

February 3, 2009

To the Editor:

State Senator Toni Boucher of Wilton is in the news again proposing to terminate the proposed Super 7 highway and selling the land acquired for the highway. The project was halted by legal action taken by Wilton residents over thirty years ago.

Not only is her move a bad idea, but it, once again, underscores the hypocrisy of Wilton, Ridgefield, and Redding's wayward political leaders on this issue. Over the years, Wilton and Ridgefield have pursued vigorous commercial and residential real estate development while contributing nothing to Fairfield County's transportation infrastructure. Just to show how narrow minded these folks are, they have also been blocking the construction of electrical transmission towers in this same corridor. Talk about selfishness – this is the epitome of it.

The proponents of selling the land for Super 7 cite the current widening of Route 7 as a solution to the traffic and congestion needs of the existing Route 7 and the surrounding area. In reality, the widening project is going to do little to help move the traffic all of Wilton and Ridgefield's real estate development has created. The widening effort, which should have been done anyway where possible, is not going to increase traffic flow for two major reasons. One, you have existing traffic lights all over Route 7 that are not going to be eliminated, and more traffic lights will be installed. You can count on more lights – politicians love them! Two, the widening does not run the full length of Route 7; there are physical bottlenecks that prevent this, i.e., hillsides that encroach on the roadway, particularly in northern Ridgefield. So, if you think all of the commuter and truck traffic is suddenly going to whisk up or down the roadway smoothly, you are kidding yourself. You are going to have continued traffic snarls and back-ups. The ancillary roads, such as Belden Hill and Route 33, are still going to be awash with cars and trucks avoiding the lights and back-ups on the "new and improved" Route 7.

What Sen. Boucher fails to recognize is the steady erosion of the quality of life in these and other surrounding towns and cities. Traffic on all roads in the Route 7 corridor is horrendous all day long. What were thought to be safe streets are now dangerous. Every road in Wilton is now a "busy street." The spillover effect on to Ridgefield and Redding's back roads is obvious. Because there is no super highway, commuters from Bethel, Trumbull, Shelton, and the surrounding towns, take their own "individualized" routes to work in Norwalk, Darien, Stamford, and Greenwich, all thanks to Mapquest.

I have an idea that is a win-win for everyone, including our neighbors in upper Westchester County, who no one seems to care about. Let's build Super 7 and incorporate not just two light rail lines, but also an underground electrical transmission and fiber optic trunk line into the project. Now you are talking about a forward thinking transportation, utility, and information superhighway to the future. Right now, President Obama is talking about infrastructure projects, and this fits nicely into those plans. The federal government, as it stands, will pay for 80% + of Super 7. And, the gas and fuels taxes Connecticut takes in annually, which is north of \$1.5 billion, is more than enough to fund the balance and other projects like this.

A final note, and not a small consideration: While Wilton and Ridgefield, and Redding to a lesser extent, have pursued all of their grandiose real estate development over the years, the host towns and cities of I-95, the Merritt Parkway, and MetroNorth, from Greenwich to Bridgeport, not to mention I-84 and I-684, have contributed mightily to Connecticut's transportation infrastructure. The residents of Wilton, Ridgefield, and Redding have benefited by the use of these roadways and rails for years. Isn't it about time they gave back and contributed something to the public good? Let's not continue to let a very vocal minority within these towns continue to block real improvement to our quality of life, as well as the continuing re-development of Norwalk and Danbury.

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