

Chase Ranch Montessori School (1090 South Anza St.)  
Ray & Jill Lutz (1010 Old Chase Ave)  
619-820-5321

February 25, 2014

TO: El Cajon City Council  
c/o City Manager Douglas Williford  
CC: Cajon Valley School District

RE: TRAFFIC PROBLEMS NEAR ANZA SCHOOL

1. Our business, Chase Ranch Montessori School, is on the corner of Chase Ave. and Anza St, and within the city limits of El Cajon. It has been struggling with the traffic problems brought on by Anza Elementary School, which is across Anza St. from our school. We also consider these traffic problems to be a general safety concern for the community.



*Illustration 1: Both directions on Anza come to a standstill as cars attempt to enter Anza School pickup area. Buses drive in the wrong lane to get to the bus loading zone, which is down the street, because the right lane to the right of the picture gets completely stopped.*

2. In the past several years, the number of students at Anza School has increased due to the closure

of Ballantyne Elementary. Traffic during drop off and pick up brings Anza Street to a standstill. People park along nearby streets which are not designed for such parking. Students are subjected to dangerous situations as they walk to those cars, open doors, and get in, sometimes from the street side of vehicles.

3. Anza Street is extremely narrow, and allows parking along the sides of the street. There is no room for doors opening when cars are passing. Some cars pass in the other lane during drop off and pick up times. Buses almost always do this.
4. Our parking lot is sometimes used by Anza School parents for a turnaround, others block the driveway, others use our clients' parking spaces. Our business was required to construct a parking lot with enough parking for our clients. Unfortunately, Anza School does not have to comply with the same parking lot requirements. It is difficult and sometimes unnerving for the teachers at our school to confront those parents attempting to park in our lot and pick up their children from Anza School, when we also have to try to reserve those spaces for our parents.
5. This is a safety issue. I have witnessed a child die before my eyes when the car he was in turned left onto Anza Street from east-bound Chase and was then T-boned by a truck traveling West on Chase. A left-turn signal was added years ago to reduce traffic deaths, but traffic gridlock continues, and the danger still exists.
6. We have presented this information to Cajon Valley School District Board and Superintendent. They have been cooperative but can only do so much. I am bringing this to the attention of the El Cajon City Council and staff because I understand it also operates as the Traffic Commission, and it is important that you are aware of the safety implications. We hope that you can work closely with Anza School to improve the traffic flow. The school district will also receive this letter as I am suprised to see no safety patrols in use.
7. Across Chase Ave, Anza St. becomes Old Chase Ave. The west side of this street is the City of El Cajon and the east side is the County. They painted the double-yellow line in the center of the street, and this does NOT provide enough room for a parked car plus traffic to pass without going into the other lane. Coupled with students getting in and out, sometimes opening doors into the traffic lane, results in a very dangerous situation. The problem is that the width of the street on the county side does not include any space for parking, just a traffic lane. On city side, the concept is parking would be accommodated as well as a traffic lane. Years ago, the double-yellow line was repainted in the middle of the street instead of being offset to one side. This makes the width of the lane insufficient for both parking and traffic on the city side.



*Illustration 2: Lane on Old Chase is too narrow to fit a car plus parked car. These parents park here and then cross Chase Ave. to pick up their children to avoid the gridlock on Anza.*



*Illustration 3: Cars routinely cross double-yellow on Old Chase*



*Illustration 4: Another example of cars crossing into oncoming traffic*



*Illustration 5: Yet another example*



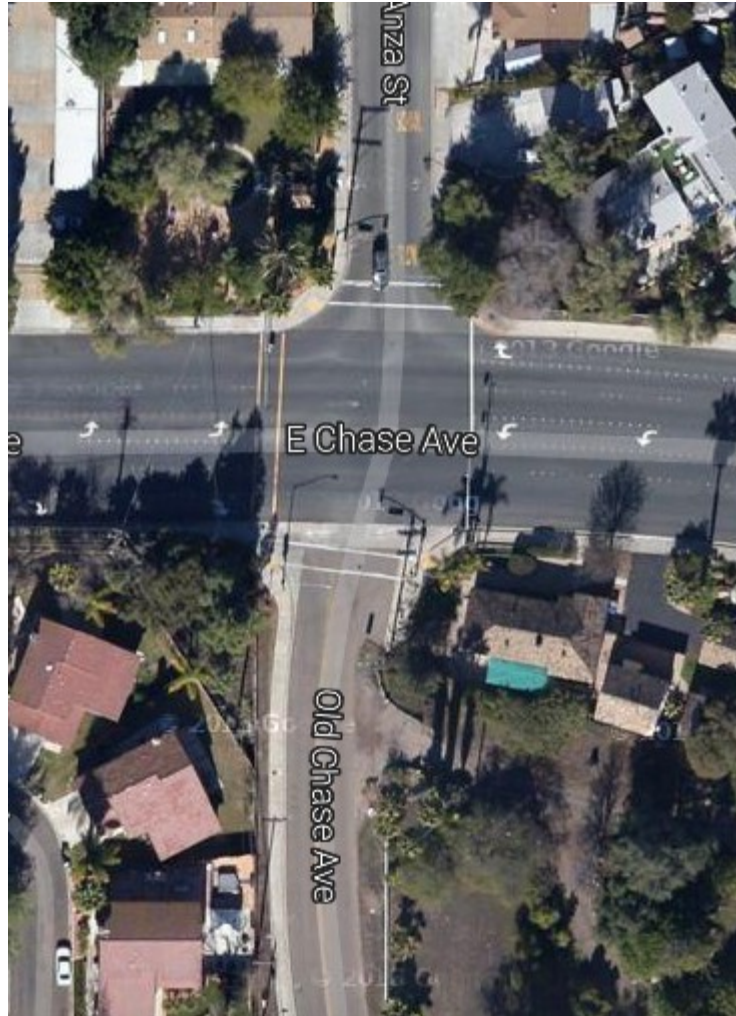
*Illustration 6: Parents open their doors into narrow traffic lane. Cars coming around the corner can't see congestion. If they have to stop, they will extend out into the intersection.*



*Illustration 7: This man parks his Mercedes on the corner so it is impossible to turn onto Old Chase*



*Illustration 8: Note that there is a survey Monument designating logical center of the street (edge of El cajon) but it is far from double-yellow lane marking. If lane marking were moved to this monument, then there may be enough room for parked cars and a traffic lane. But it looks like then, there is not enough room on the other side.*



*Illustration 9: This satellite view of Anza and Old Chase show how the street narrows on the Old Chase side, and does not line up with lanes on Anza side. This results in accidents when traffic turning east on Chase from Anza assume traffic in the through lane from Old Chase are turning left onto west-bound Chase Ave.*

The following suggestions may help the situation on Old Chase:

1. One solution would be to eliminate parking on the west side of Old Chase Ave. as there is insufficient space. Redline the street unless it is wide enough to fit both parked cars and traffic in the lane.
2. It may be possible to move the double-yellow line east to provide enough room for parking on the west side and allowing one traffic lane on the east side. This would also allow the northbound lane to align better with the line on the north side of the street. See the picture showing that the lane marking is about six feet from the monument designating the edge of El Cajon and the logical center of the street (if it were widened to the same width on the county side of the street.)

3. As we own the property at 1010 Old Chase Ave, we are willing to work with the city to improve the transition from the narrow county lane to the wider city width. Our property is opposite the narrow lane on Old Chase. It will probably be necessary to coordinate with the County as well.
8. When traffic gets tight on Anza Street, cars arriving from the north on Anza Street back up. Cars leaving going north frequently want to turn left onto Gray Dr., or are blocked by pedestrians on the crosswalk. Southbound cars back up as they arrive and make it impossible for cars that want to turn left onto Gray St. and thereby leave the school area. Without those cars leaving, no space is provided for the southbound cars, and the traffic pattern gridlocks. Additionally, there is a crosswalk at this location which also stops traffic from leaving.
9. We noted that there was no safety patrol at any crosswalks (when I reviewed this on Feb. 27, 2014). These used to be standard when I was in elementary school, and an opportunity for older students in the school to have a role in providing pedestrian safety. We note that the patrols could ease traffic problems if pedestrians are not allowed to constantly cross but are allowed to cross only in bunches.
10. We also noted many people crossing Anza directly across from Anza school without using a crosswalk to cars parked on the other side of the street. Since the northern crosswalk is way down at Gray Dr., it is hard to insist that people use the crosswalks. If the crosswalk is regulated, people may just cross the street at any random location.
11. Many drivers get stuck in this traffic and have to wait up to 30 minutes just to get down the street. Frustrated drivers frequently turn around in the street to go the other way. Some do so after loading kids into their cars. Anza St. is the first through street in El Cajon from Chase Ave to Washington, but there is no warning to drivers that the street is gridlocked every day at drop-off and pickup times.





*Illustration 10: This is the corner of Gray Dr. on the right and Anza St. Cars enter from Gray Dr. and compete with cars heading south on Anza. Cars that want to turn left onto Gray Dr. are sometimes blocked by cars going south, like this Lexus SUV. Cars that want to go straight are blocked by people randomly crossing without any safety patrol.*



*Illustration 11: Complicating matter further, this school bus also wants to turn onto south-bound Anza from Gray Dr.*

The following suggestions may help traffic flow out of the congested area:

1. The first and obvious improvement would be to resurrect the safety patrols we used to have in elementary school. By regulating crossing to specific times, this could allow traffic to more easily leave the area, and thus also enter the area too. Counter argument to that is that people will just cross Anza randomly, which they do anyway because the crosswalk at Gray Dr. is so far away from the school.
2. One change that might help is to prohibit left turns onto Gray Dr., particularly during school hours. Traffic can easily continue down to Merritt Dr. and turn left there. Traffic does not back up to Merritte Dr. so there is no difficulty in making those left turns at that point.
3. Alternatively, another change is to paint a "keep clear" zone in the intersection so incoming (southbound) traffic will not block outgoing traffic, and left turns can continue to proceed even when traffic does back up.
4. Moving the crosswalk to the other (north) side of Gray St. can allow traffic to turn left on

Gray St. even when students are crossing the crosswalk. (Or, the crosswalk could be moved further south, closer to the school so it is not by Gray Dr, and thus not blocking traffic as it leaves)

12. City should discuss the situation with Cajon Valley School district as they have had some other ideas, such as possibly eliminating parking along Anza in the northbound approach to Anza School, as now, the extend out into Chase Ave.

Thank you for your kind attention to this serious safety matter.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ray Lutz', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ray Lutz