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## **FRONT PORCH FORUM: Traffic Light at Pine and Maple**

Thank you for sharing your observations and concerns related to the Champlain Parkway Project.

### **Understanding Current Traffic Conditions**

The City is actively monitoring traffic operations at the new traffic signals along Pine Street, including the Maple Street intersection, and evaluating how they are affecting traffic flow on Pine Street and within the surrounding neighborhood. Traffic patterns continue to be reviewed, and the City is working closely with the project design team to identify and implement signal timing and operational adjustments where appropriate. Public feedback plays an important role in this process, and comments received from residents, businesses, and motorists are shared with the project team for consideration.

A primary objective of the Champlain Parkway project is to reduce traffic on neighborhood streets by encouraging north-south travel to use Pine Street, Main Street, and Battery Street as the preferred corridor. To support this goal, the new traffic signals are designed to prioritize traffic movements along Pine Street, which now serves a more significant regional transportation function than it did previously.

While some drivers may experience delays, particularly during peak travel periods or while motorists adjust to the new roadway network, traffic operations are expected to continue evolving as travel patterns stabilize and more drivers shift to using the preferred north-south corridor.

In addition to managing vehicle traffic, the new traffic signals provide controlled crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists, improve accessibility, and create more predictable traffic operations for all users. Balancing traffic flow, neighborhood livability, and transportation safety remains a key consideration in the design and operation of these intersections.

### **Requests to Return the Signals to Flashing Operation**

Some have suggested reverting the traffic signals to a flashing operation, either full-time or during off-peak periods. However, the intersection was evaluated during the design process and determined to warrant full signalization based on anticipated traffic conditions. As a result, it was designed and constructed to function as a fully signalized intersection rather than a stop-controlled intersection.

In addition to regulating vehicle movements, the signal provides protected pedestrian crossing opportunities that would be diminished or eliminated under a flashing-red operation. For these reasons, returning the intersection to flashing mode is not currently being considered.

### **Requests to Add Left-Turn Lanes**

Suggestions have also been made to add left-turn lanes to improve traffic flow. Unfortunately, there is limited physical space available on most approaches to accommodate additional turn lanes without significantly affecting other project elements.

The roadway improvements were designed to balance the needs of all users and therefore incorporate features such as on-street parking, bicycle facilities, traffic-calming measures, and curb extensions, which compete for the same roadway space that would be required for dedicated left-turn lanes.

Additionally, adding left-turn lanes from Pine Street onto Maple Street would be inconsistent with one of the project's central objectives, which is to encourage through traffic to remain on Pine Street, Main Street, and Battery Street and reduce traffic volumes on neighborhood streets.



### **Requests for Protected Left-Turn Signal Phases**

Another suggestion has been to add leading or lagging left-turn signal phases to provide protected time for left-turning vehicles. While protected left-turn phases could potentially improve certain turning movements, implementing them would require modifications to the existing traffic signal system, including the installation of additional left-turn signal heads and significant revisions to signal timing and phasing. It would also require a comprehensive traffic engineering analysis to determine appropriate operations and evaluate impacts on vehicle traffic, pedestrian crossings, bicycle movements, and overall intersection performance.

Protected left-turn phases can improve left-turn operations, but they also require additional time within the signal cycle, which may increase delays for other movements. Any changes to signal phasing must therefore be carefully evaluated to ensure they support the broader operational and safety goals of the intersection and corridor.

This type of improvement would require additional design, analysis, equipment installation, and funding, and therefore is not something that could be implemented in the short term. However, it may be considered in the future should ongoing monitoring, traffic data, and operational evaluations indicate that the benefits would justify those investments.

Additionally, protected left-turn phases would make turning movements into neighborhood streets more convenient, which would be inconsistent with the project's objective of reducing traffic on neighborhood streets and encouraging use of the Pine Street corridor.

### **Pedestrian Wait Times**

Concerns have also been raised regarding pedestrian wait times. When a pedestrian presses the push button, the signal controller registers a request for the exclusive pedestrian crossing phase. That phase is served at a designated point within the signal cycle. Depending on when the button is pressed and where the signal is in its cycle at that moment, the resulting wait time can vary.

In some cases, if the request is received after the point in the cycle when the pedestrian phase would normally be called, the request must wait until the next signal cycle before being served.

### **Pedestrian Crossing Operations**

We have also received comments suggesting that the pedestrian phase itself is the primary cause of congestion and vehicle delays. Exclusive pedestrian crossing phases do require time within the signal cycle that would otherwise be available to vehicular movements and therefore can contribute to increased vehicle wait times. This is one of the trade-offs associated with providing a fully protected pedestrian crossing.

However, current observations indicate that overall traffic volumes and turning movements at the intersection, particularly the volume of vehicles using Maple Street to access destinations to the north and south rather than utilizing the major north-south arterial routes, are more significant contributors to delays at this location.

### **Safety, Access, and Quality-of-Life Concerns**

The City has also received comments regarding broader safety, access, and quality-of-life concerns, including difficulty entering and exiting driveways and parking lots, interactions between vehicles and bicyclists, driver behavior, increased traffic noise, and the overall experience of living, walking, and traveling near the intersection.

The Department of Public Works and the project team understand that changes to traffic patterns can affect nearby residents and businesses in different ways. These observations are an important



part of the City's ongoing evaluation of the intersection and are being reviewed alongside traffic data, field observations, and operational performance.

### **Ongoing Monitoring and Public Feedback**

For those asking who is monitoring the intersection and how concerns can be shared, Department of Public Works staff and the Champlain Parkway Project Team are actively reviewing conditions and collecting information.

Residents are encouraged to continue submitting comments and observations directly to the Champlain Parkway Project Team at [info@champlainparkway.com](mailto:info@champlainparkway.com). All feedback received is reviewed, considered alongside operational data and field observations, and becomes part of the public record.

### **Next Steps**

The City will continue to monitor conditions at this intersection and throughout the corridor and make data-driven adjustments where appropriate to support the project's goals of improving transportation efficiency, enhancing safety, and reducing traffic on neighborhood streets by encouraging use of the Pine Street, Main Street, and Battery Street corridor.

Best,

The Champlain Parkway Project Team



## FRONT PORCH FORUM COMMENTS:

**This light is new, but without a left turn arrow it causes more traffic problems than before. The traffic can really get backed up with the current system. It would be great if this can be changed.**

The traffic light that was recently installed at Maple and Pine has caused significant traffic problems. DPW can look at Front Porch Forum for some discussion.

I'd appreciate some feedback please.

**This traffic light is not only ridiculous, it's stupid. It backs up traffic horribly in all directions. Just another example of poor planning without input from the commuter who travel that route daily.**

The driveway to our condo is between 116 & 122 Maple St between St Paul & Pine Streets. It is now almost impossible to get out of that driveway at busy times-- morning rush hour, lunch hour, evening rush hour. If there are many cars heading East through the Pine & Maple intersection,, one Westbound car wanting to turn Left onto Pine Street can mean that 0- 1 Westbound cars make it through the light. Which means that West-bound traffic can back up to block the driveway.

There might be room for a left-turn lane from West-bound Maple onto South-bound Pine, but it would require taking parking spots on Maple and un-doing some of the traffic mitigation supposedly pedestrian-friendly curb/grass bumps into the road at the intersection. I'm not sure how likely that is to ever happen. And Yes, I hear those who really love roundabouts, but the houses at that intersection are so close to the streets that the only way to get a roundabout at the Maple-Pine intersection would be for the City to take houses by eminent domain, and I don't think that is a reasonable solution.

If the traffic light for Maple St West-bound stayed green a little bit longer than the green for East-bound, then at least the West-bound car wanting to turn Left onto Pine would be able to safely turn (without having to turn as the light is turning yellow-to-red and hoping that the Pine St cars aren't jumping the light)

It seems that the Pedestrian signal is set to give a walk signal after a full cycle of lights; whereas the Saint Paul - Main St Pedestrian light will give a walk signal at the next change of lights -- you don't have to wait a full cycle.

Maybe the Pine Street traffic moves better at rush hours with the lights; Maple Street traffic was MUCH BETTER and had much less congestion with the Stop signs.

**I'm not convinced that Pedestrian signals are contributing significantly to the traffic backups. IMHO steady traffic East-bound on Maple that prevents West-bound traffic from being able to turn Left/ South on Pine contributes more to the traffic/ gridlock**

Yes, traffic did seem to move along more quickly before the stop lights were installed.

***Quoted from someone else. "If the traffic light for Maple St West-bound stayed green a little bit longer than the green for East-bound, then at least the West-bound car wanting to turn Left onto Pine would be able to safely turn (without having to turn as the light is turning yellow-to-red and hoping that the Pine St cars aren't jumping the light)"***

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**SO - who's monitoring this? Who is in charge of fixing it? Must we send our FPF posts to the Planning Department, or to the Mayor?**

**This is not the first complaint I've seen here in the last few weeks. Have we more people who feel adjustments should be made Now? If not now, When?!**

**Thank you for thinking about this! This kind of thing was predicted by a group of people but the City (Miro was Mayor at the time) paid us no mind. They said they knew what they were doing. But did they know? No.**

**Thanks to everyone who's written in - and please, write a note yourself if this new improved situation is worse for You!**

Well well - back a few years, Tony Redington and the Coalition for a Livable City were campaigning for roundabouts at these intersections- now you ...

**The Pine and Maple intersection is now a nightmare for everyone, even if not trying to turn left. I've always used that intersection to get onto Pine Street and go south, so it's a right turn there for me. Traffic is backed up to Battery Street, and we need to sit through so many light cycles at Pine and Maple before the traffic on Maple can slowly creep east. Clearly the timing favors a long time for the through traffic on Pine and very little for Maple in either direction, whether turning or not.**

I agree as well --this traffic light in its current state is NOT an improvement. I live in the neighborhood and find myself using alternative routes to avoid this intersection. It's even confounding as a pedestrian!

**It seems to me that when the light turns green, many drivers don't pull forward at all while waiting to turn. If they would pull forward slightly, cars going straight can pass by them and keep traffic moving. I've noticed this happens a lot on South Willard at Main St. too. It's not a perfect solution, if there are many turning cars traffic will still stop, but it would help greatly. I don't think there is room for two lanes needed for a left turn signal.**

On 3 recent occasions when I came down Maple and tried to turn onto Pine I had to sit through at least 3 light changes before I could turn onto Pine. Twice I was able to turn only because a courteous driver going up Maple stopped to let me. The 4 way stop worked fine.

Maybe DPW could put that light at a location where it would actually be useful.

**Ya. A 4 way blinking red would be the same as stop signs on each corner. just costing a million dollars instead of \$800. --**

How about a 4-way blinking red light? Just like the old days .. \_ that worked!!!

**It seems to me that the problem is the pedestrian crossing signals. With the stop signs, motorists and pedestrians negotiated crossing. With the signals, the pedestrian crossings are random and long in duration, backing up traffic. In the extreme case, if there were no pedestrian crossing signals, traffic signals work better than stop signs; the challenge is to find a happy medium.**



4way red blinking all day might be a bit much, seems like it'd make the whole project and infrastructure pointless, but I do believe it should be a blinking red in the evening/night when there's little to no traffic passing.

**My wife and I live on Maple between Pine and S Champlain. We have been frustrated by the increased congestion, noise and reduced quality of life. It seems drivers have become more aggressive and I feel safety is affected. Who could we reach out to with our concerns?**

I think the former stop signs worked great! There was never the back up there is now. I now avoid that intersection.

DPW- are you listening to all these comments? By Burlington taxpayers!!

**How about each direction get a green light for 10 seconds like the 5 corners in Essex does, and that works fine.**

The problem with this is that it causes danger for cyclists in the bike lanes when drivers sometimes erratically and often blindly pull around the cars waiting to turn left. I wrote to DPW about the issue on Willard and main, but they never followed up after an initial response. A turn signal is really needed in these places. I feel like the current situation puts cyclists (and other drivers) at risk.

I've had the same experience and now avoid Pine St

**I agree with Janis. I have had to wait through up to three cycles of this light to take a left as I was headed west on Maple to turn onto Pine Street to head south. There is no avoiding it if you live in this neighborhood. I've written to Ben Traverse on the Burlington City Council about this several weeks ago, but he has not bothered to respond.**

I have found the same thing - I submitted this on the .gov website. Hopefully they add a left turn arrow or a lane for cars to pull around those waiting to take a left!

**Hello! I saw your post on front porch. I wanted to add my voice to those who feel the new traffic light has made the intersection worse.**

**The entrance and exit to my residential parking lot is between Pine and St. Paul and it's become very dangerous to try and pull out there. It was already bad with cars parking on that side of the street, meaning you have to pull partway into the street in order to see anyone coming. Now on top of that, the back up of traffic going west completely obscures the traffic approaching going east. So turning left onto the street is significantly riskier. Additionally, the light seems to make drivers go faster than before.**

**As a side note, the parking lot I'm speaking of is owned by the Stratos building and we asked for mirrors to improve safety and we were denied. Very frustrating as it feels like I'm playing a dangerous game every time I go to leave and it feels like the city doesn't care.**

**Thank you for your time**

Hello,

I live near this intersection and have been following the discussion on FPF regarding the new traffic lights. I haven't seen anyone mention the issue of drivers turning left, which seems to be the main cause of the congestion. Just wanted to add my two cents and recommend a new light system that includes a green arrow. The green arrow could alternate for the first half of the light



cycle (so: green w/arrow on northbound Pine then green both ways; green w/arrow westbound on Maple then green both ways; then switch to arrow southbound and eastbound). I really believe this would mitigate a lot of the traffic issues there and is more realistic than a new construction project such as a roundabout. In any case, I hope this discussion brings about some changes, as it's clearly an issue that affects a lot of us in town!

Thanks so much for allowing the space to hear our input. It's much appreciated!

All the best

**Those new traffic lights on pine Street need to be blinking red stop sign format almost all the time and only turned to to stop light format during high traffic times during the day. They suck, they take forever. Traffic gets backed up and nobody gets through the light when somebody needs to go left and doesn't have the courage to do it. They just are a really really bad idea. I've lived in this town for 27 years and those lights are a terrible idea.**

**What about the idea to have the traffic lights blink red during low traffic times so operating like a stop sign, and operate as regular stop lights during heavier traffic, favoring the most traveled direction?**

**Add to the list 1) the timing of the green light going north/south on Saint Paul and main is too short causing multiple red light runners who want to get through current it turn red after maybe 1-2 cars pass through 2) the pavement markings are abhorrent many mistakes, already wearing away and lack of proper application of paint to last longer - who is watching the work with qa/qc in mind for the tax payers?**

Hi Melo!

Thank so much for responding to folks on the traffic lights issue! It has been AWFUL!! I feel like my blood pressure has been affected by the light at Pine and Maple and the light at Church and Main, both which I use every day. BOTH seem to be causing much more dangerous situations and certainly a LOT of angry drivers. I have been at both lights at all times of the day and I have seen only problems created and not any kind of ease for pedestrians or cars. Yesterday I was on Church St at Main to turn right to get to my studio at 200 Main. There was a red light for Church St and a green light for Main, BUT! A blue BUS was stopped for quite a long time at the new bus stop bench and the bus stuck out into the intersection and no one could turn or move either way when the light changed. There was a car behind the bus traveling east up Main toward Winooski and it was just stuck in the Church/Main intersection for more than one light change, and the driver was visibly upset!!

The flow worked at both intersections so much more smoothly and safely with the stop signs. I travel BOTH of the routes literally every day and I have learned new curse words since the lights were installed! Haha!

Please let us all know what we can do about this!

Thanks!