

Plan puts students at risk

Would you knowingly and willingly put your new and/or minimally experienced teenage drivers in harm's way or permit someone else to do so? That is exactly what you would be doing if you subscribe to the plan the Archdiocese has for closing the present Lansdale Catholic High School and building a new high school in Hilltown.

There are many factors to be considered, but at the top of my list are the highway risks you parents need to know to help you make an informed decision.

After navigating the high-accident areas of Route 309 in the Colmar area, your journey to the site of the new proposed high school takes you onto rural roads via Hilltown Pike. Don't be deceived by the name. It is a country road which has a number of severe curves. Most maps are unable to show the full number of curves. You must drive it yourself to know the flow of the road.

Well known in the area for the number of accidents and deaths is the curve where Hilltown Pike meets Route 152 going north. Drivers access Route 152 by way of a left turn through on-coming traffic which has the right-of-way without any stop. There is no traffic light at the intersection. Can you just picture young drivers trying to make that turn to get to school on time?

For the most part, these two-lane roads to the proposed

YOUR SAY

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location have no shoulders, no curbing, no sidewalks and no lighting. Most of them have water run-off ditches adjacent to the macadam of the road.

When filled with water or snow, there is the illusion that the terrain is level with the roadway, when the reality is that there is a drop-off of varying depths. Even experienced drivers are subject to losing control when inadvertently slipping into these depressions, especially while encountering on-coming traffic during non-daylight hours.

Also remember the need to increase the student allowance for transportation. The route to the Hilltown site is not conducive to economical fuel consumption due to the morning congestion on Route 309 and the hill climbing to Route 152. Earlier departure and later return times will be encountered.

Any parent relying on the presence of a high school student with younger siblings will have to adjust. It will also affect students having after school jobs. A cell phone could be considered a necessity in case the driver needs assistance for whatever reason. In emergencies, roadside shoulders or sidewalks do not exist for navigating the area to seek assistance, if needed. This applies to all trips to and from the site.

With the added distance to the Hilltown site, the majority of students will have to leave their homes earlier and return later.

Students attending Tech School will be affected due to the added distance to either a Montgomery County or Bucks County site. Will the Bucks County Vo-Tech School accept students whose residence is outside their feeder school boundaries?

The necessity of busing students who presently walk to school will call for additional buses and drivers. North Penn School District contracts out the transportation for private schools. Any expenses incurred by that transporter - be it equipment, fuel, drivers, operating expenses of whatever nature - will affect the cost to the North Penn School District and subsequently show up in your taxes. With fuel costs escalating and no indication of any future relief, this could be a significant amount.

Some people think it's a good idea to relocate to Hilltown. Many more think it's a bad idea. I think it a dangerous idea for the reasons I've cited.

What is your opinion?

Helen Jagger is a resident of Hatfield.