

2026 Texas Institute for
Transportation Engineers Conference

How Vision Zero Can Put Zero-Vision Pedestrians at Risk:

Understanding Leading Pedestrian
Intervals from a Non -Visual
Perspective



**Suzette
May** LLC

Bridge Gaps. Build Access. See Possibilities.

Presented by:
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Overview

- How blind pedestrians know when it's safe to cross.
- How one successful safety treatment can unintentionally create challenges for pedestrians who navigate non-visually.
- How every pedestrian can reach the other side of the street safely, even those navigating without sight.

Suzette May



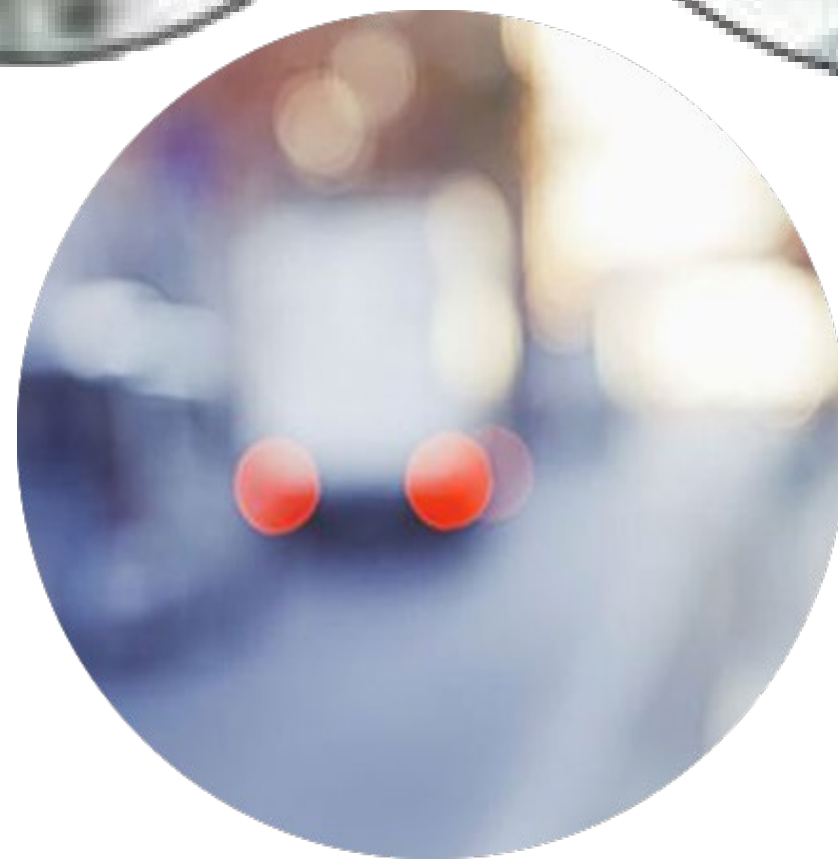
Suzette May is a disability advocate and Environmental Access Consultant based in Waco, Texas. Her work focuses on improving accessibility and safety, particularly for pedestrians who are blind or low vision. She completed her undergraduate honors thesis on Accessible Pedestrian Signals and holds a B.A. in Disability Studies from Arizona State University. She is currently pursuing a Master's in Orientation & Mobility at Western Michigan University. She serves on state and national pedestrian committees and travels nationwide often with her Seeing Eye Dog, Fred.



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A Blind Perspective



Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPI)

LPI Safety Concept

- Pedestrians receive WALK Interval 5-7 seconds ahead of vehicular green signal
- Pedestrians are well into the crosswalk by the time vehicles start moving,
- LPIs improve pedestrian visibility and reduce turning conflicts for sighted pedestrians but actually increase risk for visually impaired pedestrians.



Nonvisual Intersection Navigation

Intersection geometry

Traffic Direction

Near Parallel Surge

Accessible
Pedestrian
Signal



Blind pedestrians read intersections through sound and movement.

The Key Clue



Photo: Alfasi / Shutterstock

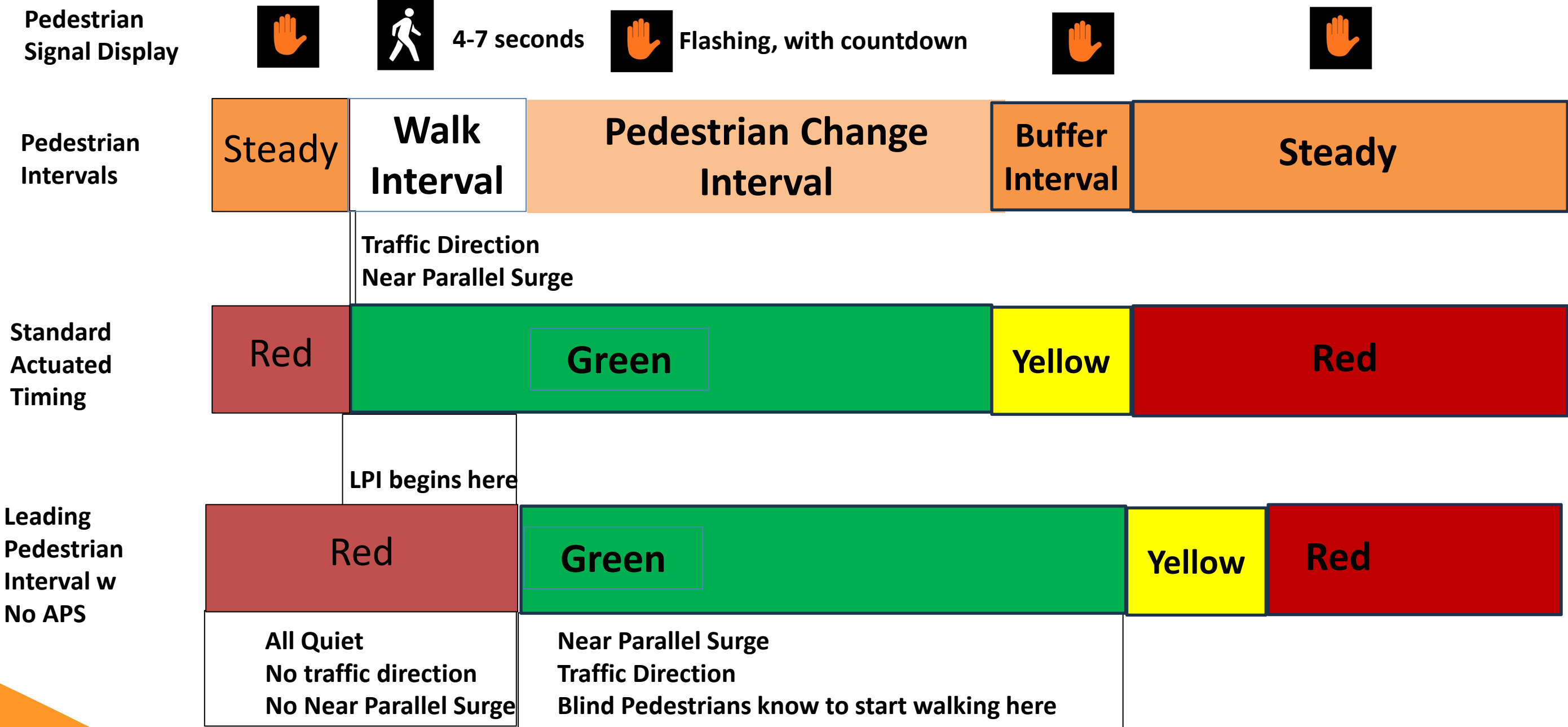
Parallel traffic surge = confirmation to cross



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The Conflicting Information



Why Audible is Critical

Make the visual information audible

Without APS

- **Blind and low vision pedestrians miss the walk interval completely**
- **They continue to wait for the usual sound cues**
- **This puts them out in the intersection when drivers do not expect pedestrians to be there**

With APS

- **The walk interval is clearly communicated audibly for blind, low vision, and deafblind pedestrians.**
- **They can begin crossing with the walk interval at the safest point in an LPI**
- **They can cross at the right time with no ambiguity for pedestrians or drivers**





Actionable Steps

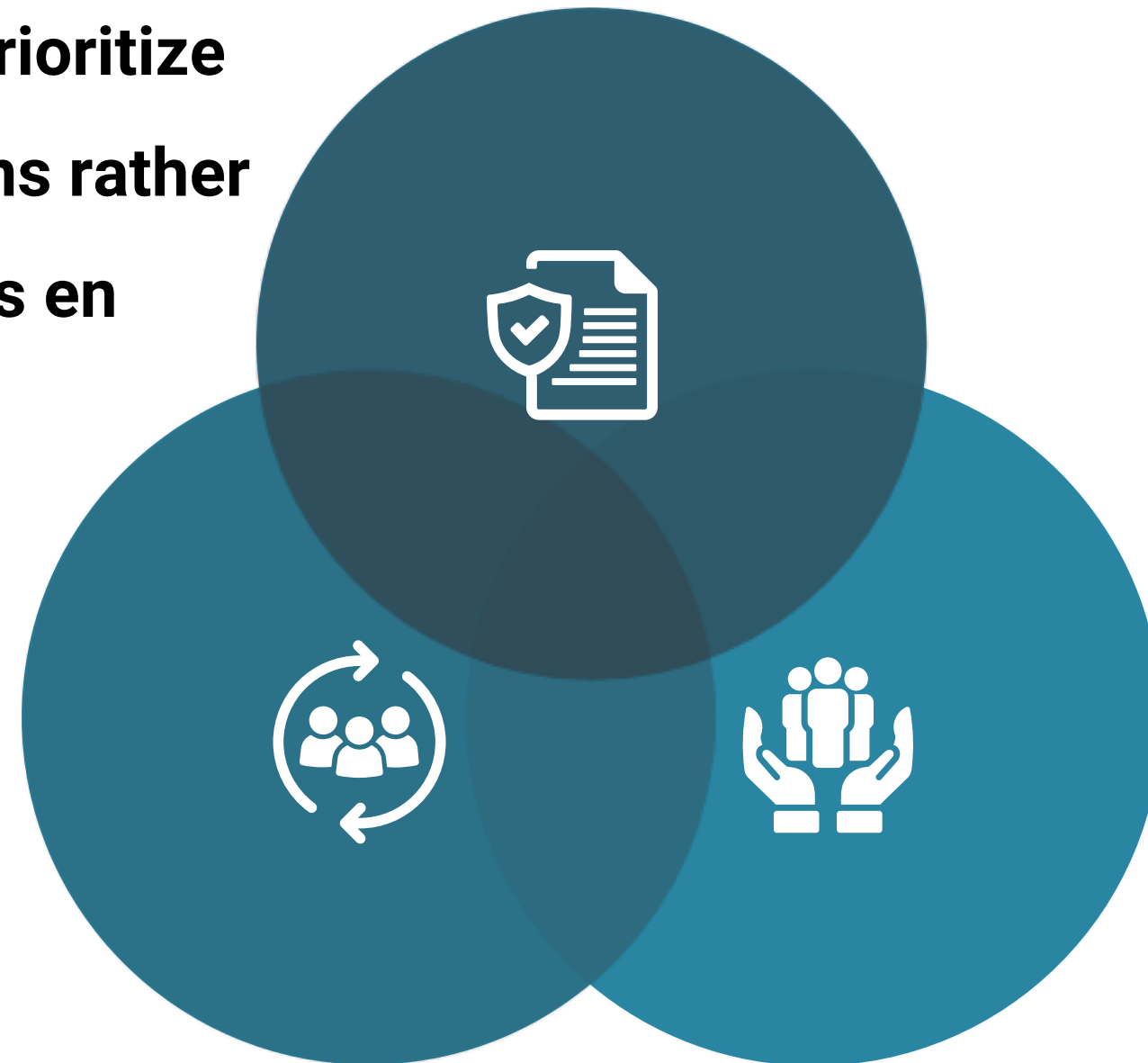
Prioritize

- Do an engineering study, even just a quick one, to prioritize high-risk intersections rather than changing to LPIs en masse.

Changing Signal

Timing Remotely

- Check that APS are present, working, and adjusted to LPI timing as well.



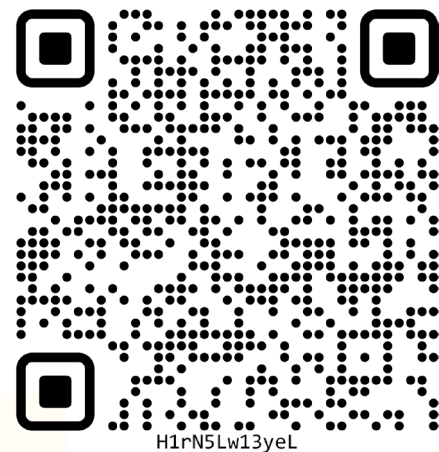
Room for APS

- Prioritizing intersections ensures that there is room in the budget for APS at every changed intersection

**Zero should
be zero for
everyone**



THANK YOU



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