



CITY OF PROVIDENCE
MAYOR BRETT P. SMILEY

GREEN AND COMPLETE STREETS ADVISORY COUNCIL

March 28, 2024

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

CC: Courtney Hawkins, Chief Operating Officer
Emily Crowell, Chief of Staff
Patricia Coyne-Fague, Director of Public Works
Joseph I. Mulligan, III, Director of Planning and Development
Nate Urso, Traffic Engineer

RE: Removal of Urban Trail Segments to Address Washington Bridge Closure

Dear Mayor Smiley,

At the recent Green and Complete Streets Advisory Council (GCSC) meeting, concerns were raised about your suggestion to remove protected bicycle facilities in response to the ongoing closure of the Washington Bridge. While we understand that challenges that may be faced by vehicle commuters during this time, we want to ensure that potential solutions are considered carefully and in the full context of the city's transportation needs, priorities, and goals - including its recent Vision Zero commitment.

According to City data, since the implementation of two-way protected bicycle facilities on South Water Street, Broad Street, Clifford Street, and Empire Street, there has been a 21% decrease in the total number of crashes for all modes of transportation on these corridors, as well as a 10% decrease in fatalities, a 22% decrease in injuries, and a 55 to 61% decrease in pedestrian injuries. Removal of the urban trail will jeopardize pedestrian safety by increasing vehicle speeds and crossing distances, increasing the likelihood of severe crashes as a result.

Data from other cities that have experienced sudden and prolonged road closures due to infrastructure failures (Atlanta, Seattle, Philadelphia, Minneapolis, Portland, etc) suggests that anticipated traffic problems seldom materialized, as residents adjusted their travel behaviors and modes accordingly.

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

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Philadelphia, for instance, chose to provide increased train frequency and free park and ride opportunities to encourage more transit use during unexpected structural repairs.

Recent amendments to the Green and Complete Streets Ordinance (Section 1. Chapter 23, "Streets, Sidewalks and Public Places" Article VII, "Green and Complete Streets") include the requirement to present any plans to remove Complete Streets facilities to the GCSC. We ask that before any action is taken to remove protected bicycle facilities or any other proven safety countermeasures, that the safety and operational implications are studied using empirical data and presented to the GCSC at an upcoming meeting. Cost estimates for the removal of any facilities or other complete streets features should also be prepared, and funding sources identified.

We hope that all alternatives will be explored, such as retiming traffic signals to improve efficiency, repurposing space dedicated to parked vehicles during peak periods, as well as providing increased transit frequency. We also think it is important to observe the effect of RIDOT's upcoming addition of two eastbound lanes on the Washington Bridge prior to making decisions about Providence's critical active modes infrastructure. With recent federal funding granted on the basis of expanding the urban trail network, removal of existing facilities should only be considered as a last resort.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rosie Jaswal".

Rosie Jaswal

Chair, Green and Complete Streets Advisory Council

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