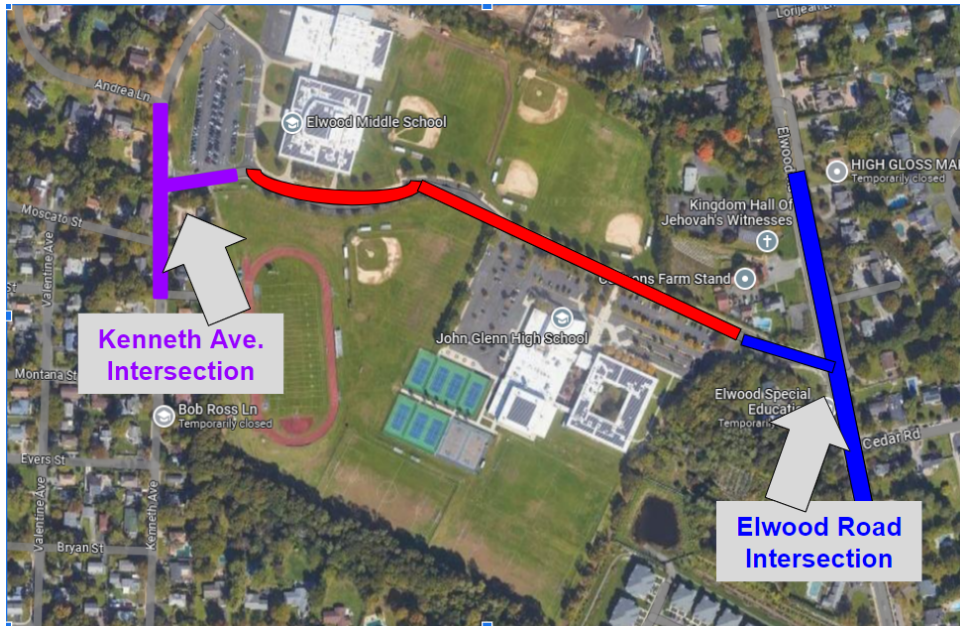


2023 Lowell Wolf Memorial Scholarship: James Rourke



At Elwood-John H. Glenn High School, located at 478 Elwood Rd, Elwood, NY 11743, the school day starts at 7:26 AM and ends at 2:36 PM. Naturally, the single-laned access road (as highlighted in red) connecting Kenneth Avenue and Elwood Road is often near capacity in the 15 minutes before the first bell and 15 minutes following the last. The access road serves the shared grounds of both the middle and high school buildings and grounds, further emphasizing the congestion despite staggered start and end times between the schools.

There are two main intersections to enter and exit school grounds: a southeast intersection with Elwood Road (blue) and a northwest intersection with Kenneth Avenue (purple). Both intersections are T-Shaped and have crossing guards in the short arrival and departure periods of the school day, but this is where the similarities end.

The Elwood Road intersection has a traffic light, and right hand turns are not allowed during the school hours of 7:00 AM and 6:00 PM. The crosswalks are painted bright white, and there is a wide, smooth sidewalk that was redone within the last three years. The school crossing signs are in full view of motorists from all directions, and a school zone speed limit is also in place. While a slight majority of the high school arrives to school through this direction, the appropriate safety measures are currently in place to adequately protect pedestrians and motorists, and a crossing guard is present in the morning as well.

On the other hand, the Kenneth Avenue intersection is not as safe for pedestrians and motorists for four main reasons: the lack of an all-way stop sign (the single stop sign is for motorists leaving the access road and turning either direction onto Kenneth Avenue), no painted lines to separate directions on the access road, a decrepit sidewalk that is full of obstructions, and the inhibiting nature of plant growth around the intersection. I use this intersection at least twice

a school day, and I have witnessed screeching stops, speeding cars, and rolls through the stop sign more than necessary.

This image is a view of the intersection from the south side of Kenneth Avenue. During my three periods of surveillance, there were a few key observations I would like to mention. I found that 30% of drivers did not completely stop at the intersection, and another 55% of drivers did not stop for the full, three second pause. This leaves only 15% of motorists adequately following stop sign standards. I often noticed late blinkers and quick, sharp turns, which often confused other motorists and nearby pedestrians. For pedestrians, I often noticed student walkers trusting drivers once they began their walk, often looking down at their phones or listening to music. In some of these situations, pedestrians did not make eye contact with the motorists on the road, which can prove dangerous.



I would advise for a few cosmetic and signage changes in the area. First, it would be helpful to clear out the bushes and tree growth on the noted corner of the intersection to make cars coming from the south direction of Kenneth Avenue. This would directly coincide with New York State's *See! Be Seen!* Campaign. Signage could also be used to remind pedestrians to look all ways when approaching the crosswalk and cross without being distracted by their phones and earbuds or headphones. I would propose to keep the main crosswalk, but the crosswalk should be repainted and Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) should be added to the pedestrian warning signs as well. RRFBs would be activated by pedestrians or the crossing guard, and it would light up to alert motorists of people on the crosswalk.



Next, two additional stop signs should be placed on Kenneth Avenue to make it an all-way stop intersection, and white lines should make it clear where the stop line actually is in all three directions.

Additionally, the school zone signage should be much more prominent, including a reduced speed limit near the intersection and school grounds. This would encourage safe, defensive driving, and lower the overall risk level of the intersection, especially when coupled with stop signs for every direction. Lastly, it would be of importance to pedestrians, especially students arriving and leaving school grounds, to have an unobstructed sidewalk along the length of Kenneth Avenue,



free of major cracks and tree overgrowth, to allow for students living nearby to have a safer walk home.

In reading about the Three E's of safe streets — engineering, enforcement, and education — as published jointly by the New York State Departments of Transportation and Health and the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee, my suggestions mainly fall within the engineering component. By changing the intersection structure, I see this focus as having the most tangible benefits. As with enforcement, the crossing guard is present at the intersection in the busiest periods, and further enforcement, like permanent cameras or consistent police presence, may be too much of a commitment of time and money. Lastly, my suggestions touch the education component with signage for pedestrians. For instance, there should be signs to remind pedestrians to look both ways and limit audio and visual distractions as they cross.

With all of these changes, there is an ability for the intersection between Kenneth Avenue and school grounds access road to be made significantly safer for pedestrians and motorists alike.