



The Norwalk Roundabout

The Newsletter of ACT << Advocates for Calm Traffic >>

www.CalmTraffic.org

Advocates for Calm Traffic (ACT) of Norwalk, CT is a grassroots organization. Our mission is to improve the level of safety and quality of life for the people of Norwalk through supporting actions that will calm traffic.

.... Wishing you calm traffic
Laurel Lindstrom, Chairperson

After the Traffic Summit: In May of 2002 the city held a traffic summit in which the residents of Norwalk were invited to hear several panelists speak about the issues on traffic and transportation. The neighborhoods of Norwalk then provided the city with specific concerns and possible solutions. The mayor has held follow-up meetings to study the information and is in the process of identifying specific solutions. ACT has been involved throughout the process. Traffic calming involves a number of strategies.

The Speed Bumps have arrived: ACT had a tough lobby in the spring of 2001 for the first funding for Traffic Calming projects -- but we succeeded. In April of 2002 the going was much easier. The new mayor and the Council supported the funding. The \$200,000 of approved funds will be used to place speed bumps on more than 10 of the 50-plus streets that have requests in to the city. This spring, once again Mayor Knopp has recommended that the Department of Public Works' request for \$100,000 for traffic calming expenses remain in the budget. The Planning Committee of the Common Council will hold a public hearing on the Capital Budget regarding this and other big-ticket items on April 3 at 7:30 PM in the City Hall Community Room at 125 East Avenue.

What else can be used to calm traffic other than speed bumps? Traffic islands, like those that were saved on Flax Hill Road last year, serve to calm traffic. Striping on the edges of streets, as has been done on Strawberry Hill Avenue in East Norwalk and Highland Avenue in Rowayton, slows traffic. Creation of street angle parking, winding roads and sidewalk treatments that extend into the street all act to slow traffic. Streets officially designated as a Scenic Road, as in the case of Fillow Street, or Village District, as is in the works for East Avenue and Rowayton Avenue, serve to calm traffic. Circles and Roundabouts are other construction possibilities that have been successful in Europe and other parts of our country. Adequate enforcement by the police for speeders also needs to be in place to help calm traffic.

Street trees calm traffic: The Tree Advisory Committee is in the process of creating a tree management plan for the city. The plan will help create and maintain a healthy urban forest in Norwalk. It has been shown that streets that are lined with trees calm drivers and slow vehicles.

Bike Route planned by Norden Park to the East Norwalk Train Station: ACT is supportive of establishing safe routes for cyclists and pedestrians and will work with the city in promoting cycling. Safe Routes to School is a program that the Connecticut Bicycle Coalition has in place that provides grants to schools through an application process. Unfortunately, the funding is limited so we need to continue to find funding from other sources such as the business community.

WHEELS lost some routes: Mass transportation that is convenient and efficient to use will be used by commuters. The loss of some bus routes recently occurred because of budget cuts. The routes with low ridership were eliminated. It is unfortunate that the outcome means removing an alternative to single occupancy automobile travel.

More affordable housing is a way of getting more vehicles off the highways: A renewed effort around creating more affordable housing is taking place. The city administration and the business community are working together to incorporate more affordable units within developments. With less commuting from home to job the congestion on area highways will decrease

The Transportation Strategy Board: The TSB presented its final report and recommendations. Although alternative modes of transportation to the automobile were recommended we believe, along with several other groups and individuals, that there was too heavy a focus on highway expansion and too little focus on the alternative modes.

Will Election promises be kept? Trucks and Safety on the Interstate: Regular inspection of trucks needs to continue in order to minimize the danger of poorly maintained or overweight vehicles from causing accidents. Injury to passengers of the trucks and cars that share the road will be avoided in many circumstances. We have seen a number of accidents that have occurred recently where trucks were involved.

The Lobby against Casinos: If development of more casinos occurs there will be substantial increases in the amount of traffic on the highways. We are already far over capacity in Fairfield County. The taxes that are generated and collected by the state create a dilemma for some. But the reality is that our highways cannot handle the additional traffic that would be generated. The economy cannot help but suffer as a net result. Repeal of the Las Vegas nights law will help stop more casinos from being built in Connecticut.

Opening I-95 Breakdown Lanes to Traffic during Rush Hour: The state Department of Transportation has scheduled public hearings for April to gather public input. The disadvantages seem to outweigh the advantages of the plan. The loss of the lanes for emergency vehicles and the overall intent to accommodate more automobiles is heading in the wrong direction. The three meetings are scheduled for 7 PM. The dates and locations of the meetings are April 3 at the Government Center in Stamford, April 15 at the Town Hall in Darien and April 16 at City Hall in Norwalk.

Transportation Choices Coalition of CT (TC3) and ACT: Since our last newsletter ACT was invited to become a member organization of TC3, an active statewide organization that is part of the Connecticut Fund for the Environment. We were proud to accept this liaison and are supportive of their efforts. TC3 can be reached by contacting Dan Lorimier, Outreach Coordinator, at 203-787-0646 or dlorimier@cfenv.org.

ACT committee members are at work: Ideas for future public awareness campaigns are being batted around in our committee. We are looking for new people to work with us.

Please call: (203) 855-7668 or use the contact numbers on the CalmTraffic.org website to get involved. You may call for more information or call to participate.

Wishing you calm traffic.....

Remember that each time you leave your car at home and find an alternative means of travel, each time you drive the speed limit and each time you avoid cutting-through residential side-streets you find for yourself and give to others a roundabout to calm traffic.

.....until the next roundabout