

September 18, 2015

To: Amherst Department of Public Works
Re: Plans for Roundabout on Triangle Street and North and East Pleasant Streets
From: Laura Holland, 149 High Street, Amherst, MA

I have heard, with concern, that there is discussion of removing the traffic signals at the intersection of Triangle Street with North and East Pleasant Streets, and replacing the signals with a roundabout.

This plan would pose significant difficulties for the many pedestrians who cross those streets. It will also create dangers for those pedestrians, such as many of the inhabitant of Chestnut Court, who must navigate more slowly, because of limited mobility, use of a walker, or dependence on a wheelchair. In addition, the influx of many new people living at the multi-story building on the corner of Triangle Street further increases the number of pedestrians who will be trying to cross the streets in the immediate area.

One suggestion for pedestrians apparently is that they cross the streets before the corner intersection, in the clearly marked pedestrian walkways. This sounds like a good suggestion until you try it. I have tried doing that many times in the years that I have walked to work at UMass. It is never an easy crossing, and it is too often dangerous.

Just yesterday I carefully looked both ways on East Pleasant, saw no cars coming in either direction, started across, and a fast moving car came speeding down the street. Although I was already part way across the street, in the crosswalk, I saw the car seeming to pick up speed rather than slow down, and I was able to leap out of its path. (I was highly visible in a bright orange sweater.) But what if I was less mobile and could not quickly move out of harm's way? This experience of a fast-moving car barreling over the crest of the hill or coming around the curve has happened many times before in my years of experience crossing East and North Pleasant Streets. That is why I rely on the traffic signals to enable me to cross the streets in safety.

More responsive traffic signals, rather than a roundabout, might be a solution. The traffic lights now at the corner of Triangle and Main Street, previously another very difficult corner for pedestrians, seem to work beautifully for cars and pedestrians.

Please keep the safety of pedestrians in mind as you consider plans for the traffic at the intersection of Triangle Street and North and East Pleasant.