

Dear Editor,

A correction is in order to clarify any confusion or misunderstanding that may have occurred as a result of Martha Ullberg's September 5 letter to the editor in response to my August 30 guest editorial: No westbound traffic lane on Buffalo St. between Fulton St. and Taughannock Blvd. will be removed as a result of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail.

I hope the following information will additionally help the public understand how cars and waterfront trail users can share the Route 96 corridor traversing the West End and Inlet Island.

The roadway from Taughannock Blvd. west to Cliff St. with Phase II of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail in place will be partially modified and essentially consist of three portions: 1) Two westbound traffic lanes will remain between Taughannock Boulevard and the entry to Pete's Grocery. 2) The merge of two lanes to one to reach Cliff St. will occur between Pete's driveway and the east end of the bridge over the flood control channel, instead of on the bridge itself. 3) A portion of the right lane on the bridge, which is now underutilized as a right turn only lane, will be raised to the level of the adjoining sidewalk and converted to a segment of the waterfront trail. Some readers may also not be aware that this right turn only lane now leads to a short dead end road which serves about 10 houses and a small public parking lot.

In essence, then, the difference in the newly designed merge is that instead of a lane ending on the west side of the bridge, the lanes will merge at the east end of the bridge. The proposed merge begins west of the railroad cars to allow westbound vehicles to pass those waiting to make a left hand turn into Pete's driveway. The plan is to install a concrete barrier to separate the 10-foot wide trail (the existing five foot sidewalk plus five feet of new trail) from the road, which will retain a travel lane and a shoulder in each direction.

Thirty-two feet will remain between the barrier and far railing. The remaining lanes will be 12 feet wide with 4 foot shoulders, or 16 feet of road space in either direction, which is sufficient room for motor vehicles. By way of comparison, the Taughannock Blvd. bridge over the flood control channel has 14 feet total in either direction, so the new width will be more generous.

In addition, the proposed merge will have striping on the pavement, where none exists now. It is expected that the new arrangement should also help minimize the present drag race merging that frequently occurs from the right-hand turn lane.

With NYSDOT permission, professional traffic engineers tested this arrangement in May 2004 for a period of about two weeks, setting up barrels and striping the merge to simulate the new configuration. Data was collected and driver behavior was videotaped with the new pattern in place. City staff and consultants concluded that drivers could navigate the merge well because it was more visible from the Buffalo St. approach and NYSDOT agreed that the change would have little or no impact on traffic flow through the area.

The city's transportation engineer, Tim Logue, the Cayuga Waterfront Trail project coordinator, Rick Manning, and the committees working on the trail project, which include representatives from various public and private bodies and the broad community, support the proposed option as a safe and cost-effective solution since there are financial constraints that prohibit building a separate bridge over the flood control channel to handle the trail. A dedicated trail bridge is estimated to cost over \$1.5 million, more than the entire cost of Phase 2 of the trail, which runs from Cass Park to the Farmers' Market.

The accompanying diagram illustrates the current and proposed layouts, and a detailed map of the proposal can be found at [www.cayugawaterfronttrail.com](http://www.cayugawaterfronttrail.com).

Susan Blumenthal

Susan Blumenthal is a former member of the City of Ithaca Common Council. She is a member of the city's Cayuga Waterfront Trail Client Committee and the Chamber of Commerce's Waterfront Trail Advisory Board and the Fund-Raising Committee.