

COMMENTS RELATING TO THE TRAFFIC STUDY FOR URTNY

I have been requested by a representative of the Northville Civic Association to give my comments relating to the above.

At the outset, let me state that I have been associated with the North Fork for over 55 years during which time I have seen the area develop from a predominantly farm community to a very successful tourist area.

The area abounds with many wineries, golf courses, farm stands and other features too numerous to mention. On Sound Shore Road, which is the truck access road to the oil facility, homes have been constructed and are presently being constructed, with a range in value from \$300,000 to well over one million dollars. All of this has been achieved by a Town Board that zealously guards the appropriate development of the area.

Unfortunately, however, the above advancements come with many disadvantages. The desirability of the area is a cause for an avalanche of tourists that inundate the roads particularly during the months of May through November. Hundreds of tourists, and perhaps thousands, arrive in cars and vans to take advantage of the Hayrides, the Apple picking, the Festival, the Wineries, Farm stands and other activities too numerous to mention.

A significant amount of these activities require access along Sound Avenue, which is too narrow to accommodate the increased traffic, resulting in massive tie-ups -- some extending for miles. Situated along Sound Avenue are the farms known as Harbes farm, Briermere farm and a host of wineries which offer tourists a myriad of activities and which account for a significant portion of the traffic.

To reach these facilities many tourists travel on Northville Turnpike to Sound Avenue (which is one of the routes proposed to reach the URT facility).

It is at this junction that most of the problems occur. Cars travelling north on Northville Turnpike must turn right to access Sound Avenue to reach the tourists areas. As a result cars are backed up on Northville Turnpike waiting to make a turn onto Sound Avenue that is also heavily backed up. To add additional extra large gasoline trucks to this traffic would be a disaster. It should be noted that at this junction there also exists a large agritourist facility, which would present a further problem. The other proposed routes would be subject to the same problems relating to Northville Turnpike and Sound Avenue.

In short, the oil tanks presently existing on the subject property were approved at a time when the area was sparsely laden with summer bungalows and the area was mostly farmland. It is extremely doubtful that such approval would be forthcoming today in view of the changing conditions of the area.

As I understand the situation, URT'S plan is for tanker ships full of gasoline to dock at a deep-water platform and gasoline would flow through the pipes along the Long Island floor. The gasoline will be pumped to the facility. Two new 19,000-gallon tanks that will hold Ethanol is to be mixed with about 6 million gallons of gasoline, which will be stored in tanks, formerly used for heating oil.

Although gasoline at one time was allowed to be stored in a few of the tanks, it can be readily recognized that it was at a time when conditions in the area were entirely different as indicated above.

More significantly however, the proposed addition of Ethanol tanks to the facility to store the ethanol for admixture with the gasoline in specified amounts now makes it tantamount to a manufacturing facility. As will readily be recognized by one skilled in the art, Ethanol is a highly volatile and potentially explosive material. The process of admixture with Gasoline, another highly explosive material, subjects the residents of Sound Shore Road to risks not contemplated when building the new expensive homes referred to above, and these residents, as well as all the others in the surrounding area, rely on the Planning Board and Town Board to safeguard their interests.

It is vigorously pointed out that the prior use doctrine relates to tanks to be used strictly for the storage of oil and/or gasoline. It does not permit any manufacturing to be conducted.

Manufacturing is defined as “ the production of merchandise for use or sale using labor, and machinery, tools, chemical and biological processing or formulation (Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia).

A special tank is to be built to store Ethanol and this Ethanol is to be admixed with Gasoline stored in another tank utilizing machinery and instruments in order to obtain the desired concentration of Ethanol in the admixture. This is a manufacturing process and should not be permitted.

The permit to conduct this activity would be tantamount to permitting manufacturing in this select area and would set a dangerous precedent.

It is noted that in the past, attempts were made to establish a desulfurization facility in the area, which was not permitted due to the detrimental effects it would have had on the community. It is anticipated and hoped that the same wisdom will prevail in the present situation.

In view of the foregoing, it is apparent that sufficient basis exists for the denial of the necessary permits without the need for any further studies such as road accessibility or traffic studies.

Notwithstanding the above facts, the URT, through Schneider Engineering, has submitted a so-called traffic study in support of their position. Unfortunately, the study does not address the impact on existing traffic but rather deals with the routing to and from the facility and the ability of the tanker trucks to navigate the following intersections:

- a. Site entry on Sound Shore Road
- b. Offset intersection of Sound Avenue with Penny’s Road and Northhville Turnpike
- c. Sound Avenue and CR105
- d. Sound Avenue and Edwards Avenue

Hence this study should have been called a Road Access Study rather than a Traffic Study

What is urgently needed is a true Traffic Study that can address the impact these monster trucks will have on the true traffic conditions as previously outlined above.

Referral is made to the so-called Traffic Study, and to the covering letter sent by Schneider Engineering to Sean M. Walter and specifically to page 2 lines 4-7 which basically states that travel on Sound Avenue from the subject property to Edwards Avenue would not be cost effective. Hence it is presumed that the route from the subject property to Edwards Avenue is not to be considered.

It is noted that no mention is made of transporting gasoline from Edwards Avenue to the Facility. However, as stated in the covering letter, a turning analysis at the intersection of Sound Avenue and Edwards Avenue is included in the report.

Referring to the report, Figures 10 and 11 illustrate the turning path of tanker trucks heading to or from the facility. It is noted in all the drawings that the green lines represent the path of the outer wheels and vehicle edges throughout the turn.

It is further noted that the turning analysis was performed on diagrams created using GIS Clearinghouse Ortho Imagery instead of Official Surveys of the roadway. It is submitted that all the roads in Question are single lane roads and the most accurate representation of these roads is by Official Survey.

In other words one of the largest gasoline types of trucks used to transport gasoline is to travel on a single lane roadway and those trucks are to make left or right turns onto another single lane roadway. It is obvious that a completely accurate representation of the metes and bounds of the roadway be indicated which is preferably achieved by an Official Survey. Furthermore strict compliance with NY State Vehicle and Traffic laws should be followed, such as for example Article 25 Section 1131.

Referring specifically to Fig. 10, and to the text which follows, by their own admission, trucks cannot complete the turn from Edwards Avenue onto Sound Avenue because of the stated issue and they state “There is no way to mitigate this issue.”

Hence, it can accurately be stated that the intersection of Edwards Avenue and Sound Avenue can be ruled out as a viable means for monster truck travel in view of the above.

With reference to 2.c. above, the submitted study by Schneider indicates that a Northbound truck needs to enter the Northbound left turn lane in order to perform the right turn lane onto Sound Avenue, and for the reasons stated they would therefore completely avoid the intersection of CR 105 and Sound Avenue. Hence the intersection of CR 105 and Sound would not be a viable option for the truck travel. As an alternative they propose making a right turn from Cr105 onto Northville Turnpike. The feasibility of using Northville turnpike as a means of providing access to the URT site will be discussed later in this Study.

With reference to 2.a. above, the Site entry on Sound Shore Road as depicted in Figures 2 and 3 of the report clearly shows the extent to which the trucks must leave the respective travel lanes to complete their turns. Anytime an oversized truck, such as that which is used in this transport, (or in fact any truck) is obligated to leave the travel lane, then there is a safety issue created. Hence the statement appearing below the drawing that “ Figure 2 clearly illustrates that there are no traffic safety issues present for tanker trucks entering the subject property”, is clearly erroneous in view of the fact that the green lines themselves show the extent of the deviation required from the travel lane.

The same reasoning is applicable to Figure 3 depicting the right turn from subject property onto westbound Sound Shore Road.

Incidentally, the statement made in the last paragraph that “There are no residents located to the west of the facility” is also erroneous as there are in fact homes located west of the facility.

With respect to item 2.b. that analyzes the offset intersection of Sound Avenue with Penny's Road and Northville Turnpike, it is at these points where most of the problems can be expected.

On page 5 of the report, the following text appears:

Sound Avenue and Penny's Road

All trucks exiting the URTNY facility currently traverses Penny's Road, as it is the only north/south roadway located to the West of Sound Shore Road. It is expected that the majority of the gasoline tankers filling up at the subject property will be traveling to points West of the facility. It is therefore expected that vehicles traveling south on Penny's Road will turn right onto westbound Sound Avenue and that vehicles driving to the facility will be turning left onto northbound Penny's Road from Eastbound Sound Avenue.

As admitted in the report and to quote them:

"BOTH FIGURES ILLUSTRATE THAT TRAFIC SAFETY ISSUES EXIST AT THE INTERSECTION OF PENNY'S ROAD AND SOUND AVENUE". (*Emphasis and underling added by the writer.*)

The report goes on to state, "This geographic anomaly creates a situation that is difficult for tanker trucks to traverse without entering oncoming traffic lanes during all turns to and from Sound Avenue to the West."

Thus, by their own admission, Safety issues exist, and their solution to these safety issues is to leave the solution of these safety issues to the discretion of the tanker truck driver.

This mode of action and reasoning is of course totally unacceptable. One just needs to recall the terrible accident in which many people were killed In a South Bound MTA train in Westchester, NY solely because of operator negligence. To rely on the navigational skills of the many truck drivers to avoid safety issues is irresponsible and certainly not a solution to the admitted safety issues.

Thus with respect to Figure 7 and the text which follows below the Figure, it is stated that “Any possible conflict between the truck and Northbound traffic can be mitigated by cautiously performing the turn and stopping mid-term if it is necessary for a queued vehicle to slightly move out to the right.”

It is vigorously emphasized that these studies were conducted under ideal conditions and without regard to the peak traffic conditions wherein both Northville Turnpike and Sound Avenue are heavily inundated with cars and vans, particularly during the months mentioned previously.

No mention is made in the report concerning the effects of these Tanker Trucks on traffic other than the brief statement appearing in the first paragraph of page 7 of the report that “there were no southbound vehicles and only one (1) Northbound vehicle observed on Penny’s Road during a 15-minute period during our site visit on October 15, 2014.”

This certainly is not enough to properly assess the true effects of the 16 or more tanker trucks that will be added to the existing traffic on these single lane roads.

During a meeting of the Town Board, which I attended, these facts were brought to the attention of the permit seekers. Their response was that Richard Hanley, the Town of Riverhead Planning Director only requested the size and weight of the trucks, and the information listed above on page 3 of this report, i.e., items 2 a, b, c, and d. They advised that no information was requested concerning the impact on travel conditions at the designated locations.

It is unfortunate that one of the most important criteria for determining the suitability for permitting expansion of an existing industry, i.e., the impact it will have on travel, was not required.

In the writer's opinion the permit should be denied, solely on the basis of the effect a proposed manufacturing facility will have on the area.

However if the powers that be do not agree then it is imperative that a true traffic study be conducted. The study should be conducted when traffic is at its maximum as mentioned previously above. It should be conducted under various conditions and various times of day.

Since the roads accommodating these monster vehicles are single lane roads, video representation of the travel and turns these trucks make in traffic should be insisted on, as that is the best way to recognize the problems that exist.

In conclusion and for the reasons advanced above it is respectfully requested that the members of the Town Board deny the issuance of the Special Permit requested.
