothers completed 300 single family and townhomes on Cedar Neck and Fred Hudson, Sandy Cove 84 units, Cheer Center will accommodate 200 people on Cedar Neck, Beazer Homes 40 townhomes on Fred Hudson, Heron bay 14 townhomes on Fred Hudson, Bethany Grand 28 townhouses near the Cheer Center, the Reservation 51 single family homes, Bethany Preserve 36 single family homes, North Lynn Lee Village, etc.

Since 2005, average daily traffic (ADT) has increased from 5,700 to 7,200 ADT, or 1,500 ADT per day. Approximately 2,100 new homes have been added to the immediate area since 1991, when the Residential Planned Community with the Neighborhood Business District embedded in it was approved by Sussex County. Summertime already brings back-ups on these State roads, sometimes extending all the way to Route 1, a distance of approximately 1.25 miles. The proposed shopping center will bring more traffic and congestion. For example, the shopping center intends to accommodate parking for 300 vehicles.

Problems include:

- § No bike paths or sidewalks on either road.
- § No turn lanes on Cedar Neck road into the Salt Pond.
- § Minimal turn lanes on Fred Hudson into the Salt Pond.
- § Both State roads are two lanes, which cannot support current summer traffic, not to mention increased shopping center traffic.
- § Large trucks and private vehicles, which will enter and exit from both Fred Hudson and Cedar Neck Roads, both are narrow 2-lane roads. This increased traffic is likely to cause long backups on these roads.

As you know improvements to SR 26 are expected to begin soon. The SR 26 improvements will not relieve any of the public safety concerns or traffic growth on SR 357 and SR 360. This is so, because additional housing developments are growing south and west of SR 26 and west of Central Avenue (e.g. Bear Trap, Ocean View, Millville). Traffic heading north -- to and from these developments -- will increase and use Cedar Neck Road (SR 357) and Fred Hudson Road to avoid the congestion in Bethany Beach. **Thus, SR 357 will continue to be used to reach SR 360, by automobile traffic seeking the high speed shortcut between US 1 and SR 357 to reach these housing developments; and by commercial traffic serving these areas.** Meanwhile, the pedestrian and cyclist traffic will continue to grow since Fred Hudson road is the shortest route to Bethany Beach and Beach parking remains almost impossible during summer months. The improvements in Fresh Pond parkland will provide some relief for bikers

and pedestrians who wish to go at least a mile out of the way to reach US 1 and the beach. Fred Hudson road will remain the most convenient way to reach Bethany Beach.

Taken together the increased volume of commercial and recreational traffic due to the housing and commercial developments along SR 360, SR 357 and those to the south and west only exacerbate the already dangerous conditions that now exist. These public safety issues need to be addressed in the short term. We have still not been informed of any progress by the traffic studies group promised in Secretary Hayward's January 24, 2005 letter to the SPHA.

Internal Salt Pond roads The two main entrances of the Salt Pond are on the two sections of Bethany Loop that border the Salt Pond Plaza area. These serve an existing residential community of over 500 families as well as a public golf course. The Salt Pond Plaza site plan shows three entrances to the shopping center from these private roads.

Problems include:

- § Turning left out of either main Salt Pond private road will cause hazardous conditions on the State roads as well as major back-ups on the private roads.
- § Entrances from State roads to private roads will not accommodate trucks and tractor trailers with large turning radius.
- § "Cut-through" traffic will create hazardous conditions. Because of the increased traffic at and near the shopping center, all drivers are likely to drive through the Salt Pond residential community seeking a shortcut and to avoid the congestion generated by the businesses located at the Salt Pond Plaza. This will increase the probability of accidents with cars, pedestrians, and cyclists and Salt Pond residents' liability. Salt Pond roads are narrow, with no shoulders, bike paths or sidewalks, and were not designed for shopping center traffic.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES and FIRE DEPARTMENT VEHICLES

Traffic safety issues. Cedar Neck and Fred Hudson roads are main routes for emergency vehicles. The fire departments and EMS personnel already have difficulties using these roads in emergencies, because of periodic traffic congestion, particularly in the summer. Without adequate road improvements and traffic flow management, the congestion will grow worse and make it extremely difficult for emergency services to travel these roads quickly at times when minutes count to save lives and property.

Communities north of this intersection have no alternative route to their homes, and must access Fred Hudson and/or Cedar Neck Road daily.

LEGISLATORS, COUNTY OFFICIALS and DeIDOT IDENTIFY SAFETY CONCERNS

As suggested by Del DOT in 2005 the SPHA gained the support of Senator Bunting and Representative Hocker as well as the Sussex County Council. Both legislators have corresponded with the Department confirming the public safety hazards that concern the community at large. Further, the legislators identify SR 360 as creating problems for Millvilles s rescue/ambulances and Bethany s fire fighting vehicles. They support widening the shoulders, improving the roadbed and building a bicycle/pedestrian path. The Sussex County Council also identified the dangerous conditions on Fred Hudson road at the DeIDOT Capital Improvement workshop on September 8, 2005 and September 7, 2006 and requested elevating and widening the road to alleviate flooding and improve safety.

In May and July 2006 the SPHA Board and our legislators received essentially the same reply from DeIDOT: funds were not available; 50 other roads ranked as higher priority. At the same time, DELDOT, in conjunction with the Capital Transportation Program, has gone on record about the unsafe conditions on Fred Hudson road (narrow roads and shoulders, large volume of traffic), particularly for cyclists using those roads. **Secretary Wicks stated in her December 5, 2006 letter concerning the CTP and Fred Hudson that “:traffic volume and insufficient shoulders make it unsafe and does not allow it to qualify as a bike lane. ”**

Traffic associated with the Salt Pond Plaza will make the situation even more unsafe, unless sufficient road improvements are made and traffic patterns are upgraded adequately.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment in this workshop. The SPHA and others in the community look forward to working with DeIDOT and local government for an early solution to this public safety issue.