

**TO: Jim Pond  
Erik Frisch**

**DATE: July 31, 2015**

**RE: Follow-up to July 22, 2015 meeting concerning Mt. Hope Ave. traffic issues**

Dear Jim and Erik:

The action items in the petition relating to traffic issues on Mt. Hope Ave., submitted on 04/13/15, include (1) installing additional traffic lights along the problem stretch of the street, and (2) improving/enhancing crosswalks in that stretch. At our meeting on 07/22/15, we were directed to identify two potential new traffic light locations and two specific crosswalks at existing traffic lights for study by the City/County traffic engineers. This submission provides those identifications and sets forth our rationales for them.

**A. POTENTIAL NEW TRAFFIC LIGHT LOCATIONS:**

1. **Mt. Hope/Robinson Drive intersection.** This intersection is frequently used by pedestrians, joggers, and bicyclists due to its location at the northwest corner of Highland Park and its proximity to Mt. Hope Cemetery's North Gatehouse entrance. Richard Reisem, a trustee of the Friends of Mt. Hope Cemetery, states that many tourists and other cemetery visitors cross at this intersection to visit the western sector of the park, which includes the Highland Bowl and the Frederick Douglass monument. This intersection is also on the planned Highland Park/Canalway Trail. It is in the lower part of the Mt. Hope Ave. incline and vehicles commonly speed through it at 40-50 m.p.h. or more.

Several representative comments concerning the extremely dangerous conditions at this intersection can be found on the [Rocville.com](http://Rocville.com) website. Resident Bob Schriever, for example, writes that "I walk this area at lunchtime during good weather. Crossing at Robinson to the cemetery is tantamount to suicide. Cars don't slow down much less stop for pedestrians. It would be great if the city actually did something about it." Resident Caitlin Meives, a runner, writes of encountering "active hostil[ity]" and "total disregard for pedestrian safety" in this area, notwithstanding existing pedestrian crossing markings and signage. Resident Claire Marziotti writes: "I (attempt to) cross at Robinson almost every day. It is incredibly rare for someone to stop at the crosswalk (this includes RPD, RCSD vehicles, Monroe Co sheriffs, etc.). People FLY in this section of Mt. Hope. I have had cars speed up to 'scare' me out of the crosswalk, cars have actually touched me as they flew past while I was IN the crosswalk. People in cars will scream and curse at you for using the crosswalk."

Pedestrian crossing signage has proved insufficient at this intersection. A traffic light at this intersection will have four main benefits. First, it will allow for safe passage of pedestrians, runners, bicyclists, and visitors to and between Mt. Hope Cemetery and Highland Park. Second, by regulating the traffic flow, it will make vehicular egress and ingress at Robinson Drive safer and more rational, including during events at Highland Bowl, when vehicle volume on Robinson

Drive can be high and egress onto Mt. Hope Ave. virtually impossible. Third, again by regulating the traffic flow in this area, a traffic light at Robinson Drive will potentially make it safer for residents and visitors in vehicles to enter and exit Menlo Place, which is immediately north of this intersection, Mt. Hope Cemetery, which is immediately south of this intersection, and Castle Park and Reservoir Ave., which are further south of this intersection. Fourth, the presence of a traffic light at this location will help dispel the perception that this stretch of street is some kind of freeway, and will provide a visual cue to northbound drivers that they are coming upon another more densely populated residential segment of the Mt. Hope corridor.

We urge that study of this intersection also encompass all relevant pedestrian crossing issues, both in conjunction with any new traffic light and as a freestanding consideration. We urge the engineers to consider the full panoply of potential tools to address such issues, including raised table additions, flashing lights, and revised markings and signage.

2. **Mt. Hope/Linden Street intersection.** Linden Street is densely populated and this intersection sees substantial vehicular and pedestrian use. The newly expanded East House facility near this intersection has resulted in even more foot traffic. This intersection occurs on a curve on Mt. Hope Ave. where excessive speeding is common. The sight lines for vehicles exiting Linden St. onto Mt. Hope Ave. are poor. Homes on the east side of Mt. Hope Ave. immediately north of this intersection are very close to the street. Numerous accidents (reported and unreported) have occurred at or near this intersection, including toppled light poles and street signs, uprooted fire hydrants, school bus accidents, and other multi-vehicle collisions.

We anticipate that the proximity of this intersection to the Mt. Hope/Cypress St. intersection (where there is an existing traffic light) may be an issue. We note, however, that consecutive intersection traffic lights exist in other areas of this City – for example, on South Avenue, along the incline that roughly parallels the Mt. Hope Ave. incline, there are traffic lights at the three consecutive intersections (Bellevue, Rockingham, and Linden). At the very least, a flashing warning signal, either in the Mt. Hope/Linden St. intersection or south thereof on the east side of the street (warning northbound drivers of the impending curve), would help make this intersection safer.

Any study of “queuing” at this intersection should account for the fact that currently many vehicles turning right onto Mt. Hope Ave. from Linden St. do not stop at all when they see a gap in the Mt. Hope Ave. traffic flow (apparently these drivers perceive such dangerous illegal activity as necessary to “break into” such gaps, which can be very fleeting in peak volume times and/or when excessive speeding is occurring on Mt. Hope). Also, any study of this intersection (as well as any study of the Mt. Hope/Robinson Drive intersection) should account for the fact that School 12 on South Ave. is currently closed for renovations that are scheduled to be completed in July 2016, and its re-opening will significantly impact traffic patterns via major increases in school bus and other vehicle traffic.

We urge that study of the Mt. Hope/Linden St. intersection also include pedestrian crossing issues, both in conjunction with any new traffic light and as a freestanding consideration. Here as well, we urge the engineers to consider the full panoply of potential tools, including raised table additions and flashing lights.

**B. CROSSWALK ENHANCEMENTS AT EXISTING TRAFFIC LIGHTS:**

1. **Mt. Hope/Ford Street intersection.** This intersection includes a number of currently hazardous crosswalks. Users include Episcopal Home employees who must cross to reach parking on Hanna Place, residents of Erie Harbor/The Hamilton, other South Wedge residents, students, Mt. Hope Ave. service organization visitors and clients, and bicyclists. We urge the engineers to consider the full panoply of potential improvements and enhancements, including eliminating traffic lanes that encourage reckless and aggressive driving (such as the second, short southbound lane on Mt. Hope Ave. north and south of Ford St.), lane narrowings and/or realignments, raised islands, roundabout configurations, textured and/or multi-colored pavement, raised table additions, enhanced signage and markings, and crossing signals timed more favorably to pedestrians.

2. **Mt. Hope/Cypress Street intersection.** This crossing also sees regular use, including by Episcopal Home employees who park on Cypress Street and bus riders trying to reach the nearby bus stops on either side of the street. Here too we urge the engineers to consider the full panoply of improvements/enhancements, especially crossing signals timed more favorably to pedestrians.

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This concludes our identification of particular locations, pursuant the direction we were given at the July 22, 2015 meeting. We further urge the engineers to apply their professional judgment and expertise to consider other locations along this dangerous stretch of Mt. Hope Ave. for potential new traffic lights or enhanced pedestrian crossings, and to consider all potential traffic calming tools and strategies for possible implementation along the entire corridor, including narrowed traffic lanes and revised lane markings throughout.

It is our understanding that, in addition to what we have identified here, a new study will be conducted for a potential new traffic light at the intersection of Mt. Hope Ave. and Stewart St. We welcome and applaud any and all steps to enhance the safety of that intersection. We trust that the rest of this dangerous stretch of Mt. Hope, including the portion from Highland Ave. north, will be given equal attention.

Finally, separate and apart from the immediate study and action urged herein to address the serious dangers that already exist, we urge the following prospective action. To our knowledge no comprehensive long term traffic plan has ever been devised for this area, notwithstanding the very significant development and growth that has occurred (*e.g.*, hospital/university expansions, College Town, Erie Harbor, Costco) and that continues to occur. This is very troubling to residents and other stakeholders as they observe, daily, the negative impact of higher and higher traffic volumes. We urgently request that the City and County undertake such comprehensive study (including where the increased traffic is coming from, where it is going, and how it can be rationally directed and managed), and devise a long term plan to balance the positive aspects of development with appropriate protections for public safety, quality of life, and historic preservation in this unique corridor.

We greatly appreciate your work for the Rochester community. Please do not hesitate to contact me if our group can provide any assistance whatsoever as this effort moves forward.

Sincerely,

Mike Orman  
554 Mt. Hope Ave.