

Roads to Respect 2010, Students Final Report



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1-Definition of the High risk site

The high risk site is situated in Bielsko-Biala, a 200,000 city in the south of Poland. The problem making place lies on the road which links the city centre with highly attractive touristic region which consists of many mountain trails and water sports centers near a lake.



The selected high-risk site includes a short street section with a road junction and two pedestrian crossings with high pedestrian activity in



some periods of day. On the one side of the street we can find: a local market and a restaurant and on the other side there are a church and a primary school. There are also several houses on both sides of the street.



While driving from the city centre there is a long straight section of a too wide road which encourages drivers to increase their speed. The junction is situated on a curve, so there is a problem with visibility and perception. The pedestrian crossings are not properly secured. There is also a lack of refuge island or any other way of pedestrians' protection. Whatsmore people do not cross the road in the place they should. The situation is getting worse because of the cars which are parked in the very close surrounding of the junction.



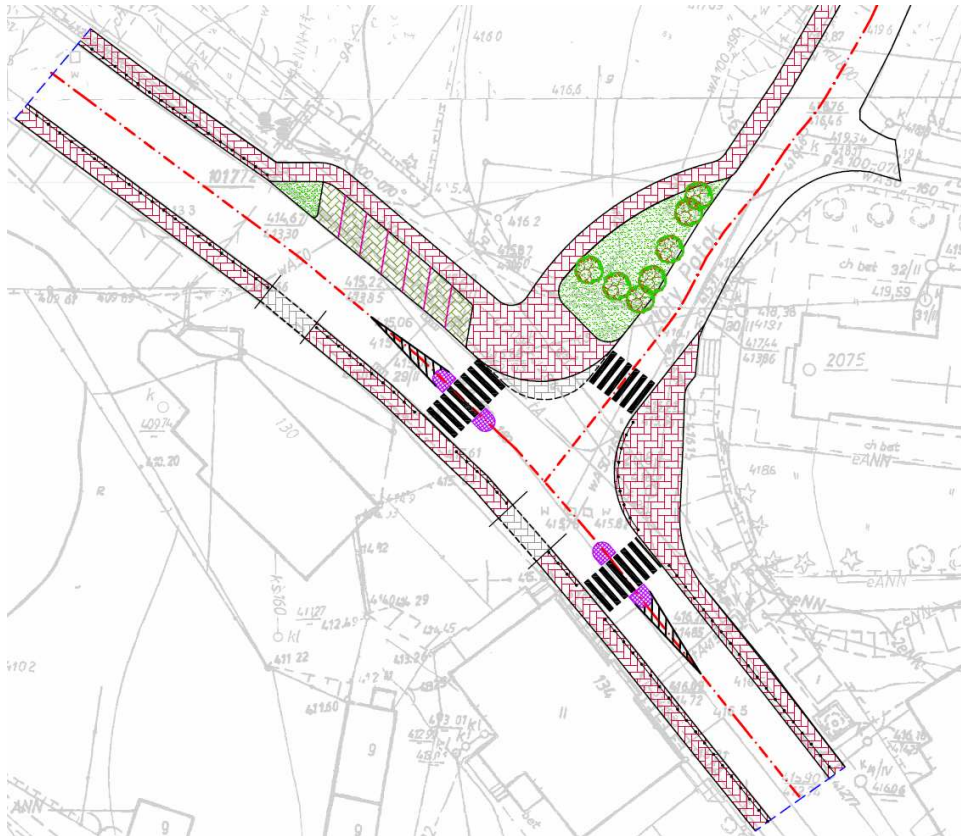
Another problem is the lack of sidewalk, so pedestrians can't walk safely neither to the church or to the primary school. There are many people trying to reach those buildings safely and they have to use the road among the driving vehicles.

Visits on the site showed also some problems with poor signing and marking. Next thing is that in front of a market there is a car park with poor visibility from cars leaving it. Some problems are related to vertical alignment and vertical visibility. Situation is even worse on Saturdays and Sundays after services in the church, as parking cars obstruct visibility. These problems are causing extremely dangerous situations in this area.



2- Project proposal to treat the selected high risk site

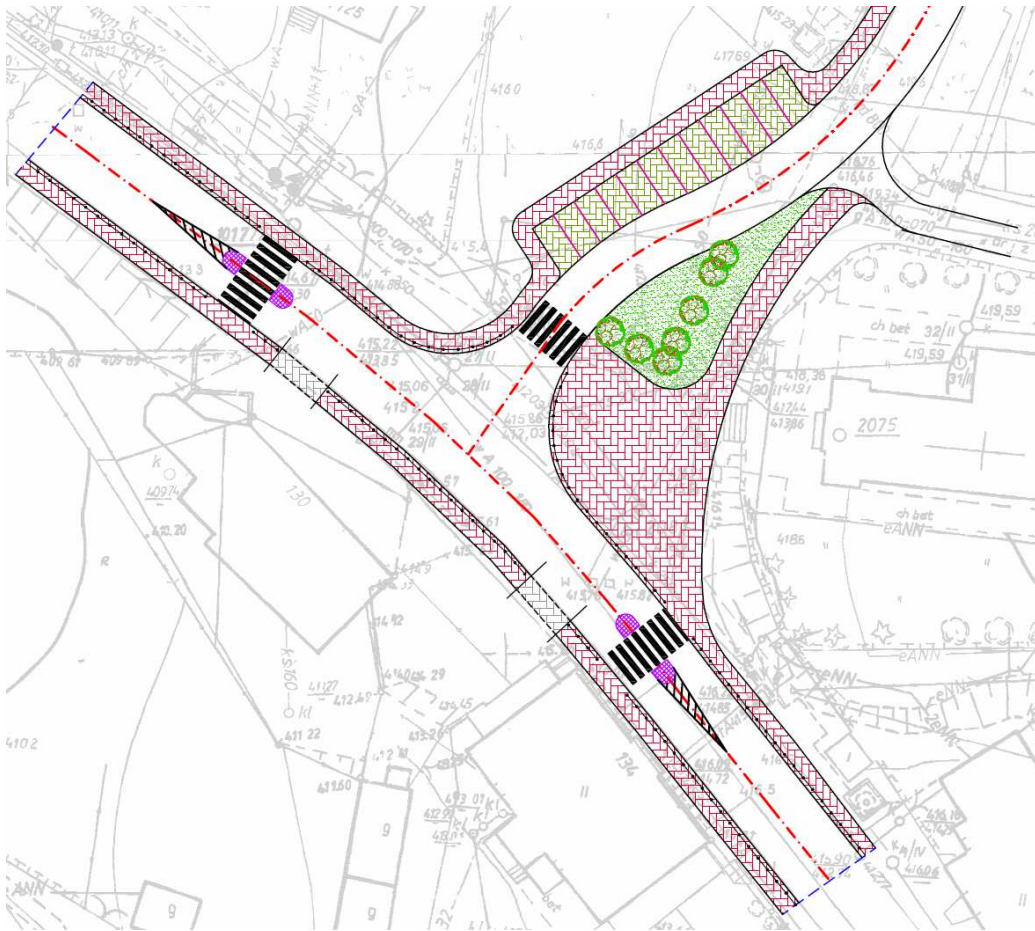
Situation on the site can be improved in several ways. I have prepared two propositions. They differ in costs of reconstruction, so the authorities could choose the version which is more suitable to their capabilities.



Drawing-Low cost version

In the low cost version the most important thing is to build a proper sidewalk to protect the pedestrians. It should provide safe access to the church then through the pedestrian crossing on the minor road up to the primary school. On the current painted sidewalk I would insert few parking places. The entry of the minor road should be narrowed to avoid parking and dangerous manoeuvres.

The more expensive version of the reconstruction is to change position of the junction by moving the side road. It would create a space for a nice square with some of existing trees in front of the church. We can't forget about the parking cars so my proposition is to build a parking along the minor road.



Drawing-High cost version

In both solutions it is very important to mount railings to prevent pedestrians from inappropriate crossing.

Another crucial aspect is to build the refuge islands on pedestrian crossing, which will protect people walking by, especially the youngsters (school pupils) and elderly people (faithful on their way to church). It will also be the perfect way of traffic calming. It will narrow the road which is way to wide in that section.

The last but not least is to correct all the signing and marking on the road. Now, the marking is hardly visible and there is e.g. no STOP sign on the side road.



Drawing-Visualization

3- Campaign to get the high risk site treated

Before I chose my high risk site I had contacted my University Professor and some road designers to find the place which is the real danger. Thanks to that I was working on a site which have many possible threats and many people might be interested in getting the problem treated. Strategy of my campaign was to begin with contacting the city roads administration to find out which version of reconstruction of the site is possible. I have contacted a local expert working in a City Development Office. He became interested in the project and offered his help in my campaign. He agreed to contact me with the real decision maker- the director of the City Roads Administration in Bielsko-Biała. The director was interested in my ideas. It turned out that the Roads Administration is aware of necessity of the reconstruction of my high risk site. His office prepared some propositions of designs. But because of the great number of road investments in Bielsko-Biała there was not enough money for the works on my high risk site. Roads Administration prepared a very tight schedule of building and repairs of roads in all the city. Many key streets in town are being renovated now. But hopefully there will be place for reconstruction of the junction which I chose in new yearly investments schedule prepared by the City Council.

At the very beginning of my campaign I wrote a letter to Police Department in Bielsko-Biała to get the accident data concerning my high risk site. After I received it I found out that despite the obvious neglects occurring on the site the amount of accidents was rather low in past few years. That's why this data was not helpful during the campaign. Though it does not mean that the site is not representing high risk in traffic safety. During the conversations I just couldn't use that kind of argument to convince people to act for change.

Another action was to talk to some inhabitants of Straconka district.

I wanted to know what they are thinking about my high risk site and what are their expectations from the reconstructed site.

I attended a meeting of a local District Council. During this meeting there was a talk about my high risk site. There was also an election for new council. The members of a new council as well as the old one claimed that the case of reconstruction of the junction is crucial for them. The inhabitants of Straconka district were aware of how dangerous this site was. They were complaining about cars speeding through the main street hindering the access to the church or to the primary school. Among the other important things for them, they really understood the necessity of rebuilding the site.

When I was gathering the information I found out that there was a local politician who promised that he will act for reconstruction of my problem making place before the election. Luckily he was elected and he is now the member of the City Council. I tried to contact him, but unfortunately I got no response from him. After this failure I kept looking for another local politician. I found one also from the Straconka District. He got interested in my campaign. I presented him the problem telling about my presentation and the camp in Brussels. I showed him my ideas of reconstruction. He asked for all my materials because he found them useful. He was already trying to gain attention of the decision makers in that problem. For now I did not get response from him about what were the results of his actions.

4-Achievements of the project

The situation on the site is almost the same as before my campaign. Only thing that is visible on the junction is the refreshed marking. As seen on the photos it improves the recognition of the junction and of the pedestrian crossings. It helps to choose the proper path of driving on the side road. But it is not a great improvement in the road safety. It is still a very dangerous place for pedestrians and still needs an urgent modification.



The main reason of why nothing has changed is that the City Roads Administration already had really intense plans of investments for that year. But they haven't found enough will to implement some changes of a really low cost that could improve the road safety. Not entire junction could be rebuild at once. All action could be divided into stages so not a big sum would be needed now. Unfortunately that did not work out and the site is still a threat.

The positive is that the decision makers are now aware that many people are interested in reconstruction and know that there is a great necessity of implementation the changes.

Another problem has appeared when I was trying to get the accident data from the Police Department. It showed that despite very irrational and dangerous behaviour of drivers and pedestrians in that area the number of collisions and accidents is very low.

I believe now there is a great chance that as soon there will be some money the situation on the site will be improved. Especially with the care of local politicians involved it is very plausible that the reconstruction will happen very soon. The first probable term is the spring next year.