



## Winter Storm Watch

### Letter:

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By Scott Thompson, P.E., MnDOT District 7 Traffic Engineer; Tim Stahl, P.E., Jackson County Engineer; Chief Anthony Fauglid, Heron Lake Police Department; Capt. Casey Meagher, Minnesota State Patrol

Highway 60 intersection safety upgrades are coming to Heron Lake in 2019. The public is encouraged to attend a design open house set for Monday, March 26 from 7 p.m. at the Heron Lake City Hall to review current plans and ask questions of city, county and state staff.

We (MnDOT, Jackson County, Heron Lake and Minnesota State Patrol) have a problem. It's a problem that can't be solved by signing, reducing speed limits or increasing enforcement. MnDOT and Jackson County have implemented all of the proven, low-cost solutions available, yet motorists crossing Highway 60 are still getting hurt and, worse yet, dying. Motorists are able to successfully cross the near set of Highway 60 lanes, but end up getting hit by traffic in the far set of lanes. Experience shows that the vast majority of motorists fail to stop in the median before crossing the far set of lanes — regardless of the space available in the median. If all motorists would stop in the median before crossing the far set of lanes, we would not have a crash problem.

The upcoming Heron Lake Reduced Conflict U-Turn (RCUT) solution is a collaborative project that requires no additional land, and is funded wholly by

MnDOT. Most importantly, it will solve the crash problem by preventing the possibility of far side right angle (T-Bone) crashes.

RCUTs, also known as J-turns, prevent this serious crash type while still allowing for all traffic movements and access. Nothing changes for Highway 60 traffic. They can still turn left/right as they do today. Crossroad traffic may also continue to turn right as they do today. If crossroad traffic wants to cross Highway 60 or turn left on to Highway 60, they cross the near set of lanes and then immediately enter a dedicated left turn lane (which starts at the intersection) and then use the dedicated lane to U-turn approximately 800' from the intersection.

More than 13 RCUTs have been constructed in Minnesota, in both urban and rural areas, at intersections that previously had fatal and/or serious injury crash problems. After 20+ years of post-construction crash data, neither a fatal nor serious injury crash has occurred at any RCUT in Minnesota. Total crashes at the RCUT intersections have also decreased.

One-third of the RCUTs in Minnesota are present in agriculturally based areas, and are designed to accommodate semis and agricultural equipment. Studies show that RCUTs improve safety for these large vehicles.

While the RCUT solution is a newer treatment, it isn't an experiment. It's a proven solution that's designed to perpetuate access for Heron Lake, while ensuring the intersections can handle the increased traffic that the future will bring. Most importantly, the RCUT solution will solve the crash problems that have plagued Heron Lake.

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