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Turnpike ramp plan dropped in Tredyffrin

By Meredith Fischer
INQUIRER SUBURBAN STAFF

TREDYFFRIN -- The Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission has dropped plans to build a slip ramp at Route 252 after months of public criticism and debate over its impact on the nearby community.

"A lot of thought was given to the project and the responses from area residents," Kathy Leibler, spokeswoman for the commission, said yesterday. "And after we looked at the situation, we decided just to move ahead with the ramp at Route 29."

The ramp would have enabled drivers to get on the eastbound turnpike at Route 252 (Valley Forge Road). The ramp would have run on turnpike property behind the existing service plaza. The only turnpike access in the area now is at the Valley Forge interchange.

Neighbors such as Bob Peterson, whose backyard abutted the proposed ramp, feared an increase of traffic. "I can't believe it," he said of the turnpike's decision. "It's fantastic."

Peter Stanton, who led the community coalition opposing the Tredyffrin slip ramp, did a victory dance when he learned of their decision.

"It was pulled off the radar screen; it's gone," Stanton said. "And we're glad."

But residents in nearby Charlestown Township aren't so happy.

The Turnpike Commission has proposed a slip ramp at Route 29, and it is to be completed by 2000 as part of the commission's E-ZPass project, aimed at reducing traffic at congested interchanges. It would allow westbound turnpike traffic to exit to Route 29 and the Great Valley Corporate Center. A second ramp would enable drivers to get on the turnpike heading east.

Slip ramps eliminate the need to stop to pay tolls by having electronic devices that activate a transponder inside the car so that the driver is billed automatically.

"These ramps are a necessity," Leibler said. "We need to find a way to move cars faster off the turnpike."

Irene Ewald, Charlestown supervisor, disagrees.

"We don't want it and we don't need it," Ewald said. "It is inconsistent with [Chester County's development plan], and it will devastate our community."

Residents in Charlestown fear the ramp would bring too much traffic onto already congested roadways, including Route 29.

"We are very, very concerned," said Sue Staas, a Republican committeewoman in Charlestown, and one of several hundred residents who have banded together to oppose the ramps. "A bigger road begets more traffic and a better interchange begets more traffic. We don't need either."