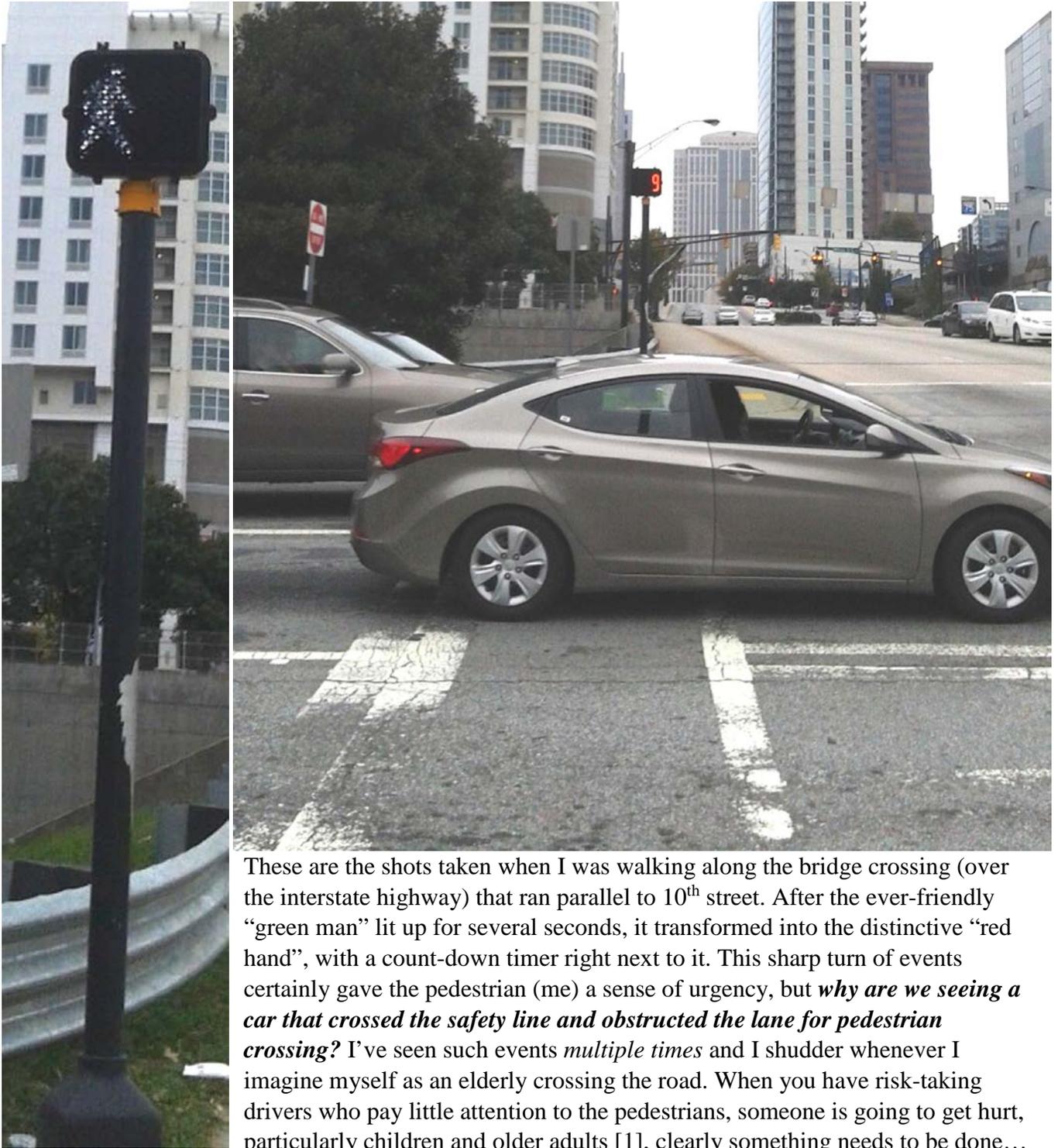


Title: **A Better Traffic Signaling System for Safer Pedestrian Crossing**

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These are the shots taken when I was walking along the bridge crossing (over the interstate highway) that ran parallel to 10th street. After the ever-friendly “green man” lit up for several seconds, it transformed into the distinctive “red hand”, with a count-down timer right next to it. This sharp turn of events certainly gave the pedestrian (me) a sense of urgency, but *why are we seeing a car that crossed the safety line and obstructed the lane for pedestrian crossing?* I’ve seen such events *multiple times* and I shudder whenever I imagine myself as an elderly crossing the road. When you have risk-taking drivers who pay little attention to the pedestrians, someone is going to get hurt, particularly children and older adults [1], clearly something needs to be done...

Why a safer system for pedestrian crossings is necessary:

There have been reports showing that older adults, when compared to younger adults, tend to take longer time to cross the road and spend more time looking at the ground than at near and far-side lane, and are less likely to survey the traffic around them when crossing the road [2]. There have also been traffic accidents that involved vehicle contacts with frail elderlies experiencing falls in the midst of road crossings [1]. Such incidents necessitate the need for a pedestrian crossing system that puts the safety of the elderly in first place.

What can be done for safer pedestrian crossings in Atlanta:

To ensure safer pedestrian crossings for older adults, I advocate a better traffic signaling system that renders stronger alerts to both pedestrian and drivers of the onset of the “green man” and the time required for the crossing.

One way of doing this is through the installation of a loudspeaker system that plays back mid- to high-frequency sounds. Different sounds would be attached to the appearance of the “green man” and the “red hand” respectively. The sounds related to the “red hand” could be time-locked to the appearance of the digits and have a faster rate of output or rhythmic flow compared to the sounds related to the “green man”. The quicker tempo of auditory sounds would inform pedestrians to hasten their footsteps. This method is definitely feasible as cities like Singapore with a substantial aging population had implemented such signaling systems. Having auditory signals not just gives pedestrians extra information about the duration of the crossing, but also gives drivers an audible warning to stop in front of the pedestrian lanes.

Moreover, another imminent issue pertains to the duration of the road crossing. Based on my observations, the lengths of many crossings are not in tune with the maximal time-limits that were programmed. The periods allocated to some longer crossings appear to be as long as or even shorter than the periods allocated to the shorter crossings. Therefore, changes ought to be made to ensure a well-distributed match of the times required for crossings to the corresponding lengths of such crossings. To estimate the times of the crossings, one way would be for Atlanta’s city planners to divide the length of each relevant crossing documented in the blue-prints of the city map over the mean walking speed of pedestrians that has been documented in the USA [3].

References

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