

Janzen, Heather

From: City Council
Subject: FW: Email - Communication - Jared Stephenson - Road Safety Audit – College Drive and Wiggins Avenue - CK 6330-1 x 6000-5
Attachments: Fixing a Dangerous Intersection Needs To Be Like Fixing a Leaky Pipe.pdf

From: Web NoReply <web-noreply@Saskatoon.ca>
Sent: Monday, April 22, 2024 1:57 PM
To: City Council <City.Council@Saskatoon.ca>
Subject: Email - Communication - Jared Stephenson - Road Safety Audit – College Drive and Wiggins Avenue - CK 6330-1 x 6000-5

--- Replies to this email will go to [REDACTED] ---

Submitted on Monday, April 22, 2024 - 12:13

Submitted by user: [REDACTED]

Submitted values are:

I have read and understand the above statements.: Yes

I do not want my comments placed on a public agenda. They will be shared with members of Council through their online repository.: No

I only want my comments shared with the Mayor or my Ward Councillor.: No

Date: Monday, April 22, 2024

To: His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council

First Name: Jared

Last Name: Stephenson

Phone Number : [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

I live outside of Saskatoon: No

Saskatoon Address and Ward:

Address: [REDACTED] Temperance St

Ward: Ward 6

What do you wish to do ?: Submit Comments

What meeting do you wish to speak/submit comments ? (if known):: REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING OF CITY COUNCIL Wednesday, April 24, 2024

What agenda item do you wish to comment on ?: 9.2.1 – Road Safety Audit – College Drive and Wiggins Avenue [CC2023-0602]

Comments:

To Saskatoon City Council,

With respect to the recommendations put forth by the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation following the CIMA+ Road Safety Audit for the subject trouble intersection, I am writing to urge Council to overrule the Committee's recommendations choosing not to act on recommended items 8-10 in the CIMA+ audit. I note that the balance of the recommendations are currently under study or are scheduled for improvement/implementation in the coming years. However, this effectively communicates that the City is unwilling to undertake any immediate action(s) to address the issue of safety (primarily ped and cyclist), at the intersection which is noted in the report as being THE busiest intersection for bikes, and the 2nd busiest intersection for pedestrians, in the entire city. If there is reason/justification to do anything immediate to improve safety, this intersection is certainly the most appropriate location.

I am most concerned about the rejection of recommended item 8 (no right turn on red, and bike box). It is understood that a right-on-red restriction would be the "one-off" instance, but, if the Committee and Council were to make a decision based on this approach, given the underlying traffic count conclusions stated above, it would be fair to then assume that both bodies would be unwilling to take immediate action where data and loss of life demand immediate attention at any location in the City. There always has to be a first time for something, and I see this as no different than new traffic controls being placed at any other high-volume or high-conflict location that caters primarily to automobiles. Double standards aside, this is arguably negligent and undermines responsibility in governing in accordance with sections 4 and 8 of The Cities Act.

With respect to the rejection of pavement marking, or bike boxes, I completely agree that these items can provide a false sense of safety and can be problematic in the winter (although the latter can be addressed through proper maintenance). To address this, I would strongly suggest immediately putting in non-permanent physical separations - flexible bollards like those utilized to delineate the cycling lanes in the downtown, OR better yet, modular concrete barriers for hard separation. While I can foresee snow-clearing impacted by such measures, this can be addressed by prioritizing winter maintenance of this area - this is probably something that should be done anyway given the known volume of ped and cyclist traffic already observed.

In my opinion, auto access to Wiggins on the south side of College should be restricted and removed altogether, but acknowledge that had not been identified as an option (but probably should have been).

While recommended items 9 and 10 should be pursued, I can understand that re-routing transit traffic and coordination with the U of S, requires additional study, consultation, and therefore time.

I can speak from experience that this intersection is perennially problematic. While studying at the U of S in 2010-2013, I cycled year-round as my means of transport from Buena Vista, and experienced the conflicts and dangers of this intersection on a daily basis. I now have young children of my own that I am teaching to cycle and helping to develop their skills, confidence, and knowledge of defensive behaviours when having to interact with autos on roadways. We live in Nutana and often head to the U of S campus, and MVA trail network extended therefrom, to be able to do this without the threat of conflict with autos. The kids are very apprehensive in approaching and crossing this intersection because it is not a safe or protected location. And, every time I do so, I will now be forever reminded of the tragic death of Ms. Fox under similar circumstances.

Lastly, please don't over-complicate/over-study this matter when common sense can provide a good solution, or fear experimenting with several potential approaches for evaluation and improvement. While it did take too long to have this road audit completed, the City would now have base-line metrics by which to evaluate any minor and immediate experiments it may pursue. PLEASE read the attached article speaking to a common sense approach to this issue (also found here: <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2024/4/5/fixing-a-dangerous-intersection-needs-to-be-like-fixing-a-leaky-pipe>). It's a 5-10 min read, and I think it really provides good guidance on finding cost-effective and immediate solutions to improving user safety, and the principles could probably be applied more broadly to other areas of problem-solving.

Thank you for the time to consider the comments, and an extra thank you if you took the time to read the attached.

Attachments:

- [Fixing a Dangerous Intersection Needs To Be Like Fixing a Leaky Pipe.pdf](#) 419.78 KB

Will you be submitting a video to be vetted prior to council meeting?: No

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Fixing a Dangerous Intersection Needs To Be Like Fixing a Leaky Pipe



(Source: Pixabay/fran1.)

Imagine that your kitchen sink is leaking. Not the annoying drip from the end of the faucet, but one that occurs in the handle: the type of leak internal to the workings of the faucet that result in water damage in the cabinet under the sink. This requires immediate attention, and replacing or repairing a faucet requires that you either engage in some DIY or call a plumber. Let's say you're busy or not convinced by YouTube University that you can fix it on your own, so you call in a professional.

I have always owned old homes and so I dabble in the DIY world, myself. This type of leak has happened to me and I learned that this is a repair I can manage. With a wrench and a screwdriver, I take pride knowing that I've been able to

repair my leaky faucet with an inexpensive gasket. It took a little time to learn about the faucet installed years before I bought my house, a pep talk from my father that this would be easy, and the grace from my wife for the time I had to shut down the kitchen to make the repair. I think to my wife's despair that this repair did not result in a shiny new faucet. This was just a simple \$2 o-ring repair that resulted in fixing the contributing factor to the leak.

What if I was not confident or did not have the tools to do this and I instead called a plumber? I trust the plumber because they have their trade licenses and years of experience: they'd be able to diagnose the problem and provide me with a solution to the leak.

What if the plumber told you that in order to address the leak, we would need to replumb the entire kitchen with a slightly larger pipe from the water meter back to the kitchen faucet to address my problem? The estimate includes removing and adding a new, larger pipe, a carpenter to repair the walls the plumber must open to reach the pipe, and at the end, we would lose two cabinets in the kitchen to make room for the new pipe. This work would make the water flow better to my kitchen and meet all the latest plumbing codes not previously addressed when my house was built 60 years ago. This estimate includes a lot of extensive and expensive work. I am assured that this work is an investment that will improve the water flow and pressure in my kitchen which should resolve the leak. By the way, the plumber is booked for the next month, so it will be at least a month until the plumber could address the leak.

Would you spend thousands of dollars to fix a leaky faucet if the repair does not include or reference the contributing factors to the problem? Could you wait a month or longer with a leaky faucet that is damaging your kitchen for the repair? The answer is no. We would demand an immediate action to stop the leak and we would want an estimate or scope of work that includes addressing the contributing factor to the leak. In this example, the dripping could be stopped by turning the water shut-off valve under the sink until you could replace the worn-out o-ring.

It is easy for us to identify a struggle and identify the next smallest step to address the struggle in certain scenarios, but it is downright elusive in others.

A Really Expensive Solution

The residents of San Antonio that use Grissom Road have [identified a problem at the intersection of Old Grissom Road](#): regular car crashes are occurring when people make turns at this uncontrolled intersection. These crashes are so frequent of an occurrence, the street is lined with mangled pieces of cars and a field of memorials to the victims.

Residents have raised the concerns of the design of the intersection with the city council and municipal staff. The solution they arrived at—the default solution to a turning problem on an arterial road—was to add a traffic light, which introduces order to the street by controlling the movement through the intersection.

The city conducted not one, but three traffic studies to justify this solution. Each study took time to complete and compile the data, which was reported back to the council. The first two studies came back to report that there were not enough turns at the intersection to warrant a traffic light on a high-speed arterial like Grissom Road. A traffic light would disrupt the design intent of a five-lane road that prioritizes volume and flow of traffic on a road where people expected to be able to drive fast. The third time was a charm, because while they conducted the first two studies, enough crashes had occurred over the year to provide the roadway designers the discretion to add a light.

Finally, after all of these studies, growing public concerns, and more crashes, the city began the design for a traffic light for this dangerous intersection. The city has very competent staff that have the authority to work with experienced local consultants, so after more time, a design has been prepared that meets all the roadway standards and best practices. There are also additional enhancements like lighting, crosswalks, and sidewalks that terminate on Old Grissom Road, inspired by the city's complete streets policy.

San Antonio now has a design for a very expensive traffic light without the funding to build it.

Like many other communities, the city does not have the hundreds of thousands of dollars to pay for this new traffic light. There are many other obligations the city must meet, and year over year, the budget becomes tighter. Grissom Road is a multimillion-dollar investment the city has already made to achieve volume and speed. They are now being asked to invest more money that will lower speed and impact volume to address safety.

This design and solution is a natural response to a complicated system, but this is one-dimensional thinking. This approach is not grappling with the complexity of the larger system, and could result in unintended consequences.

Are We Asking the Right Questions?

The question that has not been (but needs to be) asked is, “Have the contributing factors to these crashes been addressed?” Will it take hundreds of thousands of dollars to find out? It has taken over a year to develop a solution while additional crashes have occurred. If we get it wrong, will we have to wait several more years to correct the unintended consequences of this investment?

Strong Towns is sharing a different approach to address the problems we observe on our roadways through the [Crash Analysis Studio](#). This approach starts by humbly observing the contributing factors of a crash. Our built environment is a complex system that operates within a balanced chaos. As a result, there are many contributing factors of a crash beyond blaming the driver for making a bad decision. The contributing factors of the crash may actually be how we design our roads and the message they are giving the driver.

Yamini Karandikar is a concerned local resident who nominated the intersection of Grissom Road and Old Grissom Road for a Crash Analysis Studio. The studio, [which you can watch here](#), explored the contributing factors to a car-on-car crash that occurred on May 12, 2023—one similar to the many other crashes that have occurred and continue to occur at this intersection.

The panel of technical and local experts participating in the studio identified eight contributing factors to the crash. One was the driver’s poor decision by failing to yield. The seven other factors are related to the design of the road that demand motorists engage in complex decision-making with minimal margin for error. In other words, the physical conditions identified in the studio may result in encouraging a driver to undertake high-risk behavior.

The panelists identified just shy of a dozen short-term and long-term recommendations to tackle the contributing factors to this crash. There are two underlying themes in each recommendation. First, a second crash does not have to occur at this intersection. Several low-risk improvements utilizing existing resources such as paint, bollards, and signs, could be deployed today. These could reduce high-risk behavior by restricting or prohibiting left turns at this intersection. Second, each of these recommendations could be implemented at very low cost.

Rapid responses that use temporary materials are a low risk, or “[small bets](#)” that cities like San Antonio can deploy to make local streets safer. A small investment of staff time and a few dollars in materials are incremental responses that allow us to experience feedback, and, if necessary, adjust the approach. This is a repeatable process that can be accomplished at scale across a city.

What Does a Small Bet Look Like?

Small bets may not look polished and intentionally are not permanent. Temporary or movable materials allow us to receive feedback and allow us to adjust our approach. For the intersection of Grissom and Old Grissom Road, this may look like bollards in the center median on Grissom Road that would restrict left turns. Another approach may include barricades and signs that completely close Old Grissom Road to through traffic, thus removing the intersection altogether.

The city could deploy these measures immediately with materials already available and on hand. Once implemented, municipal staff could observe traffic patterns. If needed, these measures could be easily adjusted as feedback is received. This is a similar approach used by cities when a water line breaks or when they close a street for a parade.

We Need To Remember the Leaky Faucet

The situation analyzed in the San Antonio Crash Analysis Studio is an example of a community spending money on a solution with no idea if the solution will address any contributing factors. This is the standard practice and approach that cities across North America have adopted—and it's a broken system.

The analogy of the leaky faucet is much like the struggle cities like San Antonio are facing. We cannot wait for extended periods of time to address local struggles, especially struggles that place peoples' lives at risk. We need to be empowered at the most local level to undertake incremental or temporary steps to resolve problems.

Similar to my experience with my faucet, the response to an unsafe intersection may be as simple as replacing an o-ring. We cannot get overwhelmed or jump to [complicated solutions when we are working with the complex system of human habitat](#). We should be prepared to undertake the next smallest step immediately and without delay. Something as simple as closing Old Grissom Road with a temporary barricade could have prevented additional crashes at zero financial cost to the city.



Start Your Own Crash Analysis Studio

Learn To Stop Traffic Crashes Before They Even Happen

Enroll in the Free Course

Featured

[Edward Erfurt](#)

Edward Erfurt is the **Director of Community Action** at Strong Towns. He is a trained architect and passionate urban designer with over 20 years of public- and private-sector experience focused on the management, design, and successful implementation of development and placemaking projects that enrich the tapestry of place. He believes in community-focused processes that are founded on diverse viewpoints, a concern for equity, and guided through time-tested, traditional town-planning principles and development patterns that result in sustainable growth with the community character embraced by the communities which he serves.