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Heavy traffic forecast in Forks

Expert says Kings Mill development will cause major road problems.

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By **JD MALONE**
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FORKS TWP. | The Kings Mill development might add more than 18,000 car trips a day to the township's roads, a traffic expert said at Monday's zoning hearing board meeting.

John R. Wichner, an engineer at Traffic Planning and Design Inc., testified that the 3,000-home project proposed by KMRD L.P., would add a volume of traffic to Forks Township equal to the daily load on Union Boulevard in Bethlehem.

Wichner said the 18,000 additional trips dwarf the current daily flow of 14,000 vehicle trips on Sullivan Trail and comes in just under the 19,000 daily trips seen on Route 412 in Bethlehem.

KMRD attorney John VanLuvanee objected to Wichner's testimony, stating that the impact of the development was not on trial, just the legality of the township's zoning ordinances.

"It is not a popularity contest," VanLuvanee said.

In the past, VanLuvanee has objected to all such testimony presented by the township, including similar testimony regarding the potential impact of Kings Mill on Easton, the Easton Area School District and Lower Mount Bethel Township.

Zoning hearing board Solicitor Michael Shay noted the objection and asked the township to continue with Wichner's testimony.

Wichner outlined two traffic studies performed by his firm for the township, the first in 2003 and an update in 2007. He said according to the studies, Kings Mill might increase traffic on Sullivan Trail south of Old Mill Road by 36 percent.

Wichner also said several intersections need significant improvements to handle increased demands. Improvements include signalization, widening and added turn lanes. He said that beyond the intersections in need, several roads will require strengthening or resurfacing to absorb additional traffic.

During cross-examination VanLuvanee asked why the improvements recommended in 2003 were the same as the improvements recommended in 2007 since the 2003 study did not take into account the Kings Mill project.

Wichner said the recommendations are the same but for different reasons.

Township Solicitor Steve Goudsouzian asked Wichner about the estimated impact Kings Mill will have on the intersection of Sullivan Trail and Church Lane. Wichner said the estimated delay during morning rush hour jumps from 7 minutes to about 15 minutes.

Wichner said both figures indicate a need for improvement and that Kings Mill has a similar effect on most of the 12 intersections studied in TPD's 2007 report.

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