



July 26, 2023

To: Joseph D. Arsenault, Project Manager

From: Bike West Hartford, Inc. Board Members

Mary Donegan, 243 Quaker Lane North, West Hartford

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Jen Fleet, 11 Newport Avenue, West Hartford

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Jim Head, 150 Selden Hill Drive, West Hartford

Tom Martin, 134 Woodrow Street, West Hartford

Re: Public comments on Project 0155-0176, Intersection Improvements at Bishop's Corner

Thank you for inviting feedback on the Bishop's Corner project, and for making the extra effort to attend a Bike West Hartford meetup on Saturday July 15th to listen and take notes from several West Hartford residents. Below are public comments from the Bike West Hartford board, in consultation with many of our members.

We support and applaud CTDOT efforts to improve pedestrian safety at this intersection by removing right-turn channels or "slip lanes." Doing so will reduce the risk of high-speed vehicles turning directly into vulnerable walkers and bicyclists. We strongly encourage you to take additional steps to improve safety for all users (including bicyclists and bus riders), and to invest in alternatives to single-passenger motor vehicles to help achieve CT DOT's own goal of reducing vehicle miles traveled to address our climate change crisis.

1. Design transportation that matches our desired values

When conventional traffic analysis seeks to "balance" the current numbers of cars versus pedestrians/cyclists/transit riders, it upholds the status quo, with no vision for our desired future goals. In response to Gov. Lamont's executive order to address climate change, [CT DOT adopted the goal of reducing vehicle miles traveled \(VMT\) by 5 percent in 2030](#). The current levels of motorized traffic at Bishop's Corner are higher than our stated goals, and they ignore the number of pedestrians, bicyclists, and bus riders who currently *do not* use this intersection due to its current car-centric focus. We call upon CT DOT engineers to create a bolder redesign that matches the future we desire.

- Reduce the number of motor vehicle lanes from 4 to 3, and 3 to 2, at Main and Albany
 - The current design devotes too many lanes to motor vehicles:

- Southbound Main Street begins at 1 lane, expands to 4 lanes at the intersection, then drops back to 1 lane in the existing road diet
 - Northbound Main Street begins at 1 lane in the existing road diet, expands to 3 lanes (plus an unofficial “extra” lane), then drops back to 1 lane
 - Eastbound Albany Avenue begins at 2 lanes, expands to 4 lanes at the intersection, then drops back to 2 lanes
 - Westbound Albany Avenue begins at 2 lanes, expands to 3 lanes at the intersection (plus an unofficial “half-lane”), then drops back to 2 lanes
- Extend the existing road diet from North Main through the Bishop’s Corner intersection. The [Federal Highway Administration Road Diet Informational Guide](#) cited a study showing that a three-lane “road diet could work up to an ADT of 23,000 vehicles per day.” We believe that figure matches the current ADT for Bishop’s Corner cited by a CT DOT project manager. Once again, the current ADT figure is not carved in stone, but will decrease if the design accommodates more pedestrians/cyclists/transit users, and also if CT reduces its VMT by 5 percent in 2030.
- Significantly widen the sidewalks and add street trees in the space gained from reducing motorized vehicle lanes.
- Multiple entrances and exits to shopping plazas are a safety hazard and should be reduced

2. Improve crosswalk safety design

- Leading Pedestrian Interval
 - The [July 17th CT Insider article](#) reported that “crossings would be concurrent with traffic,” which is unclear. At minimum, we recommend a full 7-second Leading Pedestrian Interval (LPI) to give walkers a head start into the intersection before any motorized traffic proceeds, to improve safety.
- Illuminate “No Turn on Red” when walk-button pressed
 - In addition to the LPI, when walkers press the button to cross, a green arrow for motor vehicles in the right-turn lane should change to a red arrow (or an illuminated “No Turn on Red” sign), to improve pedestrian safety.
- Reduce corner radius with textured concrete
 - The current map shows very large radii for corners, sometimes with non-designated motor vehicle lane space, which creates a pedestrian hazard that runs counter to the project goal. We understand that tractor trailers require a larger turning radius than cars. We recommend using textured concrete with yellow paint, which would allow off-tracking by large trucks when necessary, but discourage unofficial “slip lane” usage by cars.

- Orientation and width of sidewalk ramps
 - Sidewalk ramps should comply with the American Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, and where possible, should be positioned to safely direct pedestrians through the crosswalk, not diagonally into the middle of the intersection. Ensure that curbs are sufficiently wide to accommodate users in wheelchairs or shoppers with carts.

- Audible crosswalk signals
 - Ensure that crosswalk signals are audible for low-vision users, especially those who live at the nearby Federation Square affordable housing apartments on Starkel Road

- Same pedestrian safety improvements for secondary intersections in the project
 - While most attention is devoted to the main intersection at Albany and North Main, the secondary crosswalks at Flagg Road and Starkel Road need the same level of pedestrian safety improvements above.

3. Improve safety design for bicyclists

While we understand that the original project goal was solely to improve safety for pedestrians, the Bishop's Corner redesign is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve safety for bicyclists, too.

- Add bike lanes where car lanes can be reduced, especially northbound and southbound on Main Street. Connecting to the existing bike lanes in the North Main Street Road Diet, and creating safe passage through the intersection, will increase bicycle trips to nearby Hall High School, which currently enrolls 1,500 students.

- If car lanes are not reduced on Main Street, then widen the sidewalks into 8-foot multi-use paths, and use green paint and arrows to clearly mark where cyclists should shift from existing (or future) bike lanes onto the multi-use path to safely travel through the intersection.

4. Improve safety design and shelters for bus riders

The current map of the Bishop's Corner redesign does not show any plans to improve safety or shelters for bus riders. Yet the [Jan 3rd CT Insider](#) reported that CTDOT was in the process of conducting a study of bus stops and shelters. Since every bus rider is also a pedestrian at some point, we expect that the Bishop's Corner pedestrian safety project will pay special attention to transit users, who also are part of the broader solution to achieve CTDOT's 2030 goal of reducing VMT.

- Show locations for bus shelters in project map design, and consider safety accommodations for safe crossings to and from bus stops.

Thank you again for your time and efforts.

Sincerely,

Bike West Hartford, Inc.

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