

[Quinn Howard and Rose Gilbert greeting one another:

QH: Hey

RG: Hi! Nice to meet you

QH: Nice to meet you

RG: Is this the new dog you were telling about

QH: Yeah, this is my buddy Yuri]

QH: Hey, my name is Quinn Howard and I am 27 years old and I was born with “RP,” also known as retinitis pigmentosa.

RG: Quinn has central vision in his right eye, and almost none in his left. He’s a longtime pro at navigating using a cane and just three weeks ago he got Yuri, who is his very first guide dog

One of the things Yuri is trained to do when they’re out and about together is find the curb where Quinn will need to cross the street and stop

QH: Find the curb, up boy, find the curb. Forward, to the curb. Good boy!

RG: Specifically, Yuri stops on top of the truncated domes. These are textured strips that kind of look like the top of a lego piece. They have bumps on top that let Quinn know he has reached a crossing point, and the direction of the bumps point him in the direction he needs to cross.

QH: I can feel the texture with my feet [sound of QH scraping at the truncated domes with his shoes] So I would find this and orient myself with, OK am I keeping straight here? Am I turning right or left? And then keep going.

RG: Quinn can’t drive, and Murfreesboro, which is where he lives, does not have a door-to-door paratransit system like Davidson County. That means getting around on foot is a huge part of his life.

But the infrastructure around him doesn’t always make it easy. There’s one intersection in particular that he crosses a lot that’s actually very dangerous for him. Part of the problem – the curb is rounded and the truncated dome is smack dab in the middle of it, pointing diagonally directly into the intersection and straight into traffic.

QH: I hate this with a passion - I don’t know where to line up sometimes

RG: Oh, and I notice they've got the better oh, crosswalk buttons here.

QH: They have that but it doesn't have any sound.

RG: So the crossing guard here, you can press it and

QH: You can push it, and visually it'll tell you to do a countdown. But for me, it doesn't doesn't work for auditory. There's one here and several on down on the neighboring streets. Same issue. They don't beep

RG : So they've got the truncated domes which popped up on the curb, but it'll point right into traffic and they've got the crosswalk. Yeah, but it doesn't have any sound, so it's no good.

QH: Exactly. Exactly.

RG: And so this is not this is not the best crossing for you.

QH: No, it's not. And I mean, I'm fortunate because I do have some vision and I do have extensive cane skills and crossing streets across history often, right? But I don't like it because. It doesn't feel comfortable.