Much, much safer

Change always brings complaints. Some are loudly complaining about the new bike lanes, including the “traffic-calmed” intersection where Roland and Jackson streets join Beech Street.

Almost 25 percent of Pottstown’s total land area is covered with streets and parking lots. For decades, this huge area has been almost totally restricted to cars. Now a very small fraction of roadway has been designated for bicyclists. Besides making space for bicyclists, the bike lanes slow down car traffic and make the street safer for walkers.

Back in 2011, the school district received a grant from PennDOT to hire a traffic engineer, Pennoni Associates, to review walking routes to Pottstown schools. A second firm, Traffic Planning and Design, became involved later. Both firms pinpointed the intersection of Beech, Roland, and Jackson streets as a major hazard. A federal grant paid for the redesign and construction of the intersection to make it safer for everyone.

Yes, it looks different now. Yes, Beech Street motorists now have to stop at the intersection. Yes, it’s now much safer for everyone.

New stop sign requires motorists going east on Beech Street to stop at Roland and Jackson streets, protecting cars, walkers and bicyclists.

Diagonal lines show Beech Street narrowing at the intersection of Roland Street.

Commentary by Thomas Hylton

Wide turning radius can be driven at a fast speed, increasing danger of accidents.

No stop sign. Beech Street motorists pick up speed between Rosedale Drive and Keim Street.

Concrete island protects bicyclists and walkers crossing Beech Street to and from Roland Street. Smaller turning radius forces motorists to slow down.

Stop sign requires Beech Street motorists to stop, making it much safer for cars to enter Beech Street from Jackson Street and for pedestrians and bikers to cross Beech Street.

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