

Corridor concerns to be addressed

County to begin Sunrise Highway development study soon

By JEFFREY BESSEN

SOUTH SHORE — A proposal to study traffic and potential development from Connetquot Avenue in Islip Terrace to Station Road in Bellport is slated to begin this summer under the aegis of the Suffolk County Planning Department.

The South Shore Civic Alliance (SSCA), an amalgam of several civic entities, including the Bayport, Bohemia, Idle Hour, Oakdale and West Sayville civic associations, along with the Bayport-Blue Point Chamber of Commerce and the Blue Point Community Civic Association, is spearheading the drive for this corridor study.

The Civic Alliance is concerned about the piecemeal effect of Islip and Brookhaven towns approving commercial and residential development without taking into effect the cumulative impact of these projects in this heavily traveled corridor.

"As it stands now, from Malfunction Junction eastward there is more and more development exasperating an already overdeveloped situation," said Bob Draffin, president of the Bayport Civic Association and member of the SSCA.

Malfunction Junction, better known as the Oakdale-Bohemia Merge, is the portion of Sunrise Highway between Bohemia and Islip Terrace that, despite state reconstruction several years ago, continues to vex motorists with traffic congestion and results in problems for emergency responders.

Thirteen months ago, a 13-vehicle pileup in the Oakdale-Bohemia Merge area caused a massive traffic jam that affected traffic as far east as Patchogue, and resulted in the Sayville Fire Department's main firehouse not being able to respond to a call. The auxiliary station house on Broadway Avenue was called out instead.

That location and the segment of Sunrise Highway that flows east and west between the eastern portion of Islip Town and the western section of Brookhaven Town on the South Shore, is highly developed and could be overrun with development, according to SSCA members.

Recently, a developer presented an application for 48 senior condominium units to create senior housing on a 7.34-acre parcel located at the southeast

corner of Broadway Avenue and the south service road of Sunrise Highway in Sayville.

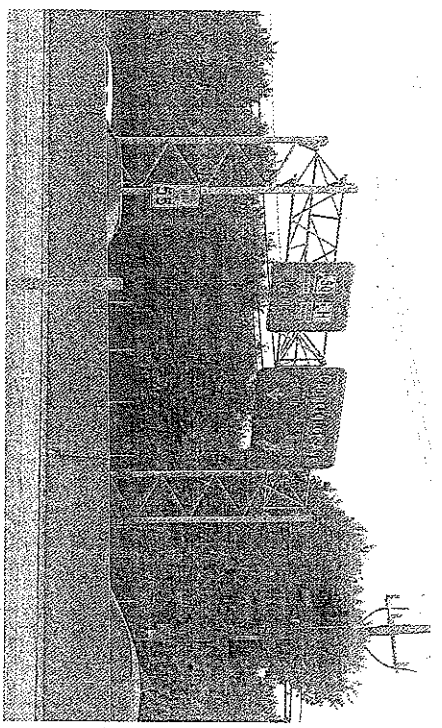
In addition, another 130 residential units are possibly being proposed for the current site of the Oakdale Golf Center, also on the south service road of Sunrise Highway, just within the area of Malfunction Junction.

"This is the type of piecemeal planning that Draffin and the other SSCA members seek to avert through the county's corridor study. We basically are looking for some form of a master plan," Draffin said. To avoid a disastrous situation let's get the two towns, the county and state DOT (Department of Transportation) all on the same page."

Presently, Suffolk County Director of Planning Tom Isles said he is working with Islip and Brookhaven planning officials to define the scope of the project. When that is completed, the study can get underway later this summer.

Isles noted that hamlet studies have been done and Islip Town undertook a major study approximately 15 years ago, but with all that has occurred a new study combined with previously collected information could meet the changing needs of the two towns.

"What makes this project unique is it is being done with both towns involved and across boundaries," said Isles, who considers this a worthwhile exercise as the participants, including civic members, will collectively have a unique perspective on planning and zoning.



This area by Connetquot Avenue in Islip Terrace either is the beginning or end of the planned Sunrise Highway corridor study, depending on which town one lives in. [B/Bessen]

In addition to land use, Isles said other aspects of planning to be analyzed by this study will be site design, site development, interaction with existing neighborhoods, and zoning, where these items can be worked into the towns' planning recommendations through more inter-municipal cooperation.

"Fundamental in terms of land use, it could serve the planning departments to consider rezoning parcels," said Isles, who noted that Islip Town rezoned parcels following its last study.

County Executive Steve Levy said that though the county is undertaking the study, it will be the towns that ultimately make the decisions regarding development, and added that he is happy to have the county assist the towns with newer information to generate plans that do not lead to gridlock or overdevelopment.

"We're hoping that this study will give the towns the tools they will need to implement the type of smart growth principles they are looking to employ," Levy said. ■