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Poor urban design could be at fault for Uber driverless car crash

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Uber's self-driving cars are grounded after a fatal accident over the weekend — but a Cato Institute article questions if bad urban design was really to blame. Elaine Herzberg, the woman killed, seems to have been using a pedestrian path, which the institute described as poorly designed, before attempting to cross a street.

A fatal accident in Tempe, Arizona involving an Uber driverless car left in its wake questions about the safety of autonomous vehicles. But it seems “the accident could not have been prevented no matter who was in control of the car,” according to Randal O'Toole for the Cato Institute.

Herzberg was reportedly walking on a roadway median before stepping out into traffic — and the Uber car, which did have a backup driver at the wheel, didn't even have a moment to brake. The Cato Institute shared an aerial view, seen below, of Herzberg's probable path. In between the northbound and southbound lanes of North Mill Avenue, there's a median strip with a paved pedestrian path. There's a sign, seen via Google Maps, indicating no pedestrians, telling them to use a crosswalk — so pedestrians or cyclists using the trails aren't supposed to walk over the strip. But the Cato Institute pointed out the pedestrian path saves almost two-tenths of a mile, making it a tempting alternative for people walking or biking.

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