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## Motorists complain about congestion near Exit 34

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STAMFORD - State and city traffic engineers faced criticisms Thursday night from city residents and politicians angry over the delays on Merritt Parkway construction and dangerous intersections along Long Ridge and High Ridge roads.

At a public safety forum at the Harry Bennett branch library, state Department of Transportation engineers Joseph Ouellette and Barbara Ricoszi said construction on Exit 34 of the Merritt Parkway - a project plagued by delays - will be cleared for traffic by Christmas. Final cleanup should be completed in spring.

Most recently, the project was delayed when an inspection two weeks ago found problems with the construction, Ouellette said.

State Rep. William Tong, D-Stamford, asked Ouellette and Ricoszi why no work was evident at the site, but they had no answer.

After the meeting, Tong said he found the DOT's response to other concerns reasonable, but "totally inadequate and disappointing with respect to Exit 34."

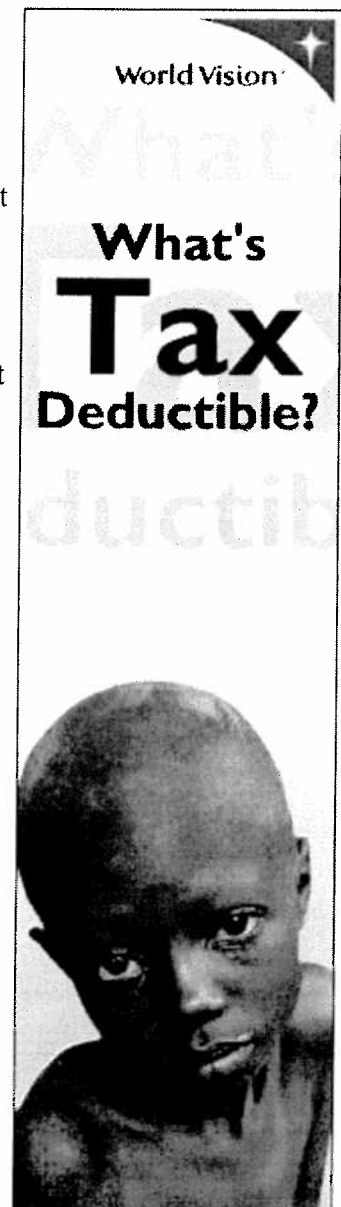
Many residents vented frustration over turning left from Barnes Road and Long Ridge Road.

"Instead of coming here and listening, you should experience it," said Sidney Goldman, who lives on Barnes Road. "See how close you come to being annihilated."

Ouellette said the DOT would study the intersection, where he said 16 accidents had occurred from 2004 to 2006. Adding a traffic signal would depend not only on volume of cars but also on the sight distance. Signals reduce some types of accidents, but they can increase rear-end crashes, he said.

Any construction at this intersection would need to include left turn lanes, he said.

Goldman later suggested a solution: timing traffic signals nearby on Long Ridge Road to create gaps.



But Stamford Traffic Engineer Mani Poola said he would probably get complaints from drivers.

Gail Raduazzo, who lives on Four Brooks Road, said she had written to the DOT three years ago seeking improvements to Wire Mill Road and High Ridge Road near the Merritt Parkway, where cars often block the intersection.

But the DOT never made changes at that intersection, she said.

Ouellette said DOT has known about problems at Exit 35 for some time. He showed a concept plan drawn up 15 years ago, which proposed widening High Ridge Road and realigning the parkway's ramps, among other changes.

DOT is seeking funding, and the concept plan will be re-evaluated, he said.

After the meeting, Raduazzo said she wasn't thrilled with what she heard, but she found disheartening the news that the 15-year-old plan is no further along.

Others raised concerns about Dunn Avenue, also near Exit 35 and a future project at Exit 9 on Interstate 95.

"What you are hearing here is a tremendous built-up frustration with the lack of communication from the DOT," said state Sen. Andrew McDonald, D-Stamford.

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