



September 10, 2017

Dear Fellow East Siders:

This portion of late summer can provide ideal weather, which I hope you were able to enjoy yesterday. I went out yesterday afternoon on the Washington Secondary Bicycle Path (through Providence, Cranston, West Warwick and Coventry) to mark last week's and this week's discussion of bicycle paths in the City.

At this past Thursday's meeting, the City Council debated a [Resolution](#) proposing mandatory traffic and economic impact studies as part of the review of proposed bicycle lanes. The proponents noted specifically a proposed bicycle lane on Broad Street, which may affect parking access for stores located along the street. The focus on bicycle lanes is largely the result of an executive order that established the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Council, which works with the Planning Department to consider possible lanes and then design and implement them. From the discussion I inferred the Planning Department could have done more to notify and engage the Broad Street merchants as part of its process. With that said, the sponsors of the resolution proposed a costly mandate that is unnecessary for many of these projects, and the resolution would effectively shut down many, and possibly most, bicycle lanes that enjoy a broad range of support. Also, in addition to balancing the interests of bicyclists and the merchants, bicycle lanes reduce congestion and pollution, which benefit broader constituencies. In the discussion, I proposed to my colleagues that they consider more refined options, that increase engagement and due diligence when circumstances require it, without imposing a "one size fits all" mandate that would bring tangible harms across the City. Unfortunately, this argument was not successful, and the City Council approved the resolution by a margin of 9 votes to 5. The resolution will now go to the Mayor's desk, where he can consider whether to exercise his veto power.

On Wednesday, September 13 at 6:30 p.m. at Hope High School Cafeteria, Councilwoman LaFortune and I will co-host a meeting where the Planning Department will present information and answer your questions about a proposed bicycle lane to be added to Olney Street beginning at Hope Street and going down the hill to North Main Street. The Planning Department did not conduct a traffic study or an economic impact study with regard to the bike lane. Neither seemed necessary, given the relatively small number of affected parking spots and the small number of on-street merchants. (The shopping center on one side of the street has its own parking lot.) In short, this bike lane provides an example of a potentially useful initiative that could be delayed or canceled if the City Council resolution takes effect. With that said, Councilwoman LaFortune and I both look forward to hearing your concerns and comments, so that any "deal breaker" issues can be identified or, alternatively, the Planning Department can hear ideas about how to improve the proposed design.

Sincerely,