

Bob Mollette

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Honorable Council Members
728 Second Street
Portsmouth, Ohio 45662

Re: Proposed Removal of Traffic Signals along US23 and US52

On June 13, 2008, it was announced in the local news media that based on the recommendations of the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) the City of Portsmouth would begin the process of decommissioning certain traffic lights within the City on Monday, June 16, 2008. The justification given for removing the traffic lights along US23 and US52 within the City was presented as a mandate from a Safety Engineering Study that was prepared for ODOT District 9 by the HNTB Corporation of Columbus, Ohio dated June 2007 (revised). Since that time citizens have expressed safety concerns with the removal of the traffic signals at various locations. I am disappointed the City has not acted on those safety concerns and conducted a public forum in an effort to resolve citizen fears through two-way communication.

On June 23, 2008, a citizen spoke at the City Council Meeting representing a local church, many area businesses, and one hundred eighty nine (189) signatures petitioning City Officials to return the traffic lights to service for the betterment and safety of our community. During the June 23rd, July 14th, August 11th, and September 8th Council Meetings I recommended a town hall meeting or public forum to resolve citizen fears and provide an opportunity for two-way communication prior to removing traffic signals.

I reviewed the above referenced ODOT Safety Engineering Study for additional information to understand the justification given for the traffic signal removal. The entire study may be found on my website at <http://portsmouthcitizens.info/Council/Misc/ODOT/6-28-07TrafficStudy.pdf>. I have enclosed Section 6.2 - Recommended Improvements (page 23) for further discussion.

"From the crash analysis and field observations, it is apparent that signal timing coordination, signing and pavement markings for parking are the main problems within the study area. Based on these problems, some low cost recommendations are being made for the short term and other recommendations are being made for the medium or long term with the medium to high costs, respectively. The medium and long term recommendations should be further studied before implementation.

- *Short Term, Low Cost recommendations to be implemented at little or no cost if performed by ODOT or the City are as follows:*
 - *Revise signal timing.*
 - *Program all traffic signals to have two (2) seconds of all red light time.*
 - *Install "No Turn on Red" signs at specified intersections.*
 - *Increase law enforcement at intersections for vehicles running red lights."*

Keep in mind, the removal of unwarranted signals at specified intersections is listed within the Medium Term, Medium Cost Recommendations which as stated in Section 6.2 should be further studied before implementation. *Table 4 – Recommendations for Unwarranted Signals in Study Area* (page 16) implied an evaluation of pedestrian data at US52 and Hutchins Avenue was required to warrant the signal but was not available for this study.

On September 10, 2008, the Portsmouth Daily Times (PDT) reported the City will continue into the next phase of the process later in the week of removing the traffic signals. It was reported the traffic lights will be covered with black bags and will be taken down within the next month. Again, I feel two-way communication with the public is needed to resolve citizen fears and assure traffic safety.

Section 401-4 Removal of Traffic Signals under ODOT Jurisdiction – Item 3 describes the steps within the removal process. I presume these traffic signals are not under ODOT jurisdiction but would be prudent for municipalities to follow these guidelines, especially if ODOT is referenced as justification for removal. The directive to program the traffic signal to flashing operation for a period of ninety (90) days and posted “*Signal Under Study for Removal*” is intended for a study phase. During this period accident experience and the public concerns shall be monitored, investigated, and answered. After this ninety (90) day period the data collected should be evaluated and decision rendered. If the decision is to continue with the removal of the traffic signal the signal heads shall be bagged and signal turned off for a sixty (60) day period. Again, this is intended to be a study period.

I am seeking to better understand the sequence of actions being taken because it is inconsistent with the recommendations within the ODOT study being used for justification. Council must seek to represent the safety concerns expressed by citizens and require these issues to be addressed prior to removing traffic signals. I am requesting the data collected at these traffic signal locations during the study periods to better understand these actions and I recommend in the future the City of Portsmouth Traffic Committee be utilized in this process.

If you should have any questions contact me.

Respectfully,



Bob Mollette, 3rd Ward Advocate and Representative on City Council

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Enclosure

cc: Jim Kalb, Mayor
Ryan Brown, Pastor, Calvary Baptist Church @ 1118 Hutchins Street, Portsmouth, Ohio
Christopher Murphy, Public Service Director
Traffic Committee
Jo Ann Aeh, Clerk (Record)
Press Release

6.2. Recommended Improvements

From the crash analysis and field observations, it is apparent that signal timing coordination, signing and pavement markings for parking are the main problems within the study area. Based on these problems, some low cost recommendations are being made for the short term and other recommendations are being made for the medium or long term with medium to high costs, respectively. The medium and long term recommendations should be further studied before implementation.

The final recommendations for the US 23 and US 52 safety engineering study are based upon accepted engineering standards that have been published by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), ODOT and the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE).

Short term, low cost recommendations to be implemented at little or no cost if performed by ODOT or the City are as follows:

- Revise signal timing.
- Program all traffic signals to have two (2) seconds of all red light time.
- Install "No Turn on Red" signs at specified intersections.
- Install all street level signs at specified intersections.
- Increase law enforcement at intersections for vehicles running red lights.

Medium term, medium cost recommendations utilizing Highway Safety Program funding to implement are as follows:

- Sell a signal contract to install a new traffic signal interconnect system with the appropriate vehicle detection for both US 23 and US 52 corridors.
- Sell a pavement marking and signing contract to upgrade pavement marketing and overhead signs for both US 23 and US 52 corridors. The contract should include striping the appropriate lane widths, auxiliary markings, parking areas and all overhead signs.
- Remove unwarranted signals at specified intersections as specified above.
- Remove all access points specified in Sections 1.4, 5.0 of this study and **Appendix 5**.

Long term, high cost recommendations are as follows:

- Construct the Portsmouth Bypass to reroute thru traffic along US 23 and US 52.

The recommendations outlined in Section 1.4 of this study should be implemented in the following order:

- Implement the short term-low cost countermeasures that can be performed by ODOT or the City.
- Implement entire corridor medium term, medium cost countermeasures by selling one or two construction contracts.
- Construct the Portsmouth Bypass.

6.3. Rate of Return

The rate of return worksheet for the recommended improvements can be found in **Appendix 8**.