

Mr. Steven Pristawa  
Traffic Safety Engineer  
Rhode Island Department of Transportation  
Two Capitol Hill  
Providence, RI 02903

October 01, 2021

Dear Mr. Pristawa:

We are writing to express our grave concerns over the City's plan, currently underway, to remove a lane of traffic on South Water Street and replace it with a two-way bicycle path. We want to be clear, we do not oppose creation of a bicycle path along South Water Street, but we do not think it should come at the expense of a lane of travel which is needed for travel, deliveries, RIPTA service and which is the only access road to the interstate highway I-195 East from the Jewelry District and East Side of Providence.

According to City Planner Alex Ellis, the stated justification for the removal of this lane of travel relies upon traffic counts done in March 2020. Alex has repeatedly stated that the threshold for requiring two lanes of travel is 600 vehicles/hour or more. He stated that the traffic counts in March 2020 did not come near that. Given that March was the beginning of the pandemic shutdown and traffic patterns have changed since, we asked for new traffic counts. Alex refused. So we hired Precision Data Industries to conduct new counts the week after Labor Day.

The new counts tell a different, and foreboding story. The new counts showed high traffic volumes between 3:00-4:00 pm on Wednesday (595 vehicles), Thursday (587 vehicles) and Friday (652 vehicles). Friday from 4:00-5:00 pm had 629 vehicles. According to industry experts, even today's traffic counts are depressed 10-15% because office capacity in Providence is barely at 50%.

One lane of travel along South Water Street will not be able to handle this current volume of vehicles, which includes frequent deliveries to restaurants and buildings along the route, multiple RIPTA stops, plus parking on both sides of the street, without significant backups of traffic onto Memorial Boulevard, South Main Street, Point Street and the streets that feed into South Water Street: Packett, Planet, Power, Dollar and James Streets. The current volume is manageable only because there are two lanes which allow for vehicles to move around blockages due to vehicles parking, deliveries and RIPTA stops.

The City's work has already begun by installing three raised bus platforms on South Water Street, and significant traffic issues are already occurring, backing up vehicles onto Memorial Boulevard when deliveries are being made to the back of 121 South Main Street for Hemenway's Restaurant.

The City's proposal, to remove a lane of travel along South Water Street, does not even account for future increases in traffic volume due to planned development of Parcel 2 with 120-194 residential units and 25,000 sq feet or more of retail space. Nor does it account for increased traffic volume from the completion of the mixed-use project on Parcel 6 with 62 residential units, a 13,000 sq foot grocery and a 10,000 sq foot commercial/retail space.

Due to the potential impact of the City's proposal upon state roads, we respectfully request your intervention with the Mayor to consider alternatives that could calm traffic along South Water Street while maintaining two lanes of travel, and to accommodate bicycles west of the curb towards the Providence River. We believe there is ample room to accommodate all users and modes of travel in a way most convenient and safe for all.

Sincerely,



Ms. Bethany Costello  
Executive Director  
Center for Community Partnerships  
Rhode Island School of Design



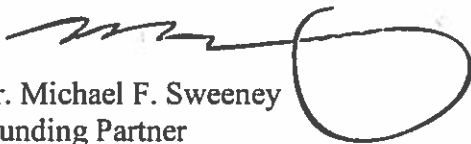
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Owners  
Bacaro Restaurant



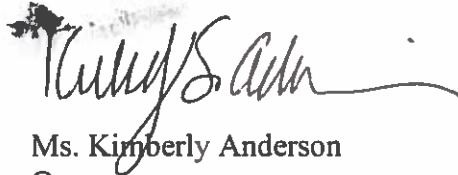
Ms. Sharon Steele  
President  
Jewelry District Association



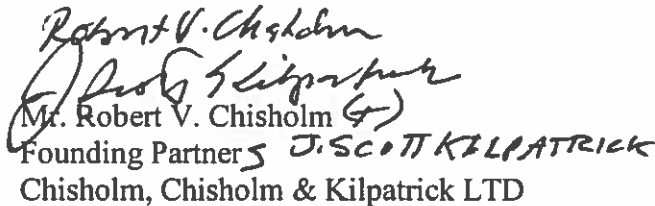
Mr. Christopher J. Marsella  
President  
Marsella Development Corporation



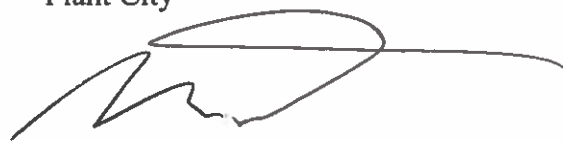
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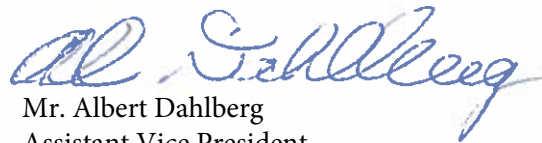
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Hemenway's Restaurant



Mr. Albert Dahlberg  
Assistant Vice President  
Government & Community Relations  
Brown University

cc: Mr. Nate Urso, Traffic Safety Engineer, City of Providence