

Will flyover take off?

By Nicole Fay Barr

GUILDERLAND — Talk of a proposed Thruway flyover that would run through McKownville is making residents and town officials uneasy.

Don Reeb, president of the McKownville Improvement Association, told *The Enterprise* this week that the New York State Thruway Authority has not officially announced its plans, but has discussed the project at planning meetings.

Supervisor Kenneth Runion also said this week that he's heard talk about a proposed flyover. He wrote the chairman of the Thruway Authority expressing the town's opposition to a flyover in McKownville.

Reeb, too, wrote a similar letter on behalf of McKownville residents, he said.

Representatives of the Thruway Authority could not be reached for comment this week. However, on its website, the Thruway Authority confirms

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that a McKownville flyover is being considered.

The Thruway Authority has been studying the Albany Corridor, between interchanges 21A and 25A, to look for existing problems and to determine improvements, the website says.

According to the Thruway's website, approximately 45,000 vehicles pass through these exits per day, except for exit 24. Exit 24, which links motorists to the Northway and Interstate 90, gets about 73,000 cars and trucks daily.

One project being explored, the website states, is the creation of a flyover from the Schoolhouse Road bridge in Guilderland, near

the Northway's Western Avenue ramps.

"The Authority will consider whether this connection would improve service and reduce delays," the website states.

Reeb said Tuesday, that, from what he heard, Schoolhouse Road would be widened and trucks and other traffic would drive virtually through neighborhoods.

"The problem for McKownville is it will put a lot more traffic and noise on Schoolhouse Road," Reeb said. "As trucks go up that incline, their noise level changes; it gets louder."

The flyover would be for E-ZPass customers only, the website says. E-ZPass is a system

where drivers attach an electronic device to their windshields. The device is scanned as the vehicle goes through entrance and exit tollbooths on the Thruway. The driver only has to slow down to pass through the tollbooth and is billed monthly for the toll charges.

The E-ZPass flyover is different, Reeb said, because drivers will not have to slow down. They could drive through the tolls at 75 miles per hour, he said, because they won't be worrying about drivers without an E-ZPass stopping at the tolls.

Reeb said representatives of the Thruway Authority have told him that plans for a flyover "aren't far along" and are still under discussion. Still, Reeb said, "as far as I could tell, something is in the works for E-ZPass high-speeders."

He went on, "It's someplace between being publicly announced and privately planned."

If this flyover is built, Reeb said, McKownville residents "are going to go bonkers down here."

A few years ago, the Thruway Authority placed rumble strips on the Northway to slow cars down before they approached the exit. This greatly impacted the quality of life in McKownville, Reeb said.

After neighborhood opposition, the strips were removed.

Supervisor Runion mentioned this in his letter to the Thruway Authority. "The present Thruway Authority proposal is many times more detrimental to the quality of life in McKownville than the rumble strips were," Runion wrote. "...I urge you to consider alternatives other than the construction of new E-ZPass lanes in the town of Guilderland."

He wrote the letter, Runion said, because he felt the town should support the McKownville Improvement Association.

Runion said Tuesday that he has not yet received a reply to his letter from the Thruway. Asked if he thinks his letter will make a difference to the flyover plans, Runion said, "I think they should take into account local opposition."