



Prescott Alternative Transportation

P.O. Box 2122, Prescott, Arizona 86302
www.prescottbikeped.org
(928) 708-0911

For immediate release

Contact Russ Willis
President, Prescott Alternative Transportation
phone 314.566.3386
e-mail rawillis3@juno.com

Prescott, Arizona, August 24, 2015

Action Urgently Needed to Improve Crosswalk Safety

Citing a recent incident in which a pedestrian was seriously injured, Prescott Alternative Transportation president Russ Willis said Monday the city urgently needs to take action to improve safety in downtown crosswalks.

"If we are going to invite people to come here and walk around the historic district, we ought to make it safe for them to do so," he said.

On Wednesday afternoon, August 5, a motorist struck a pedestrian in a crosswalk at the intersection of Gurley with Granite, during the "walk" signal phase, seriously injuring her. Police responding to the incident found the motorist disoriented and confused.

The motorist, who is 87 years old, later surrendered his driver license and will not be charged. The pedestrian is still in a hospital in Phoenix, recovering from surgery to stop a brain bleed.

The fact that the motorist in this particular case may have had cognitive issues does not mean there is nothing the city can or should do, Willis said. The underlying cause is that the motorist had a green light at the same time the pedestrian had a "walk" signal.

"Anyone who walks in downtown Prescott can tell you there is a problem with motorists not yielding to pedestrians in crosswalks," Willis said. "If we cannot rely on motorists to exercise appropriate judgment in this situation, we need to take the decision out of their hands entirely."

One possible approach, Willis said, would be to implement entirely separate signal phases for pedestrians and motorists at downtown intersections. This might take the form of a "scramble" phase, in which pedestrians could cross in any direction, including diagonally.

A "scramble" signal phase would also increase the visibility of pedestrians, Willis said, reinforcing the perception that public spaces belong to everyone, not just motorists.

Willis also suggested the city might explore banning right turns on red at key intersections.

Willis noted the state of Arizona does not require a driver, once licensed, to submit to even a written examination, much less a road test of driving skills, until age 65. A medical re-evaluation will not occur unless someone who has firsthand knowledge of specific circumstances warranting restriction or revocation of driving privileges makes a formal request of ADOT.

"We would like to see all that change as well," Willis said, "but that will require some heavy lifting at the state level. A separate signal phase for pedestrians is something we can do locally, with not much difficulty, and at not much cost," he said.

Prescott Alternative Transportation is a nonprofit membership organization working to improve bicycle and pedestrian access to public roadways in and around Prescott.

Contact Russ Willis, president, at rawillis3@juno.com. Any changes or updates will be posted to the PAT website, <http://prescottbikeped.org/>.