

4.11 (ag)

Jacob Bohnert

May 10, 2021

Hamilton City Council
71 Main Street W
Hamilton, ON
L8P 4Y5

Dear Hamilton City Council,

Yesterday over social media, Ward 3 Councillor Nrinder Nann shared her intention to table a motion which will make Hamilton streets safer for pedestrians, with a focus on Main Street and King Street. I am very happy to hear action will be taken to make the streets safer. As I myself am a driver, a pedestrian, and a cyclist, I know how unsafe the streets can feel during rush hours. I was concerned, however, when I read the motion will include an option to make Main Street two-way.

I do not see how taking away the primary feature of Main Street which makes it unique and prevents congestion will somehow make the streets safer for pedestrians. As it stands now, pedestrians and cyclists crossing Main street can expect cars coming from one direction. Also, cars come by in “groups” based on the traffic lights, giving pedestrians a large window of time in which to cross between “groups” of traffic. Making Main Street two way will eliminate this gap and lead to situations we already see on the Mountain all the time: pedestrians standing in the turning lane between two busy traffic lanes, waiting for a gap in which to reach the sidewalk on the other side. This is extremely hazardous for the pedestrians to be compelled to put themselves into, but it comes with busy two-way corridors. On top of this, de-synchronizing the lights and making Main Street two way will increase congestion exponentially. Cars will be backed up into intersections, and drivers between intersections will be encouraged to speed even more in attempts to “race the green” and avoid stopping again. Drivers stuck in traffic will get less patient and more stressed from being in that situation, and will be more likely to make unsafe manoeuvres, pass on the right, and make turns without looking. All of these behaviours put pedestrians (children especially, who can easily be missed in a vehicle’s blindspot and hit by a driver making a right turn), cyclists, and other drivers at risk. Making our city into Toronto will not make our streets safer.

The improvements we do need to see - on Main Street especially - are changes to actually protect pedestrians from cars. This includes pedestrian-prioritizing crossing signals, restricted right-on-red intersections where pedestrians are trying to cross, and measures to prevent vehicles from using the shoulder lanes (which should be reserved for turning) to exceed the speed limit and pass other traffic. Even re-adjusting the synchronized lights so that cars travelling 40km/h or less will be more likely to get all green lights than cars travelling 50km/h – 60km/h would slow traffic and make the Street safer

without causing excess congestion. More than anything else, Main Street needs wider sidewalks and a physical barrier such as trees and bollards in between the sidewalk and moving traffic. Having such a barrier would have prevented the May 5th tragic loss of life of the darts driver full-stop. These features can all be implemented without making Main Street two-way, without impacting and creating excessive congestion, and would dramatically improve pedestrian safety.

I hope the city will come to a solution that actually makes our streets safer, while maintaining the uniqueness that sets Hamilton apart from the rest of the GTA.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jacob Bohnert', written in a cursive style.

Jacob Bohnert, Ward 2