

# Route 20 plans to be revamped for McKownville

By PEGGY L. STEPHENS

**GUILDERLAND** — A communication gap between state and town officials and residents of McKownville has placed a stumbling block in the way of state Department of Transportation plans for reconstruction work on Route 20.

DOT had planned to widen the four-lane highway from the Albany city line west to Route 155, installing a center median, left turn lanes and two 4-foot-wide bike paths.

However, steadfast opposition by the McKownville Improvement Association to the road-widening project has prompted DOT to revamp its plans. The work will not be done in the hamlet.

The DOT proposal was designed to do away with any existing safety problems along the 3.2-mile stretch, according to Ray Gardeski, DOT regional design engineer.

But Donald Reeb, president of the McKownville Improvement Association, said Monday, "Neither pedestrians nor drivers would have found those solutions adequate. They are running much too fast with their proposal in order to use federal monies that are presently available."

Reeb said his group is also opposing the road work because it will lead to increased commercialization of the McKownville section of Route 20.

State officials have left open the possibility of developing the .6-mile stretch of road between the city line and the State University in Albany entrance at a later date when agreement is reached between area residents and businessmen.

But state and local officials and McKownville residents are at odds on just who is involved in the dispute.

DOT says the major holdup is the issue of commercialization of Western Avenue, and that the dispute is "not going to be resolved by DOT."

"We have maintained the position we don't want to be involved in that issue," Gardeski said. It is a local problem, not a state one, he said.

Town Supervisor Carl Walters has washed his hands of the whole matter.

"It's not a matter of zoning," Walters said, citing recent changes in the town's zoning law that returned some commercially zoned land in the McKownville area to residential designation.

Walters said there are no plans for increased commercialization along Western Avenue. "We are not going to change our theories about commercial property on Western Avenue," he said.

He said the town still plans to intermix commercial and residential property and not "create a strip zone."

"It's (deletion from the DOT proposal) what the people want," he said. "I'm not going to be responsible for any future accidents. That's going to be on their conscience. If that's what they want, that's what we're here for."

But Reeb believes his group's argument is with both town and state officials.