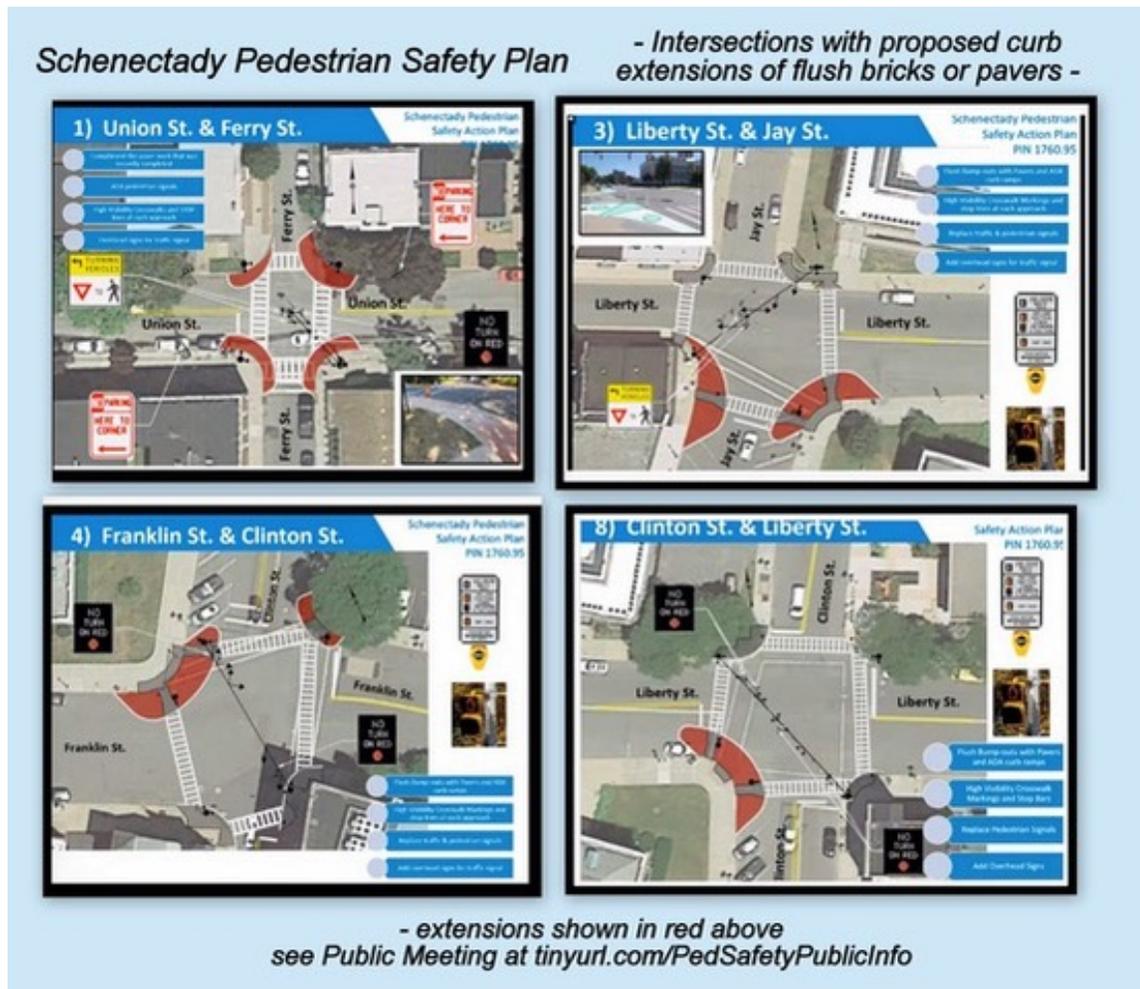


From: **davidgiacalone** dgiacalone@nycap.rr.com 
Subject: Comments on Pedestrian Safety Action Plan (Part II - ineffective "flush bump-outs")
Date: February 1, 2021 at 4:29 PM
To: Christopher R. Wallin cwallin@schenectadyny.gov
Bcc: Lawrence Schmidt schmidtla@aol.com, gloria kishton gloria.kishton@gmail.com, Roberta Farrell rfarrell5@nycap.rr.com



Dear Mr. Wallin [Chris]:

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the Pedestrian Safety Project plan presented to the public online on January 19, 2021. [\[online link\]](#) Part I of my comments was submitted earlier today. This second and final Part discusses the “flush bump-outs with pavers and ADA curb ramps” proposed for four intersections (Liberty & Jay; Franklin & Clinton; Clinton & Liberty; and the work recently completed at Union & Ferry), on Plan charts.



As I argued in more detail at my website (on [July 24](#) and [September 9](#), 2021), with regard to the so-called bump-outs completed in the Stockade last summer, the “sidewalk/curb extensions” or “pedestrian safety islands” proposed for the four intersections cannot achieve the safety benefits normally attributed to such traffic calming effort. That is because they would be constructed flush to the pavement, without a raised sidewalk, vertical curb, bollards or similar device to distinguish the extension from the roadway and offer pedestrians some protection when waiting on the extension.

You were correct at the Public meeting when discussing the Union at Ferry St. proposal (at approx. 0:08:40), when you declined to call the configurations “bump-outs”, as neither the

sidewalk nor the curb is in fact bulbed or bumped-out in order to narrow the street and shorten the crosswalk. Because the road is not in actuality narrowed, there is no reason to expect vehicles to slow down, whether going straight or turning, and no real shortening of the area a pedestrian must cross to get to the other side.

Also, because the pavers are flush to the pavement, there is no obstruction preventing short or long-term parking on the extension, which is bound to happen in busy areas, especially at times when parking spaces are scarce, and more so now with the great influx of delivery vehicles that need to stop to make a delivery or pickup. Vehicles parking on the extension or island defeat the important goal of increasing “daylight” (sight-lines) to allow pedestrians and vehicles to see each other better.

Prediction: As proposed, the “flush bump-outs” will be quite expensive, but give those on foot, or with a bike, wheelchair, or handicap scooter, a false sense of security. That’s especially true when they are touted as increasing pedestrian safety



The STOCKADE PROJECT. As you know, the bump-outs proposed in the Stockade streetscape plan were expected to have curbs. When I saw them coming in without curbs, I wrote about the issue [at my website](#) and in our Community email server, and wondered why the Stockade Association did not try to postpone the project so that such a great expenditure would not be made with so little positive effect on safety. My inquiries about whether the fancy brick, curbless corner “tattoos” could achieve the safety goals were totally ignored by the Association, and no one in the neighborhood suggested any safety benefits to me in writing or in person. However, one neighbor did write the email group saying they were pretty. Others, seeing me in person, have offered a litany of reasons why they would not work, such as those I stated above.

Also, no one at City Hall answered my question as to whether State of local traffic regulations would prohibit driving or parking on the curbless “bump-outs”. It soon became obvious that lots of drivers were parking on the new brick, and some driving over them. The parking issue was helped when the City put up the far less expensive No Standing Here to Corner signs, but they do not prevent cutting sharp corners and driving over the bricks.

Of course, as I learned Jan 28 and 29th with only a few minutes strolling on Union Street

Of course, as I learned Jan 28 and 29th with only a few minutes strolling on Union Street, cars are still being parked on the bricks at each Stockade Union Street intersection, despite the No Standing signs, traffic signals, and a stop sign. Thus:

STOCKADE UNION STREET “Extended” CORNERS Jan. 28 & 29
approx. 4 PM

- curbless, with both flush bricks + “No Standing Here to Corner” signs -



above: Jan. 28, L to R: Union, Church and College intersections



above: Jan. 29, [L] at S. Ferry; [R] at N. Church

EVERY INTERSECTION HAD A CAR PARKED ON THE BRICKS ON 28th or 29th



above: Tire Tracks on bricks at S. Ferry, Aug. 25

Also Note: Winter conditions can disguise the bricks
photos by David Giacalone - see tinyurl.com/curblessbumpouts

I was, therefore, surprised at your statement at the Jan. 19 virtual Meeting that “The Stockade Plan has been well-received,” and thus apparently justified proposing spending lots of money on more flush pavers. Last week, when I wrote Association President Suzy Unger about the “well-received” remark and the hope-for safety goals, I was basically told we cannot expect to solve everything but have to start somewhere. And, I was referred to the “complete streets” notion in general and Pete Buttigieg’s work in South Bend. My [quick research on South Bend](#) and traffic calming showed just what I had expected: All examples of bump-outs, chicanes, and safety islands had very visible raised perimeters to guide cars and protect pedestrians.

One reason that was not a surprise is that hours of research since curbless bumpouts came into my neighborhood have not unearthed *any* examples of government or private guidelines that consider flush pavers or safety painting without curbs or bollards to be a traffic calming device. They all seem to expect curb extensions to actually have curbs or their equivalent.

The Capital Roots Safety Paint Project. I was also surprised that you spoke of wanting to use more permanent materials to “mimic what was done by Capital Roots” at Jay and Liberty in 2018 with their green-design pedestrian safety paint. Capital Roots used white bollards to

2016, with their green design pedestrian safety paint. Capital Roots used white bollards to separate the safety space from the road. See next image. The [Gazette reporter stated](#): "The pavement markings created last week on the four corners of Jay and Liberty streets, along with temporary plastic bollards to stop vehicles", and:

Over the winter, Capital Roots, CDTC and city officials will determine whether the markings were effective. They might be made permanent, or the city could look at the more-expensive step of constructing raised sidewalks that extend out into the street.



Capital Roots' Safe Streets efforts have been honored by [Smart Growth America](#), which also appears to expect permanent curb extensions and pedestrian islands to be constructed of raised concrete, and temporary ones to use both paint and bollards or street furniture.

Better for Operations? It was stated twice at the online Meeting that having flush pavers would be better for "operations and maintenance". I supposed that mostly means "plow drivers are really bad dealing with the bumped out curbed curves. That does not seem to be a problem at the bump-outs already existing on the Proctors block, Church and Liberty, and Dean and Union Streets. I would think that our City plow drivers can be adequately trained for the task.

High-visibility? One assumption in your proposal seems to be that the new pavers will somehow remain a highly visible part of the streetscape, and remain effective. But, the once decorative bricks at the Union St. and Erie Boulevard entry to the Stockade weathered rather poorly and scarcely stand out in contrast to the rest of the roadway. That suggests that the new flush pavers are unlikely to stand out for very long in contrast to the rest of the roadway. That will be especially true in winter months.





Similarly, although they were placed only last summer, the corner bricks in the Stockade are, sorry to say, no longer very.



It's Only State Money! I hope the City is not willing to make a “safety” expenditure as great as the cost of the proposed flush pavers despite the slim possibility of significantly reducing the hazards for pedestrians, merely because it is State Money. City Hall owes it to all the residents and visitors to Downtown Schenectady to use the generous grant dollars as effectively as possible for the goal of pedestrian safety.

- SUGGESTION. If you are not willing to install actual curb extensions at the proposed locations, find other ways to use the grant for the sake of pedestrian and roadway safety.

Please let me know if you have questions or replies. The photos above, and many others, can be found in a larger form at the two links above to my website, SnowmenAtTheGates.com.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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