

Statement on the subject

Removal of pedestrian crossings

Graz, 21.01.2020

What is at issue

In Graz, protective crossings ("zebra crossings") are repeatedly removed - most recently in the district of Andritz on the way to school from the St. Gotthard bus stop to the St. Veit elementary school (see photo). The procedure is as described below:

1. It checks **how many people** use the pedestrian crossing on a given date.
2. If there are too few, **the pedestrian crossing is removed** - regardless of whether there are alternative pedestrian crossings in the vicinity; regardless of the maximum permitted speed; and regardless of the number of vehicles per hour.

Justification: **Drivers** do not expect pedestrians to cross the street here and are **not paying enough attention**. This increases the risk of accidents. This has been shown in studies and is also confirmed by the Board of Trustees for Road Safety.



Graph: Christian Jauschowitz (krone.at)



Consequences of this approach

Pedestrians who want to cross the road **must wait** until no more vehicles come from either direction. In contrast to pedestrian crossings, they now have **lower priority** and are therefore **to blame if something happens**.

The situation is particularly problematic for two groups:

- **Children:**

Children have **difficulty estimating the speed** of oncoming vehicles and are often **not paying enough attention**. Therefore, they are educated to cross roads only on pedestrian crossings. If these are missing, the parents' concern grows that the children will be run over. Consequence: Instead of letting them walk to school on their own, parents drive their children all the way to the school door. This increases the amount of traffic and creates an even more insecure situation for their own children and those of others.

- **People with impaired walking ability:**

Older people and wheelchair users in particular need **more time** to cross roads. They therefore **require particularly broad vision** if they want to cross a road without a pedestrian crossing. If someone is afraid of being run over, they choose other means of transport.

However, **walking is becoming less attractive** not only for children and people with impaired walking ability, but **also for everyone else**: waiting on a busy road increases the travel time for pedestrians, while comfort decreases (standing in exhaust fumes, noise, etc.). For motorised traffic, it is exactly the opposite: By removing the pedestrian crossing, you get ahead faster (no stopping) and more comfortably (no looking, no stopping, no waiting, no restarting).

Conclusion: *The removal of protective pedestrian crossings leads to a shift of pedestrian traffic to motorised traffic. This creates a self-reinforcing feedback: with every additional person who chooses to change, walking becomes even less attractive.*



What does the city want?

In order to be able to take the right measures on this question, a clear prioritisation is needed first: Does Graz want to promote A) walking or B) motorised traffic?

- A) **In order to encourage walking, fast, comfortable and safe routes must be provided for pedestrians.** This includes the crossing of busy roads, which is not possible without protective pedestrian crossings in the sense of these criteria.
- B) **In order to encourage motorised traffic, fast, convenient and safe routes must be created for drivers.** To achieve this, it is essential to remove all obstacles that prevent the fluidity of traffic as efficiently as possible - whether protective pedestrian crossings, traffic lights or speed limits.

The city must make this choice between A) and B) at every point where foot and motorised traffic meet. **With the implementation of protective pedestrian crossings, cities encourage people to walk, if these are not taken into account, cities further encourage car traffic.** It is not possible to do both at the same time (unless part of the traffic is moved one level lower or higher; however, this results in many other problems).

Conclusion: *In all municipal council agreements, the city of Graz declares itself in favour of strengthening walking and reducing motorised traffic. The removal of pedestrian crossings contradicts these agreements diametrically.*

What could be done?

One thing is clear: **the problem of unsafe pedestrian crossings must be solved.** In the sense of making walking more attractive and reducing motorised traffic, however, removing them is counterproductive. What else can be done?

First of all, it is important to recognise that **counting is the wrong method** for taking intelligent transport policy measures. Why? Because it is assumed that these traffic flows "exist anyway" - forgetting that every single transport policy measure changes the number of pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users and motorists.

Example: *If a city makes previously unsafe pedestrian crossings safer, more parents will let their children walk to school. If they are removed, there will be a decrease in the number of children walking to school.*



It is therefore completely irrelevant for transport policy decisions how many people use a particular pedestrian crossing on a single day. It is a question of whether or not there is a fundamental potential. It can be said that: **Along school routes, at public transport stops and in all populated areas there is a high potential for walking.** Cities can increase this potential by taking appropriate measures - or not, in which case traffic will shift to other, more attractive means of transport.

This results in the following proposals for measures:

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- 1. development of an attractive network of footpaths** (instead of counting the crossings): The city supplements the existing network of footpaths so that pedestrians can move quickly, comfortably and safely over the entire city. Safe pedestrian crossings are part of this network. They will be left in place or newly built where it is most conducive to the lightness and fluidity of pedestrian traffic (!).
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- 2. adaptation of motorised traffic** (instead of removing pedestrian crossings): For each crossing, the city develops a concept that guarantees a safe crossing for pedestrians. In addition to tried and tested instruments such as lights or middle islands, this also includes speed limits (30 km/h or less) and speed bumps, which ensure that the maximum permitted speed is maintained.
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Safe pedestrian crossings can be avoided if and only if the speed of motorised traffic is reliably reduced to below 20 km/h by appropriate construction measures or among other things by implementing residential streets.

Conclusion: *Safe pedestrian crossings are an essential element for a pedestrian-friendly city. If the city really wants to increase pedestrian traffic, it must increase both the number and the safety of the protective crossings - even if this means slowing down motorized traffic. The basis for this should be potential studies and accessibility analyses in which the needs of children, young people, the elderly and the people with disabilities are given priority.*