BARRINGTON
BROOKFIELD
DOVER
DURHAM
FARMINGTON
LEE
MADBURY
MIDDLETON
MILTON

Strafford
REGIONAL PLANNING
COMMISSION

NEW DURHAM
NEWMARKET
NORTHWOOD
NOTTINGHAM
ROCHESTER
ROLLINSFORD
SOMERSWORTH
STRAFFORD
WAKEFIELD

March 19, 2012

Barrington Planning Board Members
Town of Barrington,
P.O. Box 660,
333 Calef Highway
Barrington, NH 03825

RE: Access Management for Proposed Gas Station Development North of the Route 125 & 9 Intersection

Dear Chairman and Members of the Board:

On March 6, Strafford Regional Planning Commission transportation staff attended a meeting at the Barrington Town Hall regarding driveway permit requests presented in the design proposal for the Gas Station/Dunkin Donuts application on Route 125 in Barrington. The meeting was requested by planning staff from Barrington on behalf of Barrington public safety officials to address safety concerns over planned access points to the gas station. Among those present at the meeting were: Barrington Safety Officials, the Town Planner, NH DOT District 6 staff, the gas station developer and his engineers for the project, Strafford Regional Planning Commission staff, and others.

The primary focus of the meeting was to review the driveway permit requests for the gas station design and provide feedback about the planned design.

The site plan design for the proposed development includes:

- One in-only driveway at the southern entrance to the gas station
- One full service driveway roughly 100ft north of the in-only driveway
- Removal of the center median island from Route 125, starting at the Route 9 intersection and continuing north. This was included in the design to allow for left turning movements from Route 125 southbound and left turning movements from the site onto Route 125 southbound.

The traffic study for the project indicated the level of service (LOS) on Route 125 is currently adequate to grant both driveway permits and to allow left turning movements both on and off Route 125. NH DOT District 6 staff also supported removing the center median islands as it would make plowing the roadway in the winter less difficult.

The concerns of Barrington Safety Officials were primarily related to the safety issues that would arise from allowing left turning movements onto and off Route 125 southbound. The concerns were compounded because the driveways would be in close proximity to the Route 125 and Route 9 intersection. The following issues were sighted by Barrington Safety Officials as concerns about adding these driveways on Route 125:

LAND USE OFFICE
MAR 19 2012
RECEIVED

150 WAKEFIELD STREET · SUITE 12 · ROCHESTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE 03867
TEL: 603.994.3500 FAX: 603.994.3504 E-MAIL: SRPC@STRAFFORD.ORG
WWW.STRAFFORD.ORG

- Adding additional left turning lanes in the southbound direction to allow for turning into this development would likely be used improperly by motorists to avoid waiting in long queues that are reoccurring at the traffic signals during peak traffic times.
- Vehicles making a left turning movement onto Route 125 southbound would have to cross several lanes of traffic, an inherently dangerous move.
- Delays caused by motorists attempting to cross lanes of traffic, or merge onto Route 125 southbound, would increase congestion on this primary regional commuter corridor.
- The traffic congestion during peak hours at the intersection is currently a problem. Additional access points near the intersection would further complicate the current delays and safety issues.
- The center median islands offer enhanced safety for motorists and help calm traffic. Their removal would decrease roadway safety.

Strafford Regional Planning Commission shares many of the concerns expressed by the Barrington Safety Officers. SPRC supports keeping the median islands on Route 125 as they provide a physical barrier separating north and southbound motorists and provide motorists a visual queue that helps define the roadway and indicates an approaching intersection. This has become more important in recent years as traffic volumes, specifically of large trucks, have increased, along with the prevalence of distracted driving related crashes. In 2011 there were numerous serious crashes along this stretch of roadway, some resulting in fatalities. Any measures that are in place to provide safety enhancements to the corridor should be maintained. Also, removing the islands would take a step back from the recommendations made in the *NH Route 125 Transportation and Land Use Corridor Study*. The study forecasts the need for future capacity expansions to address congestion along the route. The capacity improvements would require expanding the roadway to two lanes in each direction- a project that would likely include the installation of median islands along large stretches of the Route 125 corridor.

At Strafford Regional Planning Commission staff also have concerns with allowing left turning movements into or out of the proposed development. The existing conditions in this area provide sufficient reason to be concerned about additional left turning movements in this major intersection. Projecting the potential for commercial build out shows there is ample opportunity for additional commercial growth near the Route 125/Route 9 intersection that would further impede traffic flow and cause safety issues. SRPC encourages Barrington to set the precedent now by allowing "right in, right out only" turning movements in close proximity to the intersection of Routes 125 and 9.

Route 125, beyond being a important locally, has been established by NH DOT as a regional corridor of statewide importance. This means it has been recognized for its importance as a primary route for freight movement and commuter travel. Ensuring that Route 125 functions efficiently and safely for moving freight and motorists is a priority for NH. Efforts should be made at the local level to reflect these goals. Maintaining or re-establishing these standards will help keep Route 125 safer and will help provide known standards for future build out along the Route 125 corridor in Barrington.

Please consider these recommendations to assist with keeping Route 125 a corridor that can be traveled safely and efficiently.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Copeland, AICP
Executive Director
Strafford Regional Planning Commission