



Crash Analysis Studio – Session 6 Transcript

Introductory Trailer

Chuck Marohn: I want to give you two scenarios. Scenario number one a plane crashes. Scenario number two, two cars collide. In scenario number one, we pull out all the stops – we bring in the NTSB, we try to figure out exactly what went wrong. Scenario number two – we send out the cops, we sweep up the mess, and we go on our way.

John Pattison: If we, collectively – everyone on this call and the broader Strong Towns movement – if we do this right, we’re going to save thousands of lives.

Edward Erfurt: Mayors and local council members want to do the right thing. They have the ability to solve it. We’re going to help provide those tools for them.

Session

Tony Harris: Alright, it looks like our attendees are slowly filing in. But I'm going to go ahead and get us started. Hi, everyone. Welcome to the Strong Towns Crash Analysis Studio. We're glad that you're here today. My name is Tony Harris, and I'm the Action Team Coordinator at Strong Towns. And in a moment, I'll introduce you to the rest of our expert panel. But first, let's talk about why we're here.

So last year, over 40,000 people died in automobile crashes in the United States. Hundreds of thousands more suffered traumatic injuries. Despite the best efforts of public safety officials, these numbers have been increasing and they affect all of our lives. There's a prevalent misconception that car crashes are called solely by mistakes that drivers make - looking at your phone, changing the radio, drinking alcohol, speeding. When a crash occurs, the American response is to send out law enforcement and insurance agencies to assign blame. Who made the mistake that caused this crash? Who should we blame? The reality is that crashes are caused by multiple factors, not just driver error. When a traumatic crash occurs, we need to

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identify all the contributing factors and learn all we can from the experience so that we can reduce the number of deaths and traumatic injuries in our communities.

What you're going to see now is a crash analysis studio. Drawing from the best practices of the medical profession, we've convened a panel to review a crash that happened in Amarillo, Texas, where a driver hit and killed a pedestrian standing in the road outside of a crosswalk or an intersection. This crash was submitted to us by Eduardo Valdez, who's also a panelist for this session. So today we'll start by introducing you to our panel, then we'll review the facts of the crash and - with our guests - we'll assess the design factors that contributed to the collision. Our goal is not to assign blame; our objective is to learn as much as possible about what happened and identify the many factors that contributed to this unfortunate event.

So, before we get into details and talk with our experts, we need to begin with the fact that this tragedy resulted in the death of 32-year-old Hayden Paul Ducommun. Please take a moment of silence with me to honor and acknowledge him and the loss of his life. Thank you.

Okay. So, now I'm going to go ahead and introduce our panel for today and I'm going to start with Tony Tramel. Tony Tramel is retired, but he's the sole proprietor of a consulting firm that bears his name and provides transportation engineering and expert witness services. He has over 40 years of experience, municipal experience, working for Grand Prairie and Arlington, Texas and Lafayette Louisiana in assistant and director level positions. The most extensive experience in the private sector working predominantly in the Dallas/Fort Worth area is experiencing troops traffic operations and safety parking transit land development intersection and traffic signal design. Besides being a registered engineer in multiple states, he's also a planner with a BS degree from Purdue University and two MS degrees from Georgia Institute of Technology.

Richard Giberson, who is engaged in infill real estate development in the walkable downtown neighborhoods of Grapevine, Texas where he lives. His current role as a developer comes after a long career as an actuary and investment professional. He's an active student on the topics of



walkability, bikeability, urban planning, architecture, and placemaking and he is a Strong Towns member and supporter. Richard grew up in Amarillo, Texas and still has friends and family in the area.

Next up we have Eduardo Valdez, who decided to join us as a panelist today since he's familiar with the area where the crash occurred. Eduardo was interested in this project partly because he read Chuck Marohn's book *Confessions of a Recovering Engineer*. Though Eduardo currently lives north of Amarillo, he visits the city regularly as a destination for him and he believes it's a destination for small towns that surround it. So, Eduardo is a concerned citizen interested in safer transportation and increasing walkability.

And then finally, we have Edward Erfurt, who is our director of community action at Strong Towns. He's a trained architect and passionate urban designer with over 20 years of public-sector and private-sector experience. Edward has a skilled eye when it comes to evaluating the safety issues posed by intersections, roads and streets like the ones that we'll be looking at today.

So now I'm going to walk us through the details of this crash in Amarillo. Let me share my screen. Ok, perfect. Make this full screen. Alright, so as we said, Hayden Paul Ducommun, 32 years old, was fatally struck by a Mercury Montego on the 2700th block of South Osage Street. The crash occurred at 8:03 PM on January 21st, 2023. And as we were gathering information for this session, we managed to get a hold of a crash report as well as an investigation report that came from Amarillo Police Department that Eduardo was able to get for us. So, the crash report listed Ducommun's time of death as 8:11 PM and the investigation report stated it was 8:08 PM. However, both sources indicated that he was not at an intersection or in a crosswalk. The crash report indicates there was cloudy weather and it was dark, but it was lighted due to streetlights and it was a dry, straight, two-way undivided roadway.

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Eduardo confirmed for us that the Osage Street speed limit is 40 miles per hour while the southeast 27th Avenue speed limit is posted at 35 miles per hour. And then we also found 28th street, which is south of where the crash took place, is posted at 30 miles per hour. The motorist was traveling in the outer southbound lane on South Osage Street. And according to the investigation report, Ducommun was on the street nearby 2706 South Osage when the collision occurred. We found some conflicting information in the crash report. It stated two different locations as the place where the collision happened. So, it stated the 2800 block of South Osage as well as 75 feet north of 27th Avenue. So, two different areas. And then we also noted that both reports and the media sources we looked at indicated the motorist was 71 years old and not issued a citation.

So, here we have a depiction of the crash location, which we've covered with the red oval here. And then in orange, you see the motorist and the direction that they were traveling headed south. So, some more details on the crash - there were no witness or driver statements included in the crash report. However, in the investigation report, there were four witnesses listed with statements from them. And, we understand that Ducommun lives in the adjacent Glenwood apartments to the west and that he was at the small strip shopping center prior to the crash. The crash report included "had been drinking" as a contributing factor. And the investigation report listed that there was an open White Claw container found near Ducommun's body. The crash report indicated that no alcohol or drug specimen had been collected from Ducommun or the motorist. And the investigation report included testimonies that indicated Ducommun had consumed multiple alcoholic beverages.

So, looking at the overall site conditions, Osage is an arterial street near two major highways. I believe it does intersect with highway 40 up north and then it's just nearby highway 27. SE 27th Avenue is an east-west collector street. And as we stated, Osage has a 40 mile per hour speed limit and 27th has a 35 mile per hour speed limit. When we're looking at Osage Street, both northbound and southbound - in total - that consists of five lanes, four for through traffic. And then there's a continuous center turn lane. The sidewalks along Osage Street are disconnected

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and in some places they're missing entirely. And we also noted that there are Cobra Head style streetlights sporadically located along Osage Street.

So here is a map kind of depicting the area that we're looking at with Osage and 27th Avenue intersection being here and the crash would have occurred a little bit further south of that. And as you can see, we're looking at an auto-oriented suburban development pattern here. And Osage Street is fronted by kind of large footprint commercial development and industrial uses with multiple curb cuts and parking that's fronting the street. The regular street grid and alleys of the city are interrupted by 27th Avenue and Osage Street to kind of accommodate for that large footprint development. And as we noted, there are some suburban residential uses located behind commercial developments and that kind of limits access and connectivity. For these residential areas and there's also a lot of undeveloped land.

Again, looking at the intersection and then the crash location and the surrounding area.

I want to take us through a few visuals. So here we are standing on south Osage looking north. So, the driver or the motorist would be coming at us from this vantage point. And this is another shot just with a slightly different perspective. This is a street view, still standing on South Osage but looking south. You can see some of the commercial developments here. And then in this shot, you can also see some of the residential developments behind those commercial entities. So, we wanted to look at measurements of Osage street south of 27th Avenue and you can see there is a total width of about 60 feet from one side of the street to the other. And the drive lanes and turn lane are all in between 11 and a half feet wide and 12 and a half feet wide. And Eduardo used a drone to get us some aerial shots of Osage Street. So, here you can see kind of the stretch of South Osage with this being the 27th Street intersection up here to the north. And then this is an aerial shot taken at nighttime, which I think is important to include since you know the crash did occur at night. This would be the northern area, right, with the intersection of 27th here and then these lanes are extending southbound where the crash took place.



So Eduardo conducted two speed studies in this area for us as part of the information-gathering process. And I want to note that this happened kind of before we had clarification on where the crash actually took place with the crash report and with the investigation report. So, we were trying to gather as much information as possible. So, the South Osage graph kind of shows us that 53% of drivers were speeding beyond that 40 mile per hour speed limit. And we know that the likelihood of a pedestrian fatality due to a car crash, climbs once travel speeds surpass 20 or 25 miles per hour. And it climbs even quicker once speeds go beyond 30 and 40 miles per hour. So, travel even at that posted speed limit is still a danger to pedestrians. We also found that 7% of drivers were traveling at 50 miles per hour or more over the speed limit. So at 50 - or more, over the speed limit, sorry. And 85% of the cars tracked were traveling at or below 46 miles per hour.

And then looking at the 27th Avenue data, we see that 79% of drivers were going over the posted speed limit of 35 miles per hour. On this roadway, 6% of drivers were going 45 miles per hour or more. And then 85% of the cars that were tracked were traveling at or below 42 miles per hour.

So now I'd like to turn to our panel and ask them to identify any factors that they think might be contributing to this crash or in this scenario. So Tony, I'd like to start with you and please feel free to use screenshare to show Google Maps or a street view if that would be helpful.

Tony Tramel: Okay, I'll give it a try. My observations are that the land development that you see here is pretty typical in Texas in general. And that is it still uses the hierarchical approach of major arterials, collector streets being distributed further down. Adjacent land uses are residential or away from the particular roadway. Adjacent facilities then have the retail commercial development with it. You have a five-lane roadway section. Somewhat surprising in this particular case, you actually have a significant amount of sidewalks installed rather than there are a few pieces that are missing in the standpoint. Observations are that speed is

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determined by speed limits which are established. However, the reality is unless there is some vertical or horizontal change and alignment people will not comply with any sort of arbitrary speed limit that is established. But I think that we are seeing in our profession a change of that approach. Typical speed limits are established by doing speed studies determining what the 85th percentile is, and then typically lowering it five miles an hour. And the reason why that occurs is related to enforcement action. Police officers find it very difficult to bring speeding violations to court. And judges say, well, we give everybody five miles an hour or maybe 10 at the end of it. And that is just a practical reality of speed limits and establishing them. And the court systems that are there at the same time.

It appears that this is an isolated location. And the thing we've seen or heard or observed in this location is this person, unfortunately, decided to visit some locations. Alcohol is maybe involved that we didn't have any blood alcohol taken, which I find very unusual for a case like this. Because sometimes there's even criminal charges which are listed between drivers when a pedestrian is killed when the pedestrian is clearly in the street. And person had an opportunity to observe the pedestrian, no matter what goes on. So it's pretty typical. I will later on - maybe we'll have an opportunity to talk about the idea that there has been a huge change in my profession. And I'm sorry going to the bandwagon, dealing with the idea of Vision Zero and principles of the same systems approach. And so how we got here, we have a long history of getting to where we're at this location today. So, I'll stop right there and let someone else to provide comments.

Tony Harris: Perfect. Thank you. Yeah. I appreciate what you said about the blood alcohol level. I thought that was a little bit unusual. And then just the long history of how we arrived here. I think that's good ... good notes to have. Eduardo, can we shift over to you any factors that you're seeing or thoughts that you have.

Eduardo Valdez: Yeah, Tony, pointed out a lot of really good stuff already, but I really want to emphasize on the vast amounts of undeveloped land right there. So as you're going down that,

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you can see off to your right – in walking down south, on the right – there’s a huge amount of land that's undeveloped. That that will obviously signal to the drivers that, “hey, look all this open space, maybe I can you know, afford to go a little bit faster” when they're calculating the risk in their head. Also, in the report it stated that... his fiancée had stated that he had preferred to stay - to stay on the road because on the field, he wouldn't like to get stickers on his pants, on his shoes, which is why he was on the road. But like I said, Tony pointed out a lot of really good stuff already and that's all.

Tony Harris: Sure, thank you, I appreciate that. That's good. Richard, can we go to you.

Richard Giberson: Yes, let me let me start off, I'll, I'll try to share a screen here.

Tony Harris: There we go.

Richard Giberson: All right, you see the street view there?

Tony Harris: I do.

Richard Giberson: So maybe a quick comment before I jump in on the analysis just one other observation about the conditions at the time. You noted before it was cold - well it was dark. But it was also cold. It was about 32 degrees at the time with over a 50 mile an hour wind out of the north so the wind chill would have been much worse. And I think Mr. Ducommun’s back would have been to that cold, you know, shielding his face and when he was struck from behind so it's a little bit of context from the weather.

So, what you can see here and I'm just starting at the intersection there at Osage and 27th. You can see the, you know, the lack of sidewalks. No markings for crosswalks. The only sidewalk that should show up at this intersection is up on the northwest corner, which would have been not really relevant for this incident. So just a general lack of infrastructure. The buttons, you

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know, to call or to get that signal are there, but you know, not marked or highlighted it all. So just kind of a lack of pedestrian infrastructure in general. So, you know, when I think about, you know, where to start and I guess the question that is in my mind and is, you know, "Why was Mr. Ducommun walking in the road?" right, and I think - Eduardo already hit on one of the key points that I saw as well, but you know, there's some big picture factors at play there's also some small details and I think as we sit through it, we kind of get to a reasonable conclusion. So, you know, I showed this the sidewalk situation or the intersection and lack of crosswalks. You know, but I, that said... I doubt that fixing that one intersection would have really made a difference in this instance, you know, as you already noted that the crash happened outside the crosswalk area. The police investigation concluded that Mr. Ducommun was walking southwesterly, across Osage. And some of this is probably visible if you pull up there, I think it was slide 16, Tony see the context a little bit, but he was coming from the neighborhood bar on the east side. So that would be the kind of the upper right hand side year, off of the screen and then. So they're suggesting he crossed Osage southwesterly when he was then struck - that's a plausible scenario.

But based on some of the witness testimony, there's another plausible scenario as well, is that he might have actually Osage at the crosswalk, or at the implied crosswalk at the intersection. And then proceeded south along the parking lot until he reaches a little strip there and if you look. If you look that piece of just outside where the stone slabs are displayed. And this gets to the point that Eduardo just made is that. From the fiancée's testimony, Mr. Ducommun did not like walking in in the fields in unpaved areas because he would pick up stickers on his pants and shoes. So. So if you are then, you know, trying to go from the neighborhood bar back to your apartment on the other side of Osage here, it's a five-minute walk, it's a short little walk. And if you're trying to do that in a way that doesn't take you off the pavement, you basically have two options. One is you take that you walked down the parking lot on the east side of Osage until it runs out and as soon as that parking lot runs out, you take a diagonal across Osage until you pick up the new sidewalk. And that's in front of that that newer development on the west side or you cross at the intersection, come down south, until you hit that strip outside of this where

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the stone slabs are displayed, that's there's a little bit of gravel there, but it's definitely not paved. Definitely has plants that grow in there as well. So, if you're coming that way, you have about if looks like about a 15 second walk. And then you can go to the right side of the street. Until you get to the sidewalk picking back up again. And this is with the newer development - so you see that lighter colored sidewalk area is new that just was less than a year old at the time of the crash. So, you know, before that you would have had to walk a lot longer in the street or take a lot longer diagonal across Osage if you're trying to avoid the fields. One thing and you can see this on the same page. You know, as much as the city is not making for a comfortable and friendly pedestrian environment, people are still walking, right in spite of that. And you can see the kind of the social path or the trail that's kind of beaten into the field on the right-hand side of Osage there.

And then some of the other views that we showed earlier, you can see those same kind of paths that people are just making paths where they need to go, right? The people are walking in spite of the lack of infrastructure. One thing, you know, there's a - there was an analysis and report done a neighborhood plan that was done in 2018, with city officials working with neighborhood representatives and they are focused on the neighborhood just here, you know, to the east or excuse me to the west side of Osage. And they here's how they assessed or summarize the sidewalk situation. So, this is a quote, "It is highly unlikely any pedestrian can easily and safely walk to any point of interest or place of business." So that's that's a pretty - that's a pretty harsh critique. So, you'll give in this context in terms of lack of crosswalks, lack of sidewalks or incomplete sidewalks frequent gaps. You know, that I asked myself, my self question, you know, what? Would anyone actually develop a habit of complying with, you know, pedestrian rules, right? Would anyone, you know, develop that as their approach? But I think not, right? I think there's, you know, they have no expectation of finding infrastructure, intersections along the major roads to support walking. So they have to, they have to kind of find their own way, right? They're making their own path, finding their own way. So, you know, in that in that context, then, you know, I propose that it's really the lack of clear consistent continuous sidewalks and crosswalk infrastructure. To me, that's the primary infrastructure

failing that's contributing to the crash and the death. The infrastructure forces those that are on foot or on bike to actively create their own way. And they have to do that exactly in the place where they're most vulnerable, right? Which is along those major roads. If they stick inside the residential neighborhoods, most residential neighborhoods in Amarillo actually have pretty good sidewalk infrastructure. But as soon as you leave those residential neighborhoods, you're forced to kind of make your own path into a dangerous setting. Mr. Ducommun, we talked about the context here, I mean a little bit more that came out in the police report. He had had a, had an argument with his fiancée, had left to spend a little time early evening at his neighborhood bar where he was a regular. Was walking back home on that cold January night probably preoccupied with what he was going to be saying when he got back to the apartment. He was probably walking by instinct and by experience, right? And he was probably not actively engaged. It was more of a habit and instinct. Unfortunately, the infrastructure here does not give walkers the luxury of walking by instinct, right? There might have to be focused always engaged or the results could be fatal. So that's really my primary analysis on the on the right crash.

Tony Harris: Thank you. Yeah, I think the “doesn't give the luxury of walking by instinct.” I think that's a really nice way to summarize that. Edward, let's turn to you in terms of factors and thoughts that you have.

Edward Erfurt: Yeah, let me reinforce some of the things that we've heard about contributing factors to this. On that hierarchy of streets that Tony had shared, what you can see on the, as we, as we look at the plan and look at the aerial, we can see in this particular area, the city that the street grids have actually been modified, to accommodate these five lane roads. And if I look at the state site, the Osage is only carrying about 15,000 trips a day and 27th is less than 7,000 trips a day. So not we've over, you know, for the vehicular that has been overbuilt. For the pedestrian and all other users, it's been underbuilt. So looking at that. Also as Eduardo has talked about, you know, walking in the streets, and also Richard talked about the idea that. That walking where you're kind of familiar. The apartment complex, whichever one that's over

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here or he lived. The only way to actually walk to this location because the entire properties fenced off is down 28 and on Osage. It's actually one of the longest routes. Because of the built environment street grid which is traditional throughout Amarillo has been lost here and then the form that the planners chose and the architects chose restrict how you can actually get to places. And if you click on that apartment complex, their big advertisement, their big selling point for renting at that location is that you're minutes away from shopping and all of your amenities. And it has been our experience and through these, through these, through these Crash Analysis Studios is if it is not safe for the pedestrian, it's probably also not safe for you in the car. So there's some pieces to that. I, you know, we need to praise Amarillo for improvements that they're doing with new development. We can see on the current corridor, I could see on a street that is overbuilt that is prioritizing the car. And that somebody's familiar with this that there's not there would not be that much traffic at this time of night on this type of road with these numbers. Walking in the street you – frankly, you have to - whether you want to keep out of the weeds, whether there's things that are obstacles in the way, whether private property has pushed out and absorbed, public right of way, or in your design work you end up putting gravel, and in Texas it doesn't matter what time of year it is nobody is going to be walking on that type of gravel so that infrastructure is missing along this corridor its' kind of inexcusable when we look at these conditions because on this particular road, they have really done everything they possibly can to allocate in this right of way for vehicular movements, and they've not allocated really anything for people. It becomes even more evident on the new development.

So, it's great that new sidewalks are being put in. But even the sidewalk here, you would probably have to walk in the street. There are obstacles - the speed limit sign is right in the middle of the sidewalk. I don't think that that meets appropriate width for American for Disabilities. So it's already a very narrow sidewalk. The street is very wide. All the lanes are very wide and very generous. But when it came to the right of ways, it's not. And you can actually see, I think, the driveway, this new driveway, which being less than a year old, would have

definitely had to meet PROWAG¹. It would have had to meet American for Disabilities for all users. And what I can tell here is I don't know how they meet the cross slopes or the turn areas on this. So again, it's great that new things are coming in because there are high density residential, and there's lots of commercial. And we definitely would want folks that are deciding to go out and have a drink, if that's what actually happened here, to have the ability to walk. The ability to walk is our most fundamental fact. We've been doing it for 10,000 years. So when we look at a situation like this, the new stuff, something is missing in this process, of moving forward.

So, when I look at this roadway, we are forcing the pedestrians out into the street. I mean, it's a fact and there are people that are actually walking here. So making sure both in the land use decisions, the design decisions on properties, like I don't know why there couldn't be a pedestrian gate at the back of the apartment complex, making it a shorter route, whether there's more complete sidewalks in that connection. Sidewalks were - clearly are required - when new development is occurring in Amarillo. But if you put a fence across the rear property line, the sidewalk is now no longer a requirement. So we talk about these types of systems. Clearly the allocation is focused to the car. And it's not even crumbs for the pedestrian. And the system is actually set up in such a way here that for a driver, the simplest error, they could, you know, on driving that the simplest mistake on this particular roadway has led to a fatality. A single distraction of a driver has led to this. When this type of roadway section, it clearly is making a simple mistake result into a fatality, which is quite sad when you have all of these types of land uses adjacent to it.

Tony Harris: Yeah, thank you, Edward. Thank you. I agree with you that it's sad. Any other thoughts on factors before we go to recommendations?

¹ Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines

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Eduardo Valdez: I would like to add some stuff. So just going, just thinking about the perspective of the driver during the incident, let me share my screen. OK, can you all see my screen?

Tony Harris: I think it's loading. Yeah, there we go.

Eduardo Valdez: OK. So she was going to southbound right here on Ross Osage and the point out, we have Sam's Club and a major postal facility for the Panhandle area. And as you're going down, she did not have a clear line of sight until she got down to the intersection. And this intersection is not very common in Amarillo as in - most of them are straight, grid-like. So there's that as well. And I had experience here at - during my training and orientation about a year ago at the post office here. During most of that time, I walked around for lunch and actually during one of the weeks, my car had broken down. And so also during that time, the Amarillo's bus transit system had free ridership due to COVID funds, which was really, really helpful for me traveling around and needing to get around when I needed to. And the nearest bus stop around here, and I could be wrong, but it's up on 10th right here. But yeah, that's all I have to add.

Tony Harris: Yeah, that's really helpful to think about it from the motorist point of view too. I think it can be easy to lose the sight of that. OK. Any other thoughts on factors?

Tony Tramel: There is one thing, just to be aware of.

Tony Harris: Yeah.

Tony Tramel: I worked in City Government for a long time. And one of the things we often failed to recognize is the process of how sidewalks get constructed, who's responsible. I'll tell you the systems broke. It's been broke for a long, long time. Related to that is the ideal of how much right away we need - sizing of facilities as a transportation planner - you're always

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worried about under-designing something in a roadway concept. And what we're seeing today with a new approach is to say, we need to physically separate pedestrians from automobiles. And cyclists as well. Have a physical separation between those to begin with - that's not how we've done it historically. We've all been worried about costs. And we're worried about someone came to you and says, "I need 150 feet wide in order to build this cross-section." And that includes bikeways and everything else, again, with and park land. It's a great concept. But it eventually is all about cost and dollars. And the community, if you're community wants it, you'll get it.

But there are still those people that say, the city government should only take what it absolutely needs and should take no more than that. And you have a whole huge set of issues, associated with that, and councils, and other things that are worried about cost and their constituencies, and those kinds of things. So I wish there was an easy solution. If there was, we'd already figured that out. So it's just throwing that out there - more fuel for the fire, as we say, how do we come up with solutions? And I think that's a huge challenge for us in the future.

Edward Erfurt: Yeah, to expand on that, what Tony's sharing, is that it's very clear here where the prioritization is. It's very clear here that there was no holding back of funds. There's absolutely no development adjacent to this. What we're seeing is some small new stuff coming in. But there's a five-lane road to the south. There's a five-lane road to the north. There's a five-lane road to the east. There's a five-lane road to the west. It doesn't take into any sense of context. The rest of Amarillo is a street grid. With small blocks. This interconnected street grid, when you look at the transportation numbers throughout the city, this is a completely different pattern because in the street gridded areas, even where they have the wider streets, the transportation numbers are half of this. When it comes through for new development, a lot of choice has to be made about what the future of this roadway would be. This clearly is overbuilt. And there's a lot of you can see by the aerials, the way it's being maintained with crack seal. It is about time for this to be changed.

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So when we look at this type of road, they have plenty of right away. There wasn't a lack of right away. There clearly wasn't a lack of funds. But on this particular section of road, it clearly, the priority was not about accommodating all the users on this particular site. So I think that's an important thing to point out in this particular location, which contributes to a system where a pedestrian or bicyclist really can't be. It's an incongruent system. Even in the car, when you look at the spacing of 28th to 27th and you look at how wide the road is and all the different pieces, this is probably also a very dangerous area to make a left turn off of 27th onto Osage. So if you wanted to drive to the same location, a tremendous amount of risk if we talk about sight lines, if we talk about the width of the road, the lane widths, the speed, really for all users, a quite dangerous situation.

Tony Harris: Yeah, thank you for that expansion. Okay, so I think maybe we could shift to recommendations if everybody feels ready. I'd like to start with Tony again, if we could, anything you think that we might be able to do to make this area safer or prevent future crashes.

Tony Tramel: Well, the, it's interesting. I always ask myself the question, "Is this is an isolated location?" As an engineer, we say, what resources do we have? Where should we use those resources to have the best benefit and impact to begin with? Sometimes we run into cases of having a particular unique situation and you wonder, "How would we have solved this problem?" And is there, or – "Is there a problem?" is the question. I know this is part of the process that we're talking about, and we've touched on a whole variety of issues to begin with, but I think the point is made, that's made the day is to say that we clearly do not have enough traffic volume to warrant some five-lane roadway in today's world to begin with. And so you always had that ability to say, well, it's, you know, let's put the road diet approach to this location in, in several locations. And the best advantage of road diets is that you can do something temporarily, I call it temporarily, it may become permanent, which can try things with a little bit of paint and some pavement markings and some other things, which is usually a very positive thing. If it works out, you'll say, there's two things, "Why didn't we do this five

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years ago? And [why] are we doing it for future roadways at the same time?" So, there's two times to build it, you know, to plant a tree, it's 20 years ago and today. So that approach has always been something that I've always thought about as well.

The most obvious thing from the traffic operations standpoint is to always ensure there's adequate pedestrian crossing opportunities, pavement markings, ADA compliance, appropriate signing that goes with push buttons that are installed there. There are a lot of deviations that are inconsistent with that. And the point you're trying to make earlier too is about all new construction has to be ADA compliant. And the speed limit sign and the sidewalk was clearly a mistake. Someone should have just called and said, we want to relocate this sign to the right person, but the guy to contractors who were pouring sidewalks said, "Eh forget it, we're just pouring it. That's someone else's problem," more than anything else. But I think recognizing the pedestrians have rights and this whole concept of the safe system that says, look, we don't want any deaths or serious injuries. We call those unacceptable in our world today - what we want to change to begin with - humans make mistakes, humans are vulnerable, responsibility is shared when the crash occurs. Safety should be proactive and redundancy is critical to make all this work. And we're seeing philosophically a paradigm shift in the traffic and transportation industry. How fast it gets here is going to be the big struggle to begin with. I'm very hopeful that the next few young engineers will really be attuned to this concept of the safe systems that we need to be teaching it in colleges and high schools to begin with, or high schools, colleges rather to make all this happen. It concerns me that we still in the last 50 years and I've testified in court. It's the whole concept. Does it meet a standard, a standard of care? And that's the barometer that's written in the legislation that we have to deal with in today's world. We need to move forward with that in the near future and the greatest challenge that I think at the same time. That's it for me.

Tony Harris: Great, thank you. Yeah, I hear you on the standards and standard of care stuff that's definitely a big part of our conversations as we do these analyses. Richard, can I ask you



to expand a little bit on any recommendations or thoughts you might have to increase safety in this area?

Richard Giberson: Sure. And I kind of thought of these in terms of short term, medium term, long term. So short term, which is like, what can you do next week? I think next week, you can just stripe the intersection crosswalk. So even though that wouldn't have saved the situation here, but at least pretend that you're planning for people to cross there, at least pretend and maybe people will and maybe drivers will start to think about there being people crossing the street. So that's the short term.

Medium term, I mentioned earlier the neighborhood plan, the Barrio neighborhood plan. I also spent some time with the 2010 comprehensive plan from the city of Amarillo. There's a lot of good plans. The issues that we're talking about for the most part are not – this isn't news to somebody. These are identified issues and concerns going back at least a decade. But it's often hard to find the will and the time and the money to push those ahead. So, if you look at the 2010 comprehensive plan, and it's got a lot of good ideas for addressing these issues. But when is it going to really get done or at a bigger scale than maybe what has been accomplished over the last decade. I definitely would say accelerate sidewalk plans that they've already documented and how commercial land owners, even if it's not a new development, how commercial land owners step up and put in the sidewalks that will connect to joining sections. Stop allowing the power poles and everything like I've been mentioned in the middle of sidewalks. I mean, the example we'll take here was actually one of the minor, mild problems. If you scan around with Google, street view, and you've got major, major issues with obstacles. And somehow you've got to start out with getting public money to building out the sidewalk infrastructure in the older neighborhoods that are not getting a lot of development.

In terms of long-term, some of this could go on a while and beyond the scope of our discussion today. But there's two main areas I think need to be addressed long-term. One is what's been alluded to is the overall organizing plan that Amarillo has for its neighborhoods. And when you



look, if I can be able to share my screen real quick to show an image here, all right, can you see that?

Tony Harris: Yeah, I can see it.

Richard Giberson: There we go. All right, so this could be, if you can see that is a Google maps zoomed out with the street view or streets highlighted, essentially, where Google has got street views. So you can see where the blue lines are. And you see that very standardized one-mile square system, even where there's mostly just fields in between. Amarillo builds out that arterial infrastructure, even in advance. So you can see that those kind of the super blocks, if you will. And those super blocks represent those arterials with the same kind of infrastructure issues that we've been talking about. And there's a lot of advantages to what they do. And in fact, in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan, Amarillo actually held up this neighborhood's planning scheme as one of the positives that they've done. What it does is it puts the residential neighborhood in an area with an elementary school and a park at its heart. And actually within the neighborhoods, you can typically get to an elementary school pretty safely. It's a comfortable walk, or at least back in the 70s when I was there, pretty comfortable to walk to school, bike to school. It's, again, what they haven't figured out is or addressed is the negatives that come from this approach when it comes to connecting with commercial and going outside of your super block, or outside of your neighborhood.

The other kind of the other big picture issue to address from the cities, again, not based on my own experience, but based on kind of reading through their comprehensive plan in 2010, it's the way that they deal with growth and new development. So on one hand, and Tony mentioned this, they kind of the version of the tax, the raising taxes. You know, Amarillo appears to try to maintain a very low tax profile. But they also, according to the comments in the comprehensive plan in 2010, they're very developer friendly. So if a developer is coming in on the edges of the city and they want to put in a new, a new neighborhood, a new development, the city is actually footing the vast majority of that infrastructure bill, not the

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developer. And of course, then the city is on the hook for all the maintenance, for, you know, 30, 40, 100 years, right? So it's not clear, in fact, it's probably pretty clear to us - I think that those, the gain and revenue that they give from the new development is insufficient to offset the long-term infrastructure cost that the city's taken on. So I think the city needs to kind of take some hard decisions, probably, around development and growth. And not subsidize on the fringes when they instead should be focusing on building up the interior and infrastructure and infill on these. And these neighborhoods that have been around for, you know, generations, and yet we still have empty fields, right? I think we're subsidizing the wrong kind of development on the edges instead of infilling.

Tony Harris: Thank you. I think that's some really good perspective in terms of infill and thinking about the long-term maintenance and operational costs, I think is really relevant too. Eduardo, any thoughts or recommendations on safety in this area and preventing future collisions?

Eduardo Valdez: Yeah, I mean, I'll probably go over a lot of what has been said. But right now at the intersection of I-27, I-40, the TxDot has put up a billboard that says, it's a picture of a crosswalk, a nice painted crosswalk. It says, look both ways or, you know, it says cross at an intersections. But it's ironic, it's at the major, you know, interstate intersection, you can't see it unless you're driving on there. And I think what would help a lot is just getting everyone, everyone, drivers in the mentality of always having to look out for pedestrians. A lot of departments of transportation will claim that that's their goal, you know, making drivers aware and pedestrians aware but they do little or to no avail to actually do that. I think part of trying to accomplish that would be course, um, tuning the way in which like developments are allowed to, for example, notice there's a lot of parking lots, there's just encroach like right near the curb and it's just asphalt right after that. So there's no differentiation, no way to see any difference, you know, if it's a walking area or just a parking lot.

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I think Amarillo has one of the highest car ownership rates, probably top 100 like near with Midland and Odessa and all that. So like for example, to get a sense of the mentality that a lot of people have - at my training orientation, at the postal facility, my co-workers and the training ladies wanted to go have a nice lunch before our big test. And the restaurant we wanted to go - Let me show my screen again, that should answer where I am talking about. Okay. Okay. So we were training around here and we wanted to go eat at La Fiesta Grande, which you can see what is that maybe 300 feet, 400 feet? Okay, and they said, "Okay, who wants to drive?" And I said, oh, I'll walk and they were like, okay, and when I got there, they were kind of surprised, they were like, "Did you run?" I said, "No, I just walked." And I think that really, that showcased to me the mentality of people not even considering that they can walk somewhere and keep in mind that they didn't even have to cross Ross-Osage. I mean, if they had to, I would understand. But yeah, and I know, I'm not exactly sure by know the city did do a lot of redevelopments on the Boulevard. There's a lot of major improvements there. There's sidewalks all throughout from my understanding. But yeah, that's all I have.

Tony Harris: Great, thank you. That was a really helpful story to remind us that in some peoples' mental models walking isn't even an option necessarily, right? And it's like, who's going to drive? Okay, Edward, any thoughts on recommendations?

Edward Erfurt: Yeah, I think both Tony and Eduardo were sharing this idea about driver awareness. So, there's driver awareness about pedestrians, but there's also driver awareness about speed, and there's driver awareness about the land development and the retail uses adjacent to the road. When I'm looking at a street like this and we're talking about things that could be recommended to help short-term, pieces that would assist with the contributing factors, is to really think about the type of roadway - there's a lot of extra asphalt. This is Texas, so you have two things. You have this sun that creates a lot of heat an inhabitable situation when you have black asphalt, but you also have torrential downpours. So, you have a lot of water all at once on this roadway surface. So. when you're dealing with this type of stuff, it just seems logical for driver awareness and optical narrowing of the street to drop lanes. Which can

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be done as Richard has said, we've seen through Strong Towns by using paint. There's a lot of driver awareness you can do with paint, by marking crosswalk, by taking out lanes, painting out really long left turn lanes, again to help with that. The next phase from paint is to actually put vertical elements in and there's all different types of inexpensive vertical elements. At some point when this road then gets repaved, that area of asphalt can be reclaimed to something that will either 1) provide that optical narrowing, but 2) could be now allocated to some other use such as pedestrian and bicycles. Or if there's a bus route through here, it could be a dedicated bus lane to help get that down.

Another thing that needs to happen right away is that I think the city's lost sight of the policies they have established in their 2010 Comp Plan. Whenever there is an incident like this in a city, a key city staff should show up and walk this. There should be a quick response team. For this particular site, there should be somebody from the public works or maintenance department to represent that team. There should be somebody from the city engineering department that is familiar with both the surface treatments, but even things that are underground. And there should be a planner. That quick team when this occurs, they should be out there and they should not only drive these conditions, they should walk it. And I think some of the things that we pointed out, posts being in the wrong place, curbing being wrong, maybe there's you can see there's a lot of asphalt issues in this area. There's paint that's missing. By walking that, what we at Strong Towns would advocate for is kind of the next smallest thing. So providing that kind of response team to go out there, there are, in my experience of working in a local government, there is usually a warehouse of stuff that we have. There's usually a team of folks that are responsible for all of that at the city. And this is one area that we could go and quickly work with the city to figure out what's there with a team of three or four people on the ground walking that.

The longer-term things - a decision has been made with the city to get rid of the grid in this area. There are alleyways that have been abandoned. There are roads that have been abandoned; there are roads that have been rerouted. That's a deliberate decision that's been

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made by the city, especially the city is taking on a pro development approach where they're building infrastructure. We know that a grid of streets allows for more incremental development and allows for a greater diversity of land users. It's a lower risk for the development team because now we can subdivide properties and sell to multiple people. When things get built out on like a large 70-acre parcel, that was actually divided into seven blocks. Then now we could have up to 48 or 50 individual owners. And that's a real community and a traditional pattern that we see. As development comes forward, as plats come forward in the city, removing roadways should be the option of last resort. Keeping that street grid together and working with that is what the city should be doing. And in this particular area, there are vast areas that are ready for redevelopment. So when those come in, really advocating for the smaller network of streets, as we can see throughout the city, that smaller network of streets focus on buildings up to the street. And again, that adds to that optical narrowing and that expectation that this is a place for all people. And increases that, what we would describe as a comfort level for both the driver and the pedestrian to be in that environment.

Tony Harris: Great. Thank you. Tony, I see that you have your hand raised.

Tony Tramel: I do. One of the more interesting things that I ran across was a great graphic prepared by the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration aspect. In Texas alone in the last 10 years, I take that back, from 2012 to 2021, three years ago, there have been 6,043 pedestrians killed in the state of Texas. We average of between 500 and 600 a year. So, it's a huge issue. I've been engaged a couple of times in some pedestrian activities on shopping centers. And that's a whole another gamut that even private development in shopping center developers have not recognized the need for pedestrian safety and how people are dealing with that. And there are a lot of people that are hurt in shopping private development as well. So anyway, just to FYI, I kind of think that there's I may send this link out to you, Tony, so that you can take a look at it. It actually has every state. It's a very unbelievable graphic. You can just click on it, find some great information, and to show you an exercise the fact of that pedestrian, injuries, crashes, and fatalities are real live stuff for us. And that's it.



Tony Harris: Yeah, I'd be interested in checking out that graphic for sure. Great. Any other thoughts on recommendations?

Okay. Well, in that case, I'm going to move us into the closing portion of our gathering here today. Give me just one moment. Yeah, so I would like to just kind of offer some acknowledgments as we prepare to close out. I want to recognize our panelists today, Tony, Richard, Eduardo, and Edward, and I want to give special thanks to Eduardo for nominating this crash in the first place and helping to gather information and data and organize resources as we were working together over a period of a couple months. I also want to thank some of the other community members and colleagues that have helped us prepare for this session today. I want to thank the sponsor of this event - an anonymous donor and also our other Strong Towns staff members who supported in getting us prepared. You can find a recording of this session and all of our other Crash Analysis Studio sessions by going to strongtowns.org/crash-studio. There you'll also soon find resources for establishing a crash studio in your own community. Our next studio session with Strong Towns will take place on July 21st and you can find more information about that on our website as well. So, on behalf of my colleagues and the assembled panel here today, I want to thank you for watching this session and keep doing what you can to build a strong town. Take care.