

**The Civic League for New Castle County
Council of Civic Organizations of Brandywine Hundred
The Kennett Pike Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 3592
Greenville, DE 19807**

August 21, 2008

The Honorable Carolann P. Wicks
Secretary of Transportation
Delaware Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 778
Dover, DE 19903

Re: Northern New Castle County Development Onslaught

Dear Secretary Wicks:

As leaders of numerous civic organizations in Northern New Castle County representing thousands of residents, the undersigned are well aware of the many transportation challenges which confront the Delaware Department of Transportation in this portion of our State and elsewhere. However, nothing so ominously threatens the future of the highway system in Northern New Castle County as the wave of development proposals recently placed into motion by the Stoltz organization. The combined effect of these projects will have an irreversible, devastating effect on the flow of traffic between I-95 and Pennsylvania along Routes 41/48, 52 and 202; along Route 141 from Newport to Lancaster Pike and to the Concord Pike; and over the many collector and smaller roads linking to these major highways. Indeed, the collective impact of these projects will be regional. We are writing to ask for your oversight and protection in light of the manner in which the pending development proposals are being advanced.

1. Barley Mill Plaza/Greenville Center/Montchanin Road. The so-called "mixed-use" plan for Barley Mill Plaza would result in a development larger than the King of Prussia Mall, with a regionally oriented strip shopping center and surface parking lot facing Route 141, and traffic intensive uses such as a high-rise hotel and theatre complex; yet it would not directly be served by an Interstate Highway, such as exists at the much smaller Christiana Mall. The DuPont Company's office force that currently occupies the Barley Mill Plaza in its existing configuration (about one third the size of what is proposed) will be moved to Chestnut Run only a short distance away on Route 141. Concurrently, the Stoltz organization has proposed to increase the Greenville Center with construction of additional office space, a 12 story condominium and a 7 story parking garage. And, at the former Columbia Gas headquarters on Montchanin Road, it proposes to construct a new multi-story office building at the edge of the 40 foot wide right-of-way in conflict with the deed restrictions created at the time when the Columbia Gas site was approved for development years ago.

Since these proposed increases in use are merely pending rather than approved and therefore are not deemed “committed” for traffic purposes, we are concerned that the Stoltz organization plans to seek their concurrent approval without the effect of each one being factored collectively into the impact that they will have on our community. And, since the Delaware Department of Transportation apparently can base its recommendations on traffic level “E” rather than “D” if requested by the County, we are concerned that the much less restrictive LOS “E” will be sought by the Stoltz organization to facilitate imprinting its stamp of urban commercialism on this area. Our gratitude towards the Land Use Department and DelDOT for the careful manner in which they each have proceeded in evaluating these proposals to date is immense. The developer has chosen not to involve the community in shaping its response to the Land Use Department’s initial expressions of disapproval. Its traffic engineers appear to be taking traffic counts during the month of August, when traffic is lowest owing to residents being away on vacation, and schools being closed. We do not believe that the site specific mitigation programs envisioned by the developer will rectify the regional impacts of the Stoltz organization’s combined projects. By carrying our concerns to your door, we hope to be assured that everyone in DelDOT dealing with these proposals will know of your expectation that all decisions be rendered with the utmost care and restraint, and that Level of Service D will continue to apply, so that the adverse impact on our communities will be as contained as lawfully possible.

2. Concord Pike at Beaver Valley Road. This proposal originally envisioned a “mixed use” development half the size of the existing Concord Mall, called “The Shops at Brandywine Valley.” Since the intersection of Route 202 at Naamans Road on the north and Beaver Valley Road on the south is already failing, the developer proposed a bizarre pattern of jughandles that the Land Use Department and DelDOT properly rejected, to the community’s great relief. As a result, the matter has not yet proceeded to County Council for a vote and, for the first time, the Stoltz organization has begun to interface with the community to make adjustments that the community might find less objectionable. These adjustments include the possible availability of land for construction of a much needed medical facility, and increased residential housing to achieve more nearly the objectives of a mixed use development.

However, we are concerned that reliance being placed by the proposed plan for The Shops at Brandywine Valley on DelDOT’s characterization of Thompson’s Bridge Road as a collector road constitutes an important first step in eliminating the pastoral quality of the Brandywine Valley between the Lancaster Pike and the Concord Pike from the City line out to the State line. This area, which includes the federally designated scenic byways of Route 52 and Route 100, contains Hagley Museum, Winterthur Museum and Museum of Natural History, the villages of Hockessin, Centerville and Greenville, and provides a gateway to Longwood, the Brandywine River Museum, and other points of historic interest, and is the central portion of an important tourist destination. Routes 52, 100 and their feeder roads are not designed to carry increased volumes of regional traffic. To assure that the combined effects of these changes will not destroy the Brandywine

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Valley and produce gridlock on Route 141, Route 52, The Tyler McConnell Bridge, Route 202 and interconnecting roads and bridges, we believe that the County should request and that DelDOT should undertake a regional traffic study of the sort already performed along Route 40 and for the Southern New Castle County central region. We are writing to implore you to press for a study of this sort and to emphasize meanwhile within all DelDOT departments the continued need for a careful and conservative response to the Route 202/Beaver Valley Road proposal and other Stoltz organization proposals so that neither the individual nor the combined effect of the Stoltz organization's proposals will overwhelm the highway system in northern New Castle County, especially at these times when the State's capital improvements resources are severely strained.

Since this letter can only summarize concerns and thus omits many important details and considerations, we very much hope to meet with you at your soonest possible convenience in the next few days to address these matters. Please let us know as soon as possible what dates would be available for us to meet you. Thank you for your anticipated leadership in addressing these matters which, if allowed to proceed unchecked under your stewardship, will forever burden the traffic system in the Brandywine Valley and dramatically change the character of Northern New Castle County.

Respectfully,

Council of Civic Organizations of Brandywine
Hundred

By: _____
President

Civic League For New Castle County

By: _____
President

The Kennett Pike Association, Inc.

By: _____
Acting President

cc: The Honorable Charles L. Copeland, Senator
The Honorable Gerald L. Brady, Representative
The Honorable Deborah D. Hudson, Representative
The Honorable Robert F. Valihura, Representative
The Honorable Christopher A. Coons, County Executive