



May 1, 2019

Mr. Gregory Slater, Administrator
State Highway Administration
707 North Calvert Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

RE: Pedestrian Crossing and Signal:
Connecticut Avenue (MD 185) and Lenox Street

Dear Mr. Slater:

I am writing on behalf of the Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers to request that the State Highway Administration (SHA) remove the flashing yellow hazard identification beacons (HIBs) and replace them with either a HAWK pedestrian crossing signal or full-color signal at the pedestrian crossing at Connecticut Avenue (MD185) and Lenox Street.

Our municipality is bifurcated by a very busy six-lane arterial highway—Connecticut Avenue/MD185—which creates a number of difficulties, including creating unacceptable dangers for pedestrians trying to walk from one side of the community to the other to attend frequent events, access municipal services and the U.S. Post Office, participate in civic meetings and activities, to use community parks and public transit or for other reasons. Since 2012, the Village has been actively working with SHA in pursuit of a full-color pedestrian-activated traffic signal at the intersection of Connecticut Avenue (MD 185) and Lenox Street to alleviate the danger. In spite of our repeated pleas for a full-color signal, in June of 2016, SHA completed the installation of the HIBs.

Our experience over the last 3 years with the flashing yellow HIBs has been precisely as we expected (and as we repeatedly communicated to your predecessors before the HIBs were installed):

- Pedestrians are confused about the meaning of the HIBs and mistakenly rely on them to stop traffic thereby endangering themselves;
- Motorists report that they did not see the HIBs or the pedestrians;
- Motorists who see the pedestrian either ignore the law or don't know what their responsibilities are under the Transportation Article;
- Pedestrians get stranded on the unusually narrow median awaiting a safe break in traffic;
- Motorists in a hurry honk at and gesture angrily at pedestrians who are lawfully within the crosswalk; and

CHEVY CHASE VILLAGE

5906 Connecticut Avenue
Chevy Chase, Maryland 20815

Phone (301) 654-7300

Fax (301) 907-9721

ccv@montgomerycountymd.gov
www.chevychasevillagemd.gov

BOARD OF MANAGERS

ELISSA A. LEONARD
Chair

ROBERT C. GOODWIN, JR.
Vice Chair

DAVID L. WINSTEAD
Secretary

RICHARD M. RUDA
Assistant Secretary

GARY CROCKETT
Treasurer

MINH LE
Assistant Treasurer

NANCY E. WATTERS
Board Member

VILLAGE MANAGER
SHANA R. DAVIS-COOK

LEGAL COUNSEL
SUELLEN M. FERGUSON

Administrator Slater

May 1, 2019

Page 2

- Pedestrians have complained numerous times to Village staff that the crosswalk was unsafe before the HIBs were installed and it is worse now since pedestrians erroneously believe that the HIBs direct cars to stop and make the pedestrians more visible (neither is true).

Our police officers have verified the unsafe behavior of pedestrians and motorists. In the fall of 2017, officers from both the Chevy Chase Village Police Department and the Montgomery County Police Department joined forces and conducted crosswalk enforcement stings on three different days. One officer played the part of a law-abiding pedestrian while another officer video-recorded the events. A group of officers staged nearby to serve as a stop team to cite violators. The video-recorded violations were plentiful.

We are highly concerned about this unsafe situation, and we are worried that someone may eventually be seriously hurt.

When the HIBs were installed, SHA committed to reassess the situation after one year to determine if changes should be made. I have not heard if SHA conducted that reassessment, but we are fully convinced that a change—upgrading to a full-color signal—is needed for pedestrian safety. At the time the HIBs were installed, the infrastructure was included to allow a full-color signal to be added with minimal cost and disruption.

On November 13, 2018, you made a presentation to the Montgomery County Council in which you laid out SHA's priority to reduce pedestrian fatalities statewide through innovation, thoughtful design and modernization. This philosophy is encouraging to us, and we are excited and hopeful that you may understand this significant pedestrian safety concern and partner with us to fix it pursuant to the state's Vision Zero Plan and program. Under your leadership in recent months, SHA has repeatedly gone on record highlighting the need for pedestrian-focused roadway design and the need to reduce—and ultimately, we hope, eliminate—pedestrian fatalities along State roads.

I have attached a years-long timeline which highlights some of the many things our community has done in pursuit of a full-color pedestrian signal. It will be immediately apparent to you that this community is engaged and focused.

We urge you to help us get this done. Our residents and our elected officials stand ready to meet with you and to work with you and your staff to remove the HIBs and install either a HAWK pedestrian crossing signal or full-color signal at Connecticut Avenue and Lenox Street. Please contact our Village Manager, Shana Davis-Cook at (301) 654-7300 to discuss scheduling a meeting.

Sincerely,



Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers
by Robert C. Goodwin, Jr., ad-hoc Pedestrian Safety Committee

Enclosure

Administrator Slater

May 1, 2019

Page 3

cc: Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers
Shana R. Davis-Cook, Chevy Chase Village Manager
Ellen Sands, Chevy Chase Village Municipal Operations Coordinator
Cedric Ward, Director, Office of Traffic & Safety, State Highway Administration
Andre Futrell, District Engineer, State Highway Administration District 3
Derek Gunn, Asst. District Engineer - Traffic, State Highway Administration District 3
Andrew Friedson, Montgomery County Council District 1 Representative

Chevy Chase Village
Lenox Street Pedestrian Crossing Timeline:

- 2/8/12 Village Manager Shana Davis-Cook, Traffic Committee chair (Porter Wheeler) and select others met with the District III Traffic Engineer, Cedric Ward, to understand the process involved to obtain a signalized pedestrian crossing; Mr. Ward explained SHA's adherence to numerical warrants and the MUTCD
- 2/23/12 Traffic Committee met with Delegate Al Carr and explained the Village's request to SHA regarding the need for a pedestrian crossing
- 3/1/12 Traffic/pedestrian study conducted by SHA
- 3/12/12 Regular CCV Board Meeting; TC requested Board to request the SHA to install a ped-activated signalized crossing at Lenox/Connecticut
- 3/23/12 Ms. Baptiste, as Chair of the CCV Board of Managers, sends letter to SHA Administrator Melinda Peters requesting a full color signal at Conn/Lenox; copy to Delegate Jeff Waldstreicher
- 3/30/12 Del. Waldstreicher sends letter to SHA in support of the Village's request
- 4/10/12 Support letter from Montgomery County Council chair Roger Berliner to Ms. Melinda Peters
- 5/8/12 Support letter from Martin's Additions Village Council Chair Richard Krajeck
- 5/15/12 Support letter from Del. Al Carr to SHA Administrator Melinda Peters
- 5/16/12 Village Manager, CCV Board Vice Chair Peter Kilborn and Michael Younes (Village staff) met with SHA staff members Felicia Murphy and Maria Bhatti to discuss specifics regarding the traffic/ped count and analysis
- 5/21/12 CCV Traffic Committee (TC) and Village Manager met with Delegate Waldstreicher
- 7/12/12 Letter from Brian Young, District III Engineer, to Michael Younes with enclosures (findings from SHA's traffic study and related data and photos)
- 8/29/12 TC meeting; the TC voiced its disagreement with SHA's approach
- 1/3/13 Board Chair Pat Baptiste, the Village Manager, and Michael Younes met with SHA Administrator Melinda Peters and SHA staff
- 1/9/13 Ms. Baptiste sent a letter to Ms. Peters stating that the Village does not want the yellow flashing beacon at Connecticut/W. Lenox
- 2/5/13 Response letter from Ms. Peters to Ms. Baptiste stating that SHA will conduct a comprehensive simulation-driven study of traffic along Connecticut Avenue, and will provide results within 90 days.

- 5/23/13 Letter from Ms. Peters to Ms. Baptiste stating, among other things, that a traffic signal is not warranted for Connecticut at Lenox.
- 8/13/13 Pat Baptiste, Board Member Robert Goodwin, Village Traffic Committee Chair Porter Wheeler, member Jan Acton, Michael Younes, and the Village Manager had a follow-up meeting with SHA Cedric Ward and Melinda Peters
- 2/10/14 SHA (Brian Young, District Engineer) letter to Michael Younes; denial of traffic signal request at Connecticut/Lenox
- 3/5/14 Letter from TC chair Porter Wheeler to SHA Admin Melinda Peters to reconsider SHA's decision to deny a full color signal at Connecticut/Lenox
- 3/19/14 SHA sent a form letter to property owners in the area of Lenox and Connecticut to inform them that they will be entering private property in order to conduct a right-of-way survey for the intersection project.
- 3/24/14 Letter from SHA Admin Melinda Peters to Porter Wheeler, TC chair stating that SHA will install a ped-activated yellow beacon for 1 year to be re-evaluated at that time
- 4/15/14 Letter from Cedric Ward, Director, SHA Office of Traffic and Safety to Ms. Baptiste stating that SHA will install a ped-activated yellow beacon (similar to the 3/24 letter to Wheeler, above)
- 7/28/14 Letter from Mr. Crockett to SHA Admin Melinda Peters urging her to halt the plans to install the flashing beacon and reconsider a full-color signal (this letter was also faxed to Del. Waldstreicher)
- 8/14/14 Response from Ms. Peters to Mr. Crockett; Ms. Peters reiterated SHA's position that the intersection did not meet the criteria outlined in the MUTCD to justify a full color traffic signal.
- 12/10/14 Letter from Anyesha Mookherjee, Assistant District Engineer for SHA, District III; Ms. Mookherjee stated that the intersection did not meet the MUTCD criteria for a pedestrian for a signal, but after further review based on concerns raised by the community, a flashing yellow beacon would be installed 'for a trial basis of one year', and that construction is scheduled for the summer of 2015.
- 4/20/15 Email from Cedric Ward to Michael Younes (forwarded to the Village Manager) notifying the Village that SHA will be giving their contractor the go-ahead to install the flashing beacon in June, 2015; this email included the plans for the build.
- 9/16/15 Letter from Mr. Crockett to Gregory Johnson, newly-appointed SHA Administrator asking him to abandon the plan for a flashing yellow beacon and consider a full color signal.
- 9/29/15 Response letter from Mr. Johnson to Mr. Crockett stating that the intersection didn't meet the warrants in the MUTCD for a full color signal, and stating that the installation of the yellow beacon should be completed in March, 2016.

- 1/5/16 Email from Michael Younes to the Board and staff stating that SHA's contractor will be starting the installation of the yellow beacon on January 14, 2016 and expects to finish by the end of February, 2016. In that email, he noted that as a part of the project, SHA will be installing an interconnection conduit and wiring to the traffic signal at Bradley Lane, which will enable the new Lenox Street signal to be easily converted to a full-color signal if 'warranted' at a later time.
- June, 2016 The Chevy Chase Village Police Department began assigning officers to conduct targeted enforcement at the new pedestrian crossing
- July, 2016 Village runs an article in the monthly issue of its mailed newsletter advising residents how to appropriately use the HIBs at the new crosswalk.
- 7/14/16 Email from Shana summarizing a meeting she had that day with Derrick Dickerson, Team Leader for Traffic Engineering Design for SHA, and Mr. Steve Renzi, SHA's traffic consultant. The purpose of the meeting was to correct operational/functional problems with the recently-installed (June, 2016) flashing beacon.
- July, 2017 Village runs an article in the monthly issue of its mailed newsletter advising residents how to appropriately use the HIBs at the new crosswalk.
- 09/20/17
09/22/17 &
10/24/17 On 3 separate days, Village and County officers teamed up to conduct pedestrian crosswalk enforcement stings using a police officer in brightly-colored clothing as the pedestrian during daylight hours in non-rush periods; violators were video recorded and stopped by a stop team two blocks away; violations were plentiful.
- 1/25/18 Meeting of the ad hoc Pedestrian Safety Committee; the group discussed pedestrian complaints regarding the beacon; the police department's enforcement stings which were recorded on video, and the group's list of recommendations to the Board
- 2/12/18 Monthly Board Meeting; Board was briefed on the recent meeting of the Pedestrian Safety Committee; Mr. Winstead suggested hiring a consultant (a former SHA engineer) to assist the Village; the Board unanimously supported an expenditure of up to \$5,000 to hire a consultant.
- 4/3/18 The ad hoc Pedestrian Safety Committee met with traffic consultant Wes Guckert to gain his insights and feedback on the need for a full-color signal. He noted that from his professional perspective, the current configuration indeed presented a hazardous condition for pedestrians.
- July, 2018 Village runs an article in the monthly issue of its mailed newsletter advising residents how to appropriately use the HIBs at the new crosswalk.
- 8/29/18 Meeting of the ad hoc Pedestrian Safety Committee; the group decided to move forward with a formal request for a full-color signal to be submitted to SHA Administrator Greg Slater.
- Nov., 2018 Village runs an article in the monthly issue of its mailed newsletter advising residents how to appropriately use the HIBs at the new crosswalk.

11/13/18

SHA Administrator Slater's presentation before the Montgomery County Council in which he laid out SHA's priority to reduce pedestrian fatalities statewide through innovation, design and modernization.