

The Capital South County

SHA suggests traffic circle in Deale at Routes 256 & 258

By RODNEY CALVER, For The Capital

Motorists in Deale could be driving around in circles if a concept proposed by the State Highway Administration is adopted.

State engineers have concluded that a roundabout is the best way to reduce congestion at the intersection of Routes 256 and 258. They say it will ease the flow of traffic, improve safety and be an attractive addition to the community.

Wall displays showing three options for the traffic circle were presented during a public meeting at Deale Elementary School on Wednesday. Most of the questions raised by the 40 residents in attendance concerned access to businesses and proposed service roads feeding into the roundabout. But some expressed concern about the concept itself.

Cindy Burgess said her office, Century 21 H.T. Brown Realty, faces the intersection and she wonders if a stoplight would be a better solution.

"I do not believe they have done enough homework on this," she said. "There is not a roundabout in the state of Maryland that has a service road. If there's one in the United States, I would like to see that."

George Heine Jr., who owns the building that houses the Century 21 office, also supports looking into installing a stoplight, with warning blinking lights several hundred yards from the intersection, to slow traffic. His main concern is traffic joining the circle from the various businesses at the intersection.

"Until I can see some verification that a roundabout will work and some figures on traffic flow, I still think a red light might be better," he said.

SHA spokesman Adrienne Cousler said the intersection saw an average of 9,650 vehicles a day in 2002. There were three accidents there that year, four in 2001 and three in 2000. All of the crashes resulted in property damage only, she said.

Officials say the cost of roundabouts ranges from \$1 million to \$3 million. This one will be funded through the SHA's Neighborhood Conservation Program.

The concept will be considered next by a new task force, followed by another public meeting. Ms. Burgess has joined the panel.

"I think we can make (the roundabout) work, possibly with two lanes rather than one," she said. "If we put our heads together we will come up with a solution."

The SHA's Teri Soos said the roundabout plan could be adopted in July, followed by 18 months for design. The earliest the project could be funded is 2006, she added.

The public can submit written comments to Teri Soos, Community Design Division,
State Highway Administration, P.O. Box 717, Baltimore, MD 21203-0717.

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