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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Time for common-sense safety steps

To the editor,

With all the recent emphasis placed on public safety in the Saugatuck area, I believe one aspect of it needs attention: the safety of our pedestrians, walkers, runners, scooters and bicycles. The corner of Blue Star Highway and Lake Street at the entrance to the City of Saugatuck is especially dangerous. An accident that just happened there emphasizes the problem.

Each season we invite tens of thousands of tourists to visit our town. Those of us who live here know we need to be extra cautious when driving while they are around. When driving down Butler Street one's top speed should never exceed 10 to 15 mph, because you never know when a group of tourists may wander into the street, oblivious to their new surroundings.

The same is true on the Blue Star. We rent these tourists, scooters and bicycles and they will be walking, jogging and pushing babies in strollers. Blue Star and Lake Street is especially busy. Anyone attempting to turn left onto Blue Star during August can attest to this.

The other day I saw a family of six bicycling north on the Blue Star Bridge. The youngest daughter looked around 10 years old. I saw them approaching the sign two thirds of the way across the bridge which reads, "Bike Lane Ends."

The question they faced is, "Where do we go from here?" There is no safe answer. At this point there is a turn lane onto Lake Street into downtown. The through lane veers right and the shoulder narrows to about 15 inches. Nothing here makes sense.

A very simple and safe answer would be to erect a traffic light at this intersection, put in crosswalks and replace the almost-useless fourth lane that was restriped when you turn right off Lake onto the Blue Star with a proper bike lane.

For years I have spoken with Saugatuck City Council members about this. Their answer is a traffic study performed several years ago concluded that a light would just slow down traffic. My response is, "Isn't that what we want?"

When coming from the north on Blue Star, you round a curve and go downhill toward the bridge. The speed limit drops from 50 to 35 mph just at this intersection. One will often see a police officer parked there waiting to catch potential speeders.

Would it not be a better use of resources to have a stoplight there that would naturally slow down traffic so the police could be freed to perform duties elsewhere?

Another strange argument I have heard is that if you created a proper bike lane, the yellow-striped center lane on the bridge that currently cannot be used for traffic would have to be eliminated. If this happens, some have said, where will emergency vehicles go when crossing the bridge?

I say this is strange because the bridge won't get smaller. When emergency vehicles approach, either now with the center lane or not, traffic must pull over to the side and allow the emergency vehicles to pass. Most of Blue Star is only two lanes wide and traffic must pull when emergency vehicles go by anyway. The bridge width will stay the same no matter how it is striped and there's plenty of room for traffic to pull to the sides and let emergency vehicles pass.

Now the season is winding down, this would be the best time to re-engineer the bridge traffic flow and the Lake/ Blue Star intersection. We need to add a light, crosswalks and bike lane to make it safer and more friendly for all who use it.

Lives are at stake. It would be foolish to wait for something tragic to happen.

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**Saugatuck Township**