

# Officials eye safety of Smithtown's Main Street

January 20, 2010 by ALFONSO A. CASTILLO / [alfonso.castillo@newsday.com](mailto:alfonso.castillo@newsday.com)

Weeks after two separate accidents within a block of each other in Smithtown killed an 11-year-old girl and injured two pedestrians, the state Department of Transportation plans to meet Friday with the town's elected leaders to discuss possible safety improvements along Main Street.

The meeting follows years of concerns expressed by elected and business leaders about Main Street - a 1 1/2-mile stretch of Routes 25 and 25A from the [Nissequogue](#) River to Route 111 that is divided into East Main and West Main streets. They have said the combination of a narrow road, fast-moving car and truck traffic, and a large number of pedestrians has made crossing Main Street perilous.

According to state DOT figures, there were 359 crashes along the road from 2003 through 2008, which works out to one crash about every six days. Of those, 16 involved pedestrians, including one who was killed, according to the DOT. Some 33,000 vehicles travel each day along the road, which has a posted 30-mph speed limit.

"In the morning I do my run, and you see pieces of car everywhere," said [Mark Mancini](#), an architect who unsuccessfully campaigned for town board last year on a platform that included making Main Street safer.

Mancini is a friend of the family of Courtney Sipes, 11, who was killed by a sport utility vehicle while crossing East Main Street on Nov. 25 at about 7 p.m. Police say Maureen Lambert, 20, hit the Smithtown girl and drove away without stopping. Lambert, of [Stony Brook](#), is awaiting trial on charges of leaving the scene of an accident resulting in a death and aggravated unlicensed driving. Mancini said the Sipes family remains "devastated."

On Jan. 2, about six weeks after that accident, Charles Doonan, 65, of Flushing, and Mirtha Rotkowitz, 61, of Sunnyside, were crossing East Main Street at about 8 p.m., just a block from where Courtney was killed, and were struck by a vehicle and injured. No criminal charges were brought against the driver, police said.

Smithtown Town Board member Edward Wehrheim said he and other town officials, along with state Sen. [John Flanagan](#) (R-East Northport), last year asked the DOT to undertake a project to improve the road's safety. That request, made before Courtney was killed, was rejected, Wehrheim said.

DOT spokeswoman Eileen Peters said she was not aware of any such proposal. She confirmed that DOT officials would meet Friday with those from the town and with Flanagan. Flanagan acknowledged that the state's current fiscal crisis may make it difficult for the DOT to add another project to its to-do list.

While engineering may be part of a potential solution, he said, he also would like to see better police enforcement of speed limits and traffic laws.

"Human tragedy like that - occurring not once, but twice in a very short space of time - is problematic," Flanagan said.