



CITY OF PROVIDENCE  
MAYOR BRETT P. SMILEY

**GREEN AND COMPLETE STREETS ADVISORY COUNCIL**

February 22, 2024

Mayor Brett P. Smiley  
Providence City Hall  
25 Dorrance Street, Providence, RI 02903

CC: Courtney Hawkins, Chief Operating Officer  
Patricia Coyne-Fague, Director of Public Works  
Nate Urso, Traffic Engineer

**RE: Safety concern at Empire/Weybosset intersection**

Dear Mayor Smiley,

Thank you for your commitment earlier this week to a 2030 Vision Zero target. The Green and Complete Streets Advisory Council is excited to participate in the process to plan for success in this area.

The Advisory Council has recently discussed traffic signal changes on Weybosset Street with Mr. Urso, following a constituent complaint about the changes. It is our understanding that due to traffic congestion following events at the Providence Performing Arts Center, Mr. Urso evaluated the role of "pedestrian recall" or automatic walk signal activation, in this traffic congestion, and ultimately the City removed pedestrian recall from all traffic lights on Weybosset Street.

The Advisory Council has discussed previously with Mr. Urso the complexities of finding the optimal balance between traffic flow and safety of vulnerable road users, as different intersection conditions dictate different signal operations needs. In areas such as Weybosset Street with high volumes of pedestrian traffic and an urban trail crossing, the safety of vulnerable road users should be weighted highly. **In particular, we ask that the traffic signal at the intersection of Empire Street and Weybosset Street be returned to pedestrian recall.** Safe passage along the urban trail crossing between Empire Street and Chestnut Street depends on the pedestrian phase of the signal cycle. Without recall, people on bicycles need to relocate sideways to activate the push-button. This is not a realistic expectation. Most urban trail users are instead likely to attempt to cross without pushing the button, creating a significant safety hazard for all users, including drivers.

We strongly recommend that the signal phasing be returned to the design approved as part of the urban trail implementation project, with one phase for both directions of Weybosset Street traffic have green while the crosswalks across Empire Street and Chestnut Street have walk lights, a second phase with no

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walk lights during which all Empire Street traffic has green, and a third phase when the through lane on Empire Street has a green, walk lights across Weybosset Street are activated, and right turns onto Weybosset Street across the urban trail are held back with a red arrow. Mr. Urso indicated that he expected such a configuration would not lead to any significant traffic issues.

Thank you for your consideration, and we appreciate your commitment to pedestrian safety.

Rosie Jaswal

Chair, Green and Complete Streets Advisory Council

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