

A VOICE FROM AMAKOM

Kumasi, Ghana



The Call for Safer Streets

John Manu, a 57-year-old shop owner, has spent the last 15 years running his business just 30 meters from the Amakom Intersection, one of Kumasi's busiest intersections. He has witnessed countless crashes, near-misses, and several moments where all types of road users struggle to navigate the intersection safely, especially the most vulnerable ones, the pedestrians and cyclists. The critical situation also extends to the area around the intersection. The Kumasi Technical Institute (KTI) and the T.I. Ahamadiyaa Secondary School have become hotspots for road crashes, that involve the pedestrians reaching these facilities.

“This stretch is one characterized by high driver speeds, and offers little regard for crossing pedestrians. Hardly does a month or two go by without hearing about the occurrence of some form of crash.” - John Manu

Many of these crashes involve crossing pedestrians, who are especially vulnerable against speeding cars. Given the lack of crossing infrastructure, they must rely on small gaps in traffic to cross, and then they must do it rather quickly, as approaching cars very often do not slow down. With the focus in one direction, pedestrians might overlook vehicles coming from the other directions, leading to fatal collisions.

According to John, the solution to this problem lies in two potential options: One would be an elevated crossing that would allow pedestrians to navigate the intersection safely.

Vendors stand in front of their kiosks around the intersection.



He is quick to add, however, that elevated crossings are rarely used by majority of pedestrians, and not always accessible or inclusive to all types of pedestrians.

African data shows that the vast majority prefers to cross directly at road level facing the dangers of approaching cars than walking up and down the stairs to cross safely.

What is the real alternative then? The second option, perhaps more feasible, is to enhance the existing crossing points by adding dedicated pedestrian traffic signals, changing the intersection design to reduce the crossing distance, and adjusting speeds.

These would compel drivers to stop, giving pedestrians the time and space to cross securely. Improving this intersection is crucial, not only for safety but for the community as a whole. Several key locations are placed near it, generating significant pedestrian activity.

“Schoolchildren, in particular, face daily risks when trying to cross, and it’s heartbreaking to see such hazards threatening their journey to and from school.”

With support from UN-Habitat and ITDP, Dr. Emmanuel Dzisi, a lecturer at the KNUST, led a collaborative effort with his research team, the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (KMA), and the Department of Urban Roads (DUR) to develop an optimized pedestrian crossing system for the Amakom Intersection.

The system incorporates dedicated pedestrian signals and strategically enhances crossing points to ensure controlled vehicular stoppage and safe pedestrian movement.

Additionally, traffic microsimulations were conducted in PTV VISSIM to evaluate the impact of these interventions on vehicular traffic, ensuring they do not inadvertently lead to excessive travel time delays or increased congestion for vehicular traffic.

For now, John concludes, “the best way forward is to prioritise a pedestrian traffic signal system coupled with well-marked and accessible crossing lanes”.

By addressing key road user needs while maintaining traffic efficiency, this approach represents a technically robust and practical solution for improving pedestrian safety.

Outcome and results

The implementation of this system has already led to a significant reduction in pedestrian-vehicle conflicts at the intersection.

Motorists are now more likely to stop at crossings, and pedestrians feel safer navigating the area. Early observations indicate improved traffic flow, reduced jaywalking, and increased compliance with crossing signals. This intervention not only enhances safety but also sets a precedent for similar pedestrian-friendly improvements across Kumasi, offering key lessons for policymakers, researchers and agencies in charge of road safety.

