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to:  
Members of the Transportation Commission  
City of Ann Arbor  
Council Chambers  
2nd floor, Larcom City Hall  
Ann Arbor, MI

*Oct 12, 2021*

Dear members of the Transportation Commission,

I'm an Ann Arbor mom of a family of four living in the 800's in Seventh St. My kids are elementary students at Ann Arbor Open, 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders. During the school years we all ride our bikes to and from school as much as the weather conditions allow. We ride mostly in the sidewalk and cross critical road intersections such as W. Liberty St. and 7<sup>th</sup>, W. Huron and 7<sup>th</sup> and Miller Avenue. The latter is the only one that has a traffic guard hired by Ann Arbor Public Schools.

I am aware of the benefits of getting kids into biking in the city but also I understand the risks that comes with exposing kids to traffic. I really try hard to minimize accidents while biking on the street. However, the numbers of hazardous events involving cars and pedestrian interactions that I have witnessed crossing the intersection of W. Huron and 7<sup>th</sup> this year, made me write this letter. I understand that the design of this intersection is odd (does not continues straight from South to North). Also, many drivers usually take for granted that pedestrians don't cross at this point because it's not close enough to downtown foot traffic.

There are two issues of my concern:

1. **The closed nature of the left turns from North and South 7<sup>th</sup> St. to W. Huron at this intersection.** In order to make a left turn, drivers usually move forward (about 14 ft.) to explore when safe conditions are met (see the illustrative example of the red car in Figure 1). While this a standard practice in regular cross shaped intersections, it may pose a risk at North and South sections of 7<sup>th</sup> St. because the intersection is misaligned (not a regular cross shaped intersection). As you can see in Figure 1. (red and yellow dotted lines), turns require shorter, closed turns than a regular aligned intersection.

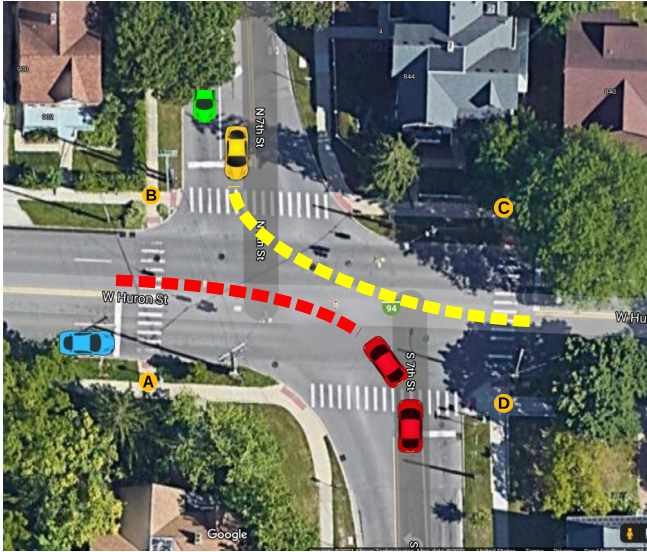


Figure 1. To avoid a crash, left turns should be shorter, sharper.

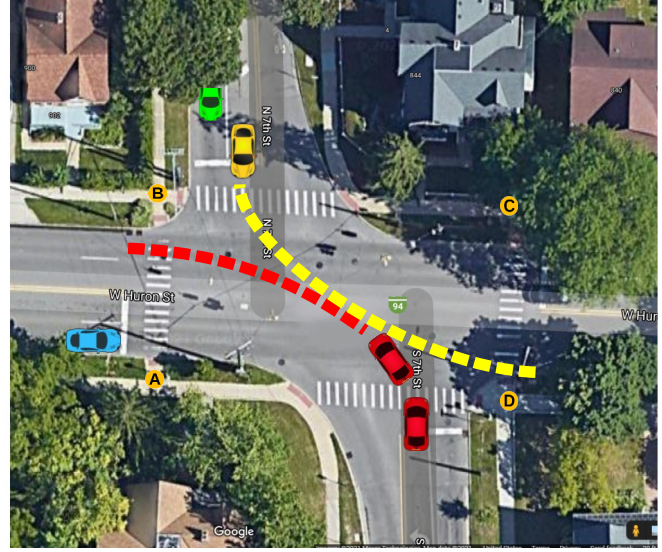


Figure 2. Conventional, wide turns could end into a crash.

However, I have noticed most of drivers omit the particularities of this intersection mentioned before. As a consequence, there's a tendency of making wide turns entering to W. Huron by taking the outside, closest lane to the sidewalk (see Figure 2.). When drivers do so, they can see that the path they have chosen conflicts with the traffic turning left just in front. While this occurs, drivers focus in avoiding a frontal crash diminishing the chance for a pedestrian who is crossing from A to B or from C to D (see yellow dots at the edge of crosswalks in Figure 1. and 2.) to be noticed by the driver making the left turn.

I have researched some alternatives that could improve safety conditions at this intersection: (a) dedicating a traffic light cycle (with a green arrow) to both northbound and southbound left turns into W. Huron St.; (b) drawing a white line dotted extension for those that turns left must follow as suggested in Figure 3.; (c) providing a flashing amber arrow instead of a green light to those that turn left after giving way to oncoming traffic or/and (d) dedicate a specific time to allow pedestrians to cross once the crossing buttons have been pressed. In all cases, I also consider important to recess the white inner lane stop lines on both sides of W. Huron St. as indicated in the purple arrow on Figure 3. By recessing these stop lines, drivers turning left would feel more less risky entering to the contiguous inner lane.

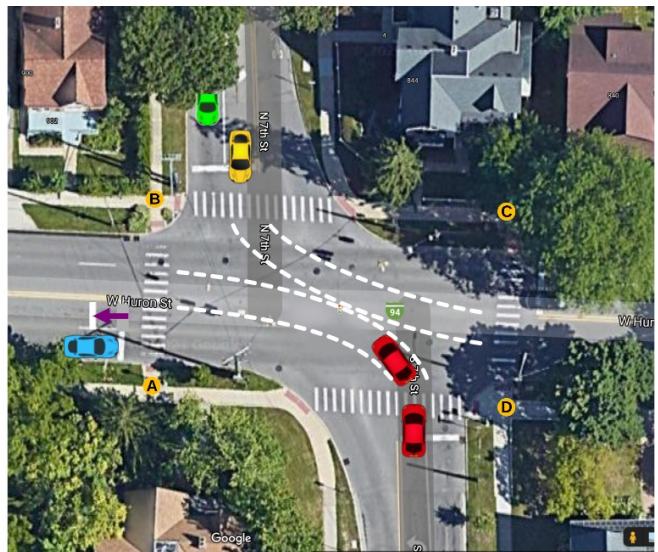


Figure 3. White line dotted extension, recessing stop line.

2. **Drivers which move forward to the intersection and beyond the crosswalk to make a right turn when the red lights are on, are blocking the visibility of pedestrians.**

This happens when drivers go westbound on W. Huron St. into N. 7th St. or eastbound on W. Huron St. into S. 7th St. as it is illustrated in Figure 4, corners A and C. As it is illustrated, the blue car is trying to turn right southbound on N. 7th St. While this happens, a pedestrian (see yellow glowing passerby) wanting to cross from point A to B would be practically invisible to the red car turning left. This issue has the potential of turning into a fatal accident when a driver turning westbound on W. Huron St. from N. 7th St. (such as the one in green car on Figure 4.), acknowledging that pedestrians are crossing the sidewalk, decides to stop. Then, the red car driver who sees the green driver not moving suddenly might consider there is a chance to turn left. If the driver do so, it will find a pedestrian right in front his/her car on the crosswalk.

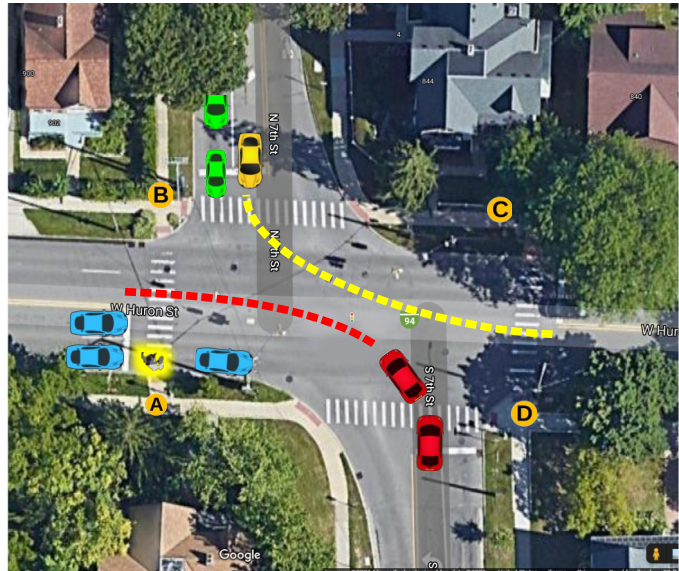


Figure 4. Right turns when red lights are on.

I think not allowing turns when red light is on could improve safety conditions at this intersection. Other adjustments are needed to ease the occasional traffic jam that takes place going southbound on 7<sup>th</sup> St. between W. Washington St. and W. Huron St. at pick up times. Some drivers are circling around Slauson Middle School by taking a right from W. Huron St. into S. 7<sup>th</sup> St., then turning right on W. Washington St., then turning right again on 9<sup>th</sup>. until reaching again W. Huron St. and going eastbound to repeat this cycle.

I am a little concerned about how these two findings I have described above would unfold next winter. While I want to encourage the City of Ann Arbor to explore the causes of the issues described above and find solutions, I wished AAPS had released a proactive traffic mitigation campaign when updating all bus routes for the 2021-22 school year. I guess most of families that are not taking the bus now are driving their kids to school, but I see foot and bike traffic have increased for this school year too. We need safe roads for Ann Arbor youth.

I hope this letter calls your attention and I am certainly open to any discussions. Thank you for your consideration,

Emilia Fichter.