

Opinion

Costco: Citizens need all the facts

Tuesday, July 20, 2010

By Harry Haskell

Special to the Times

Editor's note: This is a guest column.

As a member of the steering committee of Guilford Citizens for Responsible Development, I would like to call your readers' attention to the potential impact on traffic of the proposed Costco big-box store on the Rock Pile at Exit 57.

Big box stores generate large volumes of traffic - much more than most other land uses. The larger the store, the larger the geographic area from which it pulls customers and thus the higher the traffic count. According to the Institute for Transportation Engineers, a 150,000-square-foot warehouse club (the size of the proposed Costco) typically generates more than 6,000 car trips every weekday and significantly more on Saturdays.

Most developers and big-box store representatives get their traffic estimates from one company, an organization whose primary source of income is large developers and retailers. Independent studies, including one conducted by Loyola University, have shown that this company uses techniques and data that underestimate customer traffic by as much as 40 percent.

In addition, the estimates provided by this company do not account for truck traffic. Costco is a huge warehouse operation that requires a steady stream of delivery trucks to keep its many departments stocked. For example, the gas station at Costco's Milford store is the second-largest gas station in Connecticut (the largest being Costco's Hartford-area store) and is serviced by three large tanker trucks every day. The DDR/Costco proposal indicates that nearly all car and truck traffic will access the store from Exit 57 on I-95, therefore having little or no effect on other Guilford roads. However, this contradicts their claims that the proposed store would serve a regional market area extending from East Haven to Durham to Old Saybrook.

- Many customers from Madison and Branford would obviously choose to use Route 1 instead of the highway because it is more convenient.
- Customers from Durham, Middlefield, North Madison, and Killingworth would use Route 77 and feed into Route 1.

- Customers from North Branford and Northford would use Route 22, which feeds into Route 1 from the west.

Neither the on- or off-ramps at exit 57, nor the intersections with Route 1, are designed to handle the flood of car and truck traffic that a mass-merchandise, warehouse-type store would generate. At peak periods, we could expect major congestion on both Route 1 and I-95. As a result, the Connecticut Department of Transportation could well decide to widen Route 1 all the way through Guilford.

The implications of this proposal for traffic in Guilford and neighboring towns are too great to take lightly. Citizens need to have all the facts before the town makes any decisions. It is not adequate to depend on the stock numbers provided by a traffic firm hired by the developer. The public needs an independent, professional assessment conducted by experts chosen by a citizens' committee. If the developer believes its numbers to be accurate, it should be willing to pay for such a study.

This column represents the viewpoint of Guilford Citizens for Responsible Development (GuilfordCRD@gmail.com).

Editor's note: This column does not reflect the viewpoint of the ShoreLine Times. The author is a member of the Guilford Citizens for Responsible Development.

URL: <http://www.shorelinetimes.com/articles/2010/07/20/opinion/doc4c460cf23c194217295992.prt>

© 2010 Shorelinetimes.com, a [Journal Register](#) Property