



**BEACON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES**

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October 29, 2021

VIA US MAIL & VIA EMAIL (edward.burnett@doecs.ny.gov)

Mr. Edward Burnett
Superintendent, Fishkill Correctional Facility
18 Strack Drive
Beacon, NY 12508

Dear Mr. Burnett:

We write to express our grave concerns with the decision by the Fishkill Correctional Facility to close Matteawan Road to vehicular traffic east of Beacon High School, effective on November 1, 2021. While we gratefully acknowledge the recent addendum to this decision giving access to school bus traffic, this fails to address the full and potentially dangerous consequences of the decision. This abrupt pronouncement seems rashly made, with no thought to the negative impact it will have on the surrounding community, especially children. Even with buses granted a pass, this decision — provided with very little notice to the Beacon City School District — will significantly interfere with District families' ability to provide safe and efficient transportation for their children.

On October 18, 2021, Fishkill Correctional Facility gave the Beacon City School District two weeks' notice that the road between Route 52 in Fishkill and Matteawan Road in Beacon would be closed to all traffic. This road has been open to the public for over a decade and has become an important part of the Beacon City School District's system for getting our students to and from our two largest schools safely and efficiently, while minimizing traffic congestion.

Although the Fishkill Correctional Facility cited safety and security concerns for this closure, it offered no specific details documenting such concerns, nor did it specify the concerns, consult with, or give the BCSD the opportunity to correct any safety issues caused by school buses and parents driving children to and from school. Our school community has used this road without incident for more than a decade — if that use has suddenly put prison security at risk, we would like to understand how and have the opportunity to propose corrective measures.

Two weeks is simply insufficient time to coordinate with the City of Beacon to mitigate the inevitable traffic and pedestrian safety issues that will arise. This is a major disruption to the well-worn circulation patterns of this community. Even if our buses are allowed to continue to use the road through the Correctional Facility, the new traffic that will be forced onto Route 52 will undoubtedly have a ripple effect on our students, bus fleet, and potentially our budget. Students who are not brought to school by bus either walk, bicycle or are driven to school. We have not had time to identify what the new needs of these walkers, cyclists and drivers are in order to implement necessary changes to ensure that students can continue to travel to and from school safely, whatever their method of transportation may be.

Lastly, we are deeply concerned about having two schools with over 1,500 students, not to mention staff, on a road with only one egress in case of an emergency. Matteawan Road very easily becomes a bottleneck and would quickly become chaos if emergency vehicles were trying to get to the schools while cars and buses were trying to exit, all in the same direction.

If this change must happen, we would propose that implementation be delayed until next fall in order to permit school and local officials to study options that would have the least negative impact on children and to allow us the necessary time to enact any changes before the next school year begins.

Sincerely

The Board of Education of the Beacon City School District

cc:

The Honorable Kathy Hochul, Governor of New York State
Senator Sue Serino
Assembly Member Jonathan Jacobson
Senator Charles Schumer
Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
Congressman Sean Patrick Maloney