

Crash Analysis Studio

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Held on August 9, 2025

Session Participants

- **Nate Jung, PE**, Engineer with Toole Design's Minneapolis office; Specialist in Complete Streets, ADA¹ Compliance, and bicycle facility design
- **Mark Schoening**, long-time Central neighborhood resident; collision survivor; contemporary artist; former professor; dedicated preservationist, and husband
- **Laura Mitchell**, Founder of the Minneapolis Cargo Bike Library; Board President of Our Streets; consultant; parent; writer; active transportation advocate; concerned local
- **Tony Harris** (moderator), Community Engagement Coordinator at Strong Towns

Summary of Crash Event

- Media coverage indicates a black SUV and a 2024 Mustang were racing on Park Avenue.
 - Park Avenue—also known as County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 33—is a one way thoroughfare that features 2 lanes for northbound traffic and zero lanes for southbound drivers.
- According to the crash report, a vehicle—most likely the SUV—cut off the Mustang and the Mustang ran off the road. The Mustang caused damage to 3314, 3310, and 3306 Park Avenue.
- The Mustang flipped upside down before coming to rest at the Schoening's House, which is 3306 Park Avenue.
- The driver of the SUV fled the scene; law enforcement identified the Mustang driver to be Christian Silva and his passenger to be Leonardo Caamano-Gallardo.
- Caamano-Gallardo was treated by EMS at the scene of the crash.
- Cell phone footage showed Silva driving at a high speed and disregarding traffic signals.
- Silva was administered a blood alcohol test; his Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) was found to be .08% and he was arrested at the scene of the collision.

¹ Americans with Disabilities Act

- Weather reports indicate it was in the 70s in Minneapolis on the date of the crash. It was partly cloudy and still dark out when the crash happened.
- The posted speed limit on Park Avenue is 30 miles per hour (mph).

Primary Contributing Factors

Park Avenue at 33rd Street operates more like a small highway than a neighborhood street, and the corridor's design consistently produces speeds that far exceed the posted 30 mph. Two wide northbound through traffic lanes, an unprotected bike lane, and frequent gaps in curb parking create a visually wide, low-friction environment that invites unwarranted motorist acceleration. The effect is measurable and persistent across three independent speed studies where roughly 91% of drivers exceeded the 30 mph limit, with approximately 85% of the total sample traveling at or below 38 to 40 mph. This pattern—substantiated across different times and days of the week—is clear evidence that street design is directly influencing driver behavior.

Traffic operations and visual cues along the segment reinforce the feeling that this space prioritizes motorists traveling at high speeds over all other road users. Although signals exist at 31st and 34th, the crash location sits within a multi-block run where controlled crossings are not visible from the driver's perspective, so there are few visual prompts to slow down between intersections. The one-way Park and Portland Avenue couplet functions as a high-throughput pair. Panelists and residents described recurring drag racing and wrong-way maneuvers that are easier to attempt on long, straight, one-way facilities with generous lane widths than they are on narrower, two-way urban streets.

Community experience aligns with the collected data. Corridor residents who completed the [Park and Portland Avenue Safety Survey](#)² identified a broad concern about drivers traveling well above the limit and too few safe crossing opportunities. Meanwhile, traffic count history from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) shows that daily volumes at this location have dropped by roughly 43% since 2003. Speed would ease as volumes fell if congestion were the root cause of unsafe behavior; instead, high operating speeds persisted, underscoring that design—not demand—is the dominant factor.

The jurisdictional split between Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis—combined with constraints posed by State Aid standards—have slowed the arrival of changes that truly lower operating speeds. The bike lane's current configuration also breaks down under real-world behavior. Without vertical separation, drivers frequently encroach into or park in the buffered lane, and some use it as an ad-hoc passing lane when there is congestion. The corridor's design language prioritizes motorist movement even though the surrounding land use demands an environment that is safe for a variety of non-motorist road users.

² Mark Schoening and a group of concerned neighbors flyered a 26-block portion of Park and Portland Avenues between December 2024 and April 2025 for survey responses.

Session participants aligned around these premises and identified the following as primary factors that contributed to this crash.

1. Christian Silva engaged in reckless driving behavior by operating a motor vehicle at an unsafe speed while legally impaired.

- a. Excessive speed—potentially as high as 85 miles per hour—contributed to reckless driving and the loss of control that occurred during and after the encounter with the SUV.³
 - i. More than 60% of the 210 residents who responded to the Park and Portland Avenue Safety Survey indicated drivers racing each other to be a “significant problem”.
- b. United States’ [federal guidelines](#) indicate motorists are driving impaired if their blood alcohol content (BAC) is .08% or higher while operating a motor vehicle.
 - i. The crash report indicates Silva had a BAC of .08% at the time of testing and was arrested on the scene.

2. The design of Park Avenue facilitates high automobile speeds unsafe for motorist users and non-motorist users—including residents—in the surrounding area.

- a. Travel lanes along Park Avenue are wide enough to make drivers comfortable traveling at a design speed higher than the posted 30 mph limit.
 - i. Each of the two through traffic lanes where the crash occurred are 12 feet wide; this exceeds the [ten-foot width deemed appropriate](#) in most urban areas.
 1. State aid will not allow lanes narrower than 11 feet wide without a design variance.
 - ii. The unprotected bike lane and its buffers collectively account for an additional 12 feet of width; the west parking lane is nine and a half feet wide, and the east parking lane is eight and a half feet wide.
 - iii. The 54 foot distance across the pavement reduces driver friction and heightens comfort at higher speeds.
 - iv. Each side of the road is also extended by six-foot wide sidewalks and seven-foot wide planter areas, causing the total width of Park Avenue to jump up to 80 feet.
 1. Street trees and signage placed within these planter areas are set back and buffered by parking, providing little visual enclosure; Park Avenue consequently reads more like a minor highway than a neighborhood road.

³ The crash report did not state the exact speed Silva was traveling at. Park Avenue resident, crash survivor, and session panelist Mark Schoening stated law enforcement officers inventoried evidence from a cell phone indicating Silva was traveling at 85 miles per hour.

2. Long stretches without parked cars at the block's north end near 33rd Street may also cause motorists to perceive Park Avenue to be wider than it actually is and encourage higher speeds.
 - b. Drivers traveling too fast was ranked as a "significant problem" by 143 (68%) of Park and Portland Avenue Safety Survey respondents.
 - i. Multiple respondents noted that vehicles regularly travel 50 mph or higher along residential streets.
 - ii. Community members aligned around vehicle speed as the most urgent safety issue on the corridor, with 66% of respondents ranking "decreasing vehicle speeds" as a top priority, outpacing any other concern.
- 3. Both the design speed and documented travel speed of Park Avenue are incompatible with non-motorist traffic—including pedestrians and cyclists—that is encouraged along this avenue and in the area surrounding it.**
 - a. The current speed limit on Park Avenue is 30 mph.
 - b. Three speed studies were conducted for this session; the first took place on July 18, 2025, the second occurred on July 27, 2025, and the third took place on July 28, 2025.
 - i. The July 18th study indicates that 93.5% of motorists exceeded the posted speed limit, while the study conducted on the afternoon of July 27th found 88.1% of motorists were speeding.
 - ii. The third study—taken at afternoon rush hour rather than early in the afternoon—indicates that 90.1% of motorists were speeding.
 1. When combined, the data sets reveal 90.6% of motorists were speeding beyond the 30 mph limit.
 - iii. The data sets from the 18th and 27th indicated that the 85th percentile speed, or the speed at which 85% of drivers traveling at or below, was 40 mph.
 - iv. The data collected on the 28th indicates the 85th percentile speed to be 38 mph.
 1. When combined, the data sets indicate an 85th percentile speed of 39 mph.
 - c. A [pedestrian safety analysis](#) states that fatality rates and rates of serious injury climb for automobile collisions involving pedestrians at 25 mph.
 - i. Though pedestrians were not injured in this crash, 600 (99.3%) of the total motorists tracked across all three studies were traveling beyond the safety threshold of 25 mph.
 - ii. Motorists [are also placed at higher risk of fatalities](#) during collisions where travel speeds exceed 20 mph.
 - d. Of the 604 motorists tracked, 87 of them—or 14.4% of the total sample—were traveling ten miles per hour or faster over the speed limit.

- e. 496 motorists—82.1% of the total sample—were driving between 31 and 40 mph. This data distribution signifies that this space communicates to drivers that it is a low-risk behavior to travel at speeds up to ten miles per hour faster than the posted limit. This increase in travel speed is significant as it directly correlates with crashes that have a higher likelihood of causing property damage, severe injuries, and even fatalities.
 - f. By design, vehicle travel speeds on Park Avenue subject non-motorist users—including residents, people traveling by foot, cyclists, and public transit riders—and motorists to substantive danger.
4. **The one-way couplet dynamics of Park Avenue and Portland Avenue⁴ enable and reward high speed travel, creating the conditions for drag racing to become a systemic problem within this neighborhood.**
- a. Park Avenue and Portland Avenue operate as a one-way couplet optimized for vehicular throughput.
 - i. Drivers experience fewer natural checks on speed and passing along straight, one-way corridors that feature no opposing traffic flow.
 - ii. Sparse signals along these avenues create extended stretches—often devoid of any additional traffic calming measures—where drivers can accelerate well beyond the posted limit.
 - b. Local experts and [media coverage](#) note that—for over a decade—drag racing has been an issue on the stretch of Park Avenue that runs parallel to Powderhorn Park.
5. **Visibility challenges and changes in traffic volume collectively invite unsafe driving behavior along Park Avenue and create an environment incompatible for cyclists, individuals traveling on foot, and other non-motorists.**
- a. Motorists are not consistently presented with timely and legible cues to slow down as they travel north along Park Avenue.
 - i. One 30 mph speed limit sign is physically obstructed by a street tree, which makes it ineffective—or at least less effective—even during daytime hours.
 - ii. Marked vertical features like refuge islands or tight curb radii are absent within the immediate area around the crash location, though pedestrian refuge islands are featured at the 34th Street and Park Avenue intersection.
 - b. The segment of Park Avenue at 33rd Street is embedded in a multiple block gap between signalized crossings at 34th and 31st Streets.

⁴ Portland Avenue is also known as County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 35; Park Avenue is County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 33.

- i. The next controlled crossing is not visible to the operating driver from the 3300th block of Park Avenue; this absence signals to the motorist that they are the prioritized user on this roadway.
 - ii. The absence of visual interruptions from pedestrian infrastructure elements like raised crosswalks, median refuges, or curb extensions normalize higher mid-segment speeds and lengthen motorists' stopping distances.
 - c. Historic traffic volume data for Park Avenue and 33rd Street shows a clear downward trend in use.
 - i. From a high of 12,400 daily vehicles in 2003 to just over 7,000 in 2024, Park Avenue's volumes have fallen dramatically—yet speeding remains endemic.
 - ii. This helps confirm the risk is rooted in design speed and roadway geometry rather than traffic demand.
- 6. Jurisdictional fragmentation between Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis limits local ability to implement near-term safety fixes on Park and Portland Avenues.**
- a. Park Avenue (CSAH 33) and Portland Avenue (CSAH 35) are Hennepin County roads; the county controls design and capital projects, while the City partners on operations (e.g., many signals) and pedestrian elements.
 - b. As County State Aid Highways, projects must meet MnDOT State Aid standards, including a minimum urban design speed of 30 mph.
 - i. Minneapolis speed limit policy does not apply on county routes.
 - ii. Unilateral speed limit reductions on Park and Portland would require a variance or design exception.
 - c. Major upgrades to these roadways also rely on regional funding cycles and programming, which may add additional years to existing Hennepin County and Minneapolis processes.
 - d. These overlapping protocols—County authority, State Aid rules, and regional funding—can delay corridor-specific safety interventions, even with strong resident advocacy and clear data.

Related Contributing Factors

Session participants also identified the following related factors⁵ that impact street safety on Park Avenue.

- 7. The unprotected—though buffered—bike lane does not provide reliable separation for cyclists, motorists, or other non-motorist road users.**

⁵ While these factors did not likely contribute to the analyzed crash, they do impact the overall safety of road users and residents along Park Avenue.

- a. The lack of physical protections cause motorists to perceive the buffer areas as additional pavement for travel—likely even when they are aware that space is not prioritized for their use.
 - b. Locals and panelists report motorist usage of the bike lane for parking and passing other traffic is commonplace.
 - c. This dynamic heightens risk for vulnerable road users, especially non-motorists and individuals with mobility restrictions who may be navigating driveways and intersections.
- 8. A land-use mismatch exists between Park Avenue—which functions as a minor highway—and intersecting residential thoroughfares that operate more like neighborhood roads.**
- a. Park Avenue is surrounded by community institutions like Powderhorn Park, the Heritage Academy high school, and the United Methodist Church.
 - i. Park Avenue’s design language does not reflect the neighborhood context it is situated within.
 - ii. This mismatch heightens the risk experienced by pedestrians and cyclists who frequent nearby destinations without using a privately owned automobile.
 - b. Design differences between these roadways may limit sightlines and create blind spots like the one at 33rd Street and Park Avenue, which has contributed to multiple angle collisions—also known as T-bone collisions—in recent years.

Recommendations

The corridor’s safety problem is design-driven and persistent. The speed issues highlighted by three independent studies are further supported by survey responses from over 200 neighborhood residents. Two-thirds of these respondents indicated that reducing motorists’ speeds should be the number one community priority. At the same time, two decades of MnDOT counts show traffic volumes have declined substantially, removing the “congestion” rationale for high speeds. Residents, riders, and panelists described a one-way, two-lane cross-section with long sightlines and paint-only bike buffers that feels and functions as a small highway running through a residential district.

Given this context—and the community’s top priority to reduce speeds—recommendations must aim to lower operating speeds, protect vulnerable users, and restore the sense that Park Avenue is a [Mixed Use Community Connector](#), a street classification from the Minneapolis Street Design Guide. These recommendations may also support the priorities outlined in the [City’s 2030 Transportation Action Plan](#) and the [County’s Complete and Green Streets Policy](#). Immediate actions should reinsert friction into the street while longer-term capital is secured and interventions are planned. Immediate actions may include adjustments to signal timing, increasing optical narrowing for motorists, and other measures to heighten visibility for—and of—all road users.

Within a year, this corridor may be physically modified to help achieve lower operating speeds. This will require alignment of county and city officials responsible for setting and maintaining design standards along Park Avenue and Portland Avenue. Modifications that protect non-motorist users and change the speed-governing equation along Park Avenue should be in alignment with—and supported by—Hennepin County’s 2027 reconstruction plan. If possible, county and city staff should assess and pursue converting the Park and Portland couplet to two-way roadways; this conversion would normalize neighborhood travel speeds in a community that has struggled with drag racing for over a decade.

In summary, there are a variety of ways to address the identified factors and minimize the likelihood of future collisions, injuries, and fatalities. Along the Park Avenue corridor, the following practices should be adopted.

Immediate

1. Improve visibility and visual cues for motorists and non-motorists alike by:
 - a. Trimming street trees and vegetation that may be blocking speed limit signs or other important signage.
 - b. Painting or striping temporary high-visibility crosswalks.
 - c. Daylight corners along Park Avenue with cones or flex-posts to preserve sightlines at risk of obstruction due to parked cars.
2. Use rest in red signal timing operation on nearby signals to help reduce excessive speeding and make the corridor more responsive to users who choose to bike, walk, or roll through the crash location and its surrounding area.
3. Utilize paint to swap the eastern parking lane with the bike lane; this will create a parking protected segment that can be further protected with flex posts or modular curbs.
4. Deploy temporary quick curb extensions and median islands at priority crossing areas like 33rd street to help calm traffic, increase walkability, and daylight high-risk intersections.
5. Collaborate with the city to erect portable driver feedback or radar speed signs to heighten motorists’ awareness of travel speeds as they move through unsignalized sections of Park Avenue.
6. Organize community members to build and populate a simple form and digital map to report on and track non-fatal crashes and near misses within the neighborhood; utilize this information to target any additional block-by-block treatments.
 - a. A resident organizer may also be designated to maintain this map and any evidence of safety treatments for the purposes of presenting to external parties.
7. Elected officials of Minneapolis should provide direction and guidance to Hennepin County staff regarding the desired user behavior along Park Avenue, especially at its

intersection with 33rd Street and other unsignalized crossings—as an initial step toward improving safety for all road users.

- a. Elected leadership should prepare a resolution supporting this objective. This resolution should state:
 - i. Safety for all users shall be the primary design priority that outranks all others for this location.
 - ii. All future design and planning efforts must recognize these CSAH 33 and CSAH 35 exist within a neighborhood context that must be safe for motorists and non-motorists alike.

Near Term (within the next 12 months)

8. Secure the required variance and restripe—or use separators to restrict—the width of existing northbound traffic lanes along Park Avenue from twelve feet each to ten feet each.
9. Utilize freed space to install more permanent curb extensions and refuge islands, particularly at mid-block and unsignalized locations nearby bus stops, schools, and other popular destinations.
10. Maintain any effective daylighting measures like curb extensions and reinforce any successful vertical separation initiated for bike lanes by:
 - a. Maintaining the bike lane and parking lane swap.
 - b. Replacing temporary flex posts with more durable barriers.
11. Collaborate with Minneapolis city staff to pursue a State Aid design variance targeting an operating speed at or below 25 mph.
 - a. If and when appropriate, match any markings or signage to reflex the lower speed.

Long Term and Systematic

12. Lock in any new protections for cyclists by building a concrete, parking-protected bike lane across the entirety of the corridor.
13. Assess the possibility of redesigning Park Avenue by:
 - a. Initiating a road diet that right-sizes this crosssection to include one lane for northbound automobile traffic, a parking lane, and a protected bike lane.
 - b. Converting the Park Avenue and Portland Avenue couplet to two-way thoroughfares, as this may reduce operating speeds and ultimately decrease or end street racing in this area.

14. Cap segment speeds by tightening curb radii and inserting [single-lane compact roundabouts](#) at select locations throughout the corridor.
15. Coordinate Minneapolis city staff, Hennepin County municipal staff, and regional Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) representatives to pursue a permanent variance for design speeds below 30 mph on CSAH facilities.
 - a. Advocate for the Minneapolis City Council to adopt a resolution that updates state aid rules to allow speeds and design elements consistent with local priorities.

Concluding Statement

The design flaws along Park Avenue—specifically near East 33rd Street—present significant dangers to the Minneapolis community. Prioritizing traffic flow over the safety and usability of non-motorists has led to injuries, fatalities, and extensive property damage in communities across Minnesota and the United States.

Given the jurisdictional complexity of this area, a tiered program is warranted. This program should include immediate quick-build measures to restore visual cues and harden protection; near-term geometric changes to narrow lanes and add frequent, safe crossings; and the 2027 reconstruction to lock in a protected bikeway, right-sized cross-section, and speed-governing geometry. Coordinated action among Hennepin County (road authority), the City, and State Aid processes is essential.

With these steps—and ongoing monitoring of traffic flows and improvements along this corridor—Park Avenue can shift from a high-speed conduit to a safer neighborhood street that reflects community priorities and reduces the likelihood and severity of future crashes. By transforming Park Avenue into a thoroughfare that serves all road users, Minneapolis can set a meaningful precedent for other communities within and beyond Minnesota.