



## The Oregonian

### Safety trumps costs: Crossings get stripes

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**By Fred Leeson**  
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No one knows whether white stripes on the pavement would have saved Sara Cogan.

Cogan, 66, the director of a Portland-based international student exchange program, had finished a late dinner at a restaurant when she started walking across Northwest 23rd Avenue at Quimby Street. A motorist who said she didn't see Cogan in the darkness and heavy rain of Jan. 31, 2006, inflicted fatal injuries.

Though Cogan was crossing legally under Oregon law, there were no stripes on the pavement to tell a motorist pedestrians might be present.

It was a contentious point for the Northwest District Association and the Nob Hill Business Association, which had been asking the Portland Office of Transportation for more marked crosswalks on the busy shopping streets of 21st and 23rd avenues.

The city had said no. Crosswalks are expensive to install and maintain, officials said, and motorists learn to ignore striped crosswalks that are too close together.

The two associations asked again after Cogan's death. With a prod from City Commissioner Sam Adams, the answer was different. Adams lobbied for \$40,000 from the City Council to add striped crosswalks in five neighborhood business districts, including Northwest.

"Our first priority is safety," Adams says. "We're going to make the neighborhoods safer than before."

Striped crosswalks were installed last week on 21st from Couch to Northrup streets and on 23rd from Marshall to Vaughn. Stripes will be installed on 23rd between Couch and Northrup when that portion of the street is rebuilt soon.

The city also removed some parking spaces near the crosswalks to improve sightlines.

Striped crossings have been installed on Northeast Alberta Street between 15th and 31st avenues. Other targets include Southeast Belmont Street between 30th and 39th avenues; Southeast Milwaukie Avenue between Tolman and Knapp streets; and Southwest Capitol Highway between 28th and 31st avenues.

Adams says the city is willing to consider other locations, but will analyze street widths and traffic volumes to see whether crossings are safe without signals. Putting a striped crossing on 82nd Avenue, for instance, "would be unsafe because it would give pedestrians a feeling of more confidence than they should have."

Kim Carlson, chairwoman of the Northwest District's transportation committee, says the stripes tell motorists that they're passing through a pedestrian-oriented neighborhood. Adams says the crosswalks also show pedestrians the proper places to cross.

The stripes are made of plastic pellets melted into goo at 425 degrees and sprayed on the asphalt. Reflective beads are then sprayed on top. The stripes should last three to five years. The Northwest crossings were welcome to Sandra Diedrich, a former neighborhood association president who rides a powered scooter because of acute asthma.

"I'm dependent on crosswalks for safety," she says. "I'm really thrilled."

Fred Leeson: 503-294-5946; fredleeson@news.oregonian.com

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