

Subject: Holley Place Project - Traffic/Road Safety Information relating to Millerton Rd/Holley St/Ethan Allen St

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LAND USE OFFICE
Salisbury, CT

February 26, 2021

Dear Members of The Planning and Zoning Commission

As a mother of children at Salisbury Central School who regularly bike, walk and skateboard in the area of Holley Street, and a friend of those who would love to live with their families in the Holley Place project, I was alarmed to hear the repeated concerns regarding traffic at the Holley Street intersection and the danger and issues that were being raised in relation to this project.

I therefore decided to look at the facts in relation to the traffic at this part of Lakeville, the AllStar bus routes and Salisbury Central School's policy regarding walking in this area.

I contacted Joe Balskus at Vanasse Hangen Brustlin to get more information about the alleged traffic safety issues at the junction of Holley St and Millerton Road. (This is the company employed by SHC to conduct the traffic study for the HB project.) One of Joe's colleagues Molly Pause was extremely helpful in answering my questions about defining a dangerous road.

"Dangerous road is not a term that we use in our industry. It is purely subjective and we work with data to support our findings. Any intersection that has 5 or more reported crashes in a year is a location of concern and the crash patterns must be reviewed to determine if there are unsafe operations at the intersection."

She suggested I access the CT DOT Crash Data Repository. This is what the traffic and transportation engineering world use to analyze crash data. This information is compiled from State and Local authorities reporting collisions (police, DOT, etc.). Crashes are compiled if they are over \$1,000 in property damage or if there is a resulting injury/fatality.

By filtering for any records containing the word 'Holley, I was able to analyze the last 25 years of traffic accidents in Salisbury and Lakeville and precisely the junction of Millerton Rd and Holley St.

Total accidents in Salisbury/Lakeville between 1995-2020 – 2115 accidents

Accidents Millerton Rd/Holley St/Ethan Allen St 1995-2020– 21 accidents

% of town's traffic accidents in 25 years in this locale - 0.99%

None of them involved cyclists or pedestrians.

Accidents PRE-traffic calming measures adoption and installation (see below)**

Between 1995 and December 2015 there were a total of 1686 accidents in Salisbury and Lakeville.

A total of 19 occurred on Holley Street or on Millerton Road between Holley St and the next intersecting road.

10 were on Millerton Road where Holley St was an intersecting junction – 0.6% of town-wide accidents during this period

2 were on Ethan Allen where Holley St was an intersecting junction – 0.1% of town-wide accidents

7 were on Holley Street – 0.4% of town-wide accidents

The causes for these 19 accidents were:

5 Failure to grant right of way

4 Following too closely

4 Travelling too fast for the conditions

2 Improper turning maneuver

2 Unsafe backing up

1 Driver lost control

1 Driverless vehicle (!)

3 accidents involved injury – all of them minor and none of them fatal.

None of them involved cyclists or pedestrians.

Accidents POST-traffic calming measures adoption and installation (see below)**

Between January 2015 and September 2020 on Holley St or on Millerton Road with Holley St as an intersection, there were 3 accidents. During this period there were 429 accidents in Salisbury and Lakeville – these three accidents represent 0.7 % of total accidents.

02/25/15

Accident – Sideswiping a parked car while parking

Property damage only

No injury

No pedestrians involved

04/16/17

Accident – Front end collision at an angle with oncoming traffic

Property damage only

No injury

No pedestrians involved

09/07/20

Accident - rear ending a parked car

Property damage only

No injury

No pedestrians involved

****State Project 121-130 in Lakeville Village**

As per this agreement of 10/18/2007 the municipality of Salisbury requested to undertake design activities in conjunction with safety improvements to the US Route 44/41 junction, along with measures to encourage lower speeds as traffic entered Lakeville and pedestrian safety.

A public information hearing on this project was held on 10/24/2013 and attended by approx. 30 members of the community, First Selectman Rand, Richard Armstrong from the CT DoT and the consultant project manager and project landscape architect from BETA Engineering Group. During the meeting, the history of this project was discussed and it was noted that upon review the alternative to be presented during the 10/24/2013 meeting was felt closer to meeting the project's intent. The goals remained to:

- Improve pedestrian and traffic safety
- Provide traffic calming to slow traffic in the Lakeville area
- To do so in a manner consistent with the historical and village nature

The recommendations made that relate to the area and intersection of Millerton Road and Holley Street were:

- Narrowing of traffic lanes
- New sidewalks on the south side of Millerton Rd in the vicinity of the retail businesses
- A crosswalk – potentially with a Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacon (RRFB)
- Improvements and building up of adjacent landscaping

I can confirm that the first three recommendations have been fully implemented. Having not known what the landscaping was like before 2013, I am not able to confirm the recommendation regarding landscaping has been carried out.

School Bus Routes

I spoke to Michelle Christian, the manager of the AllStar Bus Transportation in Lakeville. This is the company that supplies and runs the school bus service for Region 1.

Holley Block does **not** fall into the restricted area in Lakeville from which children are required to walk to school and have no bus service. On the north side this does start at 7 Millerton Road (the yellow rental building up from The Boat House – almost opposite Holley Street.) However, on the south side of the street the zone ends at 310 Main Street. With sidewalks and crossings all the way to school, children residing in Holley Block will have the option of either walking or riding the bus, an advantage which very few SCS Students have due to lack of sidewalks. The benefits for children who walk to school in terms of health, fitness, focus and energy are well documented.

The school bus route that serves Holley Block currently runs as a loop from Lincoln City Road to the NY state line in Millerton via Hotchkiss and Fairfield Farm. Children from Holley Place using the bus service, along with every other child who lives on Millerton Road from the state line, would alight the bus as it heads east into Lakeville. They would not be required to cross the road. (Unlike other students further back along the route who live on the north side of the road). In the afternoon the route is **NOT** reversed, so rather

than being first off, these students would remain on the bus and alight again as the bus heads east into Lakeville from the NY state line. Again, no crossing of the road required.

Furthermore, there is already a designated school bus stop on Millerton Road at Holley Street. The bus stops here to pick up/drop off students who live on Ethan Allen and Elm Streets. It is not in use this year because there are currently no SCS students living on those streets. Michelle said the bus would go into those streets such as Holley St, Ethan Allen St, Elm St in an emergency but not on a day-to day basis they are too narrow, too congested, used as a short cut by too many, too steep in the snow - so students who live there have always had to walk up and down Holley St to get on/off the bus on Millerton Road.

As per the CT state DMV laws

"Drivers must stop for a school bus that is stopped with its red lights flashing whether it is on your side of the road, the opposite side of the road, or at an intersection you are approaching. You are not required to stop if the bus is traveling towards you and a median or other physical barrier separates the roadway."

Passing a stopped flashing bus in either direction is a breach of state law with an automatic \$450 fine. It is legal to overtake a bus travelling in the same direction when it is not stopped. However, there is a double yellow line all the way through Salisbury and Lakeville to the state line making it illegal to overtake any vehicle at any point on this bus route for the five miles from Millerton to Holley St and beyond. Multiple and frequent stops mean traffic regularly builds up behind buses when cars cannot overtake, making it highly unlikely that in the clear 0.25-mile range of visibility entering Lakeville before Holley St, a speeding car would come up too fast and unawares behind the stopped bus to be unable to stop. So unlikely in fact that in the last 25 years, with an existing school bus stop at the point in question, this has never happened.

For those concerned about very young children getting on and off the bus, every K and 1st grader has to be met by a known adult/guardian. Even for older students if they are habitually met by a parent/guardian and there is no such person waiting at the stop, the bus driver will keep the child(ren) on the bus and contact the school. They will not be allowed to alight from the bus until they are met, thus negating the danger of very young children getting off the bus and heading unaccompanied into the traffic.

SCS' use of the Holley St crossing

EXTRAS is Salisbury Central School's after school and summer program. It was established in 1988. Its summer camp runs for eight weeks every summer from when school finishes through mid-August. Children are dropped off at SCS and later each morning they are escorted to the Grove. Groups of 20-30 plus K-5th graders are escorted by two adults and up to three teenage helpers. They always use the Holley St crossing.

SCS' Special Ed teachers regularly take their students to the Grove and use this crossing.

At the end of the school year many grades (K through 8) will have events or parties at the Grove. The students and faculty walk to the Grove and use the Holley St crossing.

Crossing Guards

Both our previous school crossing guard of 15-plus years and our current one at the traffic lights at Rte 44 and Lincoln City Road are both residents of Sarum Village.

Conclusion

I greatly appreciate the concern shown for the children who might one day reside at Holley Place. It is interesting to me though that for the last nine years we have lived on Main Street (across from the Salmon Kill intersection) and with the exception of complaints about the fence we installed to keep our children safe, no one has ever once commented on our children's safety. When we moved here our youngest was four years old. Our bus route requires our children to cross Main Street every afternoon at the exact spot where drivers hit the accelerator coming out of Salisbury. We enjoy no sidewalks to walk into either Salisbury or Lakeville; in fact, my children are banned by SCS from walking to school. To get to the Grove they have to cross Main Street with no access to a crossing and then dice with the blind corner at the top of Salmon Kill to access the Rail Trail. Yet no one has ever deemed our house unsafe for children to reside in.

I would also like to point out that if our concern here is for the welfare of the children in our community then we should consider this fact: for the school year of 2020/21 70 students (24%) of students at SCS qualify for free or reduced fee lunches through Huskey, SNAP (food assistance) or income assistance. It may be my opinion (but one derived from the facts above), that actual hunger, due in no small part to housing burdened families, is more of a danger to any of our children than a traffic accident in the vicinity of Holley Block.

I hope that it is clear to the Commission that I fully support the Holley Place project. Furthermore, I hope very much that you will share my commitment to improving the lives of families most in need in our community, and consider the welfare of their children above the subjective opinions of those who for whatever reason oppose this project.

With many thanks for your time and commitment to this process
Sincerely

Pom Shillingford
91 Main St, Salisbury
Member of the Salisbury Affordable Housing Commission