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Safety Benefits:

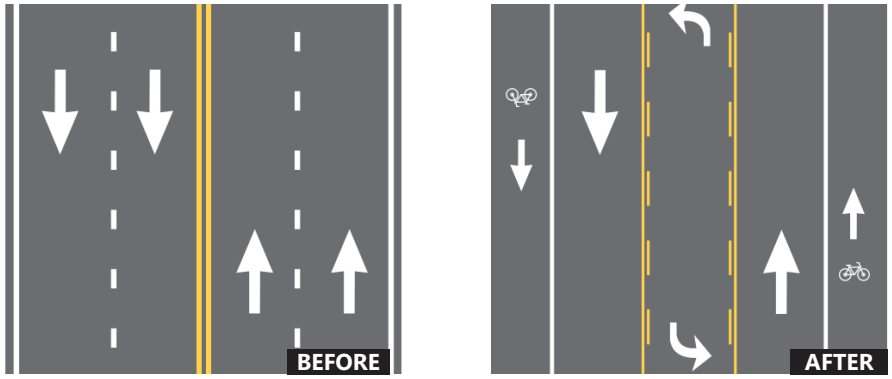
4-Lane to 3-Lane Road Diet Conversions

19-47%

reduction in total crashes.[1]

Road Diets (Roadway Reconfiguration)

A Road Diet, or roadway reconfiguration, can improve safety, calm traffic, provide better mobility and access for all road users, and enhance overall quality of life. A Road Diet typically involves converting an existing four-lane undivided roadway to a three-lane roadway consisting of two through lanes and a center two-way left-turn lane (TWLTL).



Before and after example of a Road Diet. Source: FHWA

Benefits of Road Diet installations may include:

- Reduction of rear-end and left-turn crashes due to the dedicated left-turn lane.
- Reduced right-angle crashes as side street motorists cross three versus four travel lanes.
- Fewer lanes for pedestrians to cross.
- Opportunity to install pedestrian refuge islands, bicycle lanes, on-street parking, or transit stops.
- Traffic calming and more consistent speeds.
- A more community-focused, Complete Streets environment that better accommodates the needs of all road users.

A Road Diet can be a low-cost safety solution when planned in conjunction with a simple pavement overlay, and the reconfiguration can be accomplished at no additional cost. Typically, a Road Diet is implemented on a roadway with a current and future average daily traffic of 25,000 or less.

Road Diet project in Honolulu, Hawaii. Source: Leidos

For more information on this and other FHWA Proven Safety Countermeasures, please visit https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures and https://highways.dot.gov/safety/other/road-diets.

1 (CMF ID: 5554,2841) *Evaluation of Lane Reduction "Road Diet" Measures on Crashes*, FHWA-HRT-10-053, (2010).

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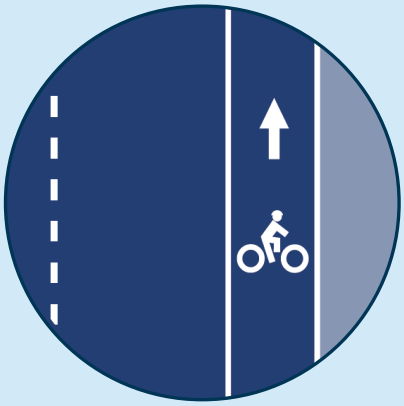

Bicycle Lanes

Most fatal and serious injury bicyclist crashes occur at non-intersection locations. Nearly one-third of these crashes occur when motorists are overtaking bicyclists[1] because the speed and size differential between vehicles and bicycles can lead to severe injury. Many people are not comfortable riding a bicycle because of their fear that this type of crash may occur. To make bicycling safer and more comfortable for most types of bicyclists, State and local agencies should consider installing bicycle lanes. Providing bicycle facilities can mitigate or prevent interactions, conflicts, and crashes between bicyclists and motor vehicles, and create a network of safer roadways for bicycling. Bicycle Lanes align with the Safe System Approach principle of recognizing human vulnerability—where separating users in space can enhance safety for all road users.

Safety Benefits:

Converting traditional or flush buffered bicycle lanes to a separated bicycle lane with flexible delineator posts can reduce crashes up to:

53%

for bicycle/vehicle crashes.[3]

Bicycle Lane Additions can reduce crashes up to:

49%

for total crashes on urban 4-lane undivided collectors and local roads.[7]

30%

for total crashes on urban 2-lane undivided collectors and local roads.[7]

Bicycle lane in Washington, DC. Source: Alex Baca, Washington Area Bicyclist Association.

For more information on this and other FHWA Proven Safety Countermeasures, please visit https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures and https://highways.dot.gov/sites/fhwa.dot.gov/files/2022-07/fhwasa18077.pdf.

Applications

The FHWA's *Bikeway Selection Guide* and *Incorporating On-Road Bicycle Networks into Resurfacing Projects* assist agencies in determining which facilities provide the most benefit in various contexts. Bicycle lanes can be included on new roadways or created on existing roads by reallocating space in the right-of-way through *Road Diets*. Separated bicycle lanes, which use vertical elements—such as flexible delineator posts, curbs, or vegetation—between the bicycle lane and motorized traffic lanes provide additional safety benefits.[2,3] For a marked bike lane without vertical elements, a lateral offset with marked buffer can help to further separate bicyclists from vehicle traffic.

Considerations

- In order to maximize a roadway's suitability for riders of all ages and abilities, bicycle lane design should vary according to roadway characteristics (number of lanes, motor vehicle and truck volumes, speed, presence of transit), user needs (current and forecasted ridership, types of bicycles and micromobility devices in use within the community, role within the bicycling network), and land-use context (adjacent land uses, types and intensity of conflicting uses, demands from other users for curbside access). Separated bicycle lanes are recommended on roadways with higher vehicle volumes and speeds, such as arterials.
- City and State policies may require minimum bicycle lane widths, although desirable bicycle lane widths can differ by agency and functional classification of the road, current and forecasted bicycle volumes, and contextual attributes such as topography.
- Studies have found that roadways did not experience an increase in crashes or congestion when travel lane widths were decreased to add a bicycle lane.[4]
- Studies and experience in U.S. cities show that bicycle lanes increase ridership and may help jurisdictions better manage roadway capacity.
- In rural areas, rumble strips can negatively impact bicyclists' ability to ride if not properly installed. Agencies should consider the dimensions, placement, and offset of rumble strips when adding a bicycle lane.[5]
- Bicycle lanes should be considered on roadways where adjacent land use suggests that trips could be served by varied modes, particularly to meet the safety and travel needs of low-income populations likely to use bicycles to reach essential destinations.[6]

1 Thomas et al. *Bicyclist Crash Types on National, State, and Local Levels: A New Look*. Transportation Research Record 673(6), 664-676, (2019).
2 Separated Bike Lane Planning and Design Guide. FHWA-HEP-15-025, (2015).
3 (CMF ID: 11296) Developing CMFs for Separated Bicycle Lanes. FHWA-HRT-23-025, (2023).
4 Park and Abdel-Aty. *Evaluation of safety effectiveness of multiple cross sectional features on urban arterials*. Accident Analysis and Prevention, Vol. 92, pp. 245-255, (2016).
5 FHWA Tech Advisory Shoulder and Edge Line Rumble Strips, (2011).
6 Sandt et al. Pursuing Equity in Pedestrian and Bicycle Planning. FHWA, (2016).
7 (CMF ID: 10738, 10742) Development of Crash Modification Factors for Bicycle Lane Additions While Reducing Lane and Shoulder Widths. FHWA-HRT-21-012, (2021).

FHWA-SA-21-051

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Crosswalk Visibility Enhancements

Poor lighting conditions, obstructions such as parked cars, and horizontal or vertical roadway curvature can reduce visibility at crosswalks, contributing to safety issues. For multilane roadway crossings where vehicle volumes are in excess of 10,000 Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT), a marked crosswalk alone is typically not sufficient. Under such conditions, more substantial crossing improvements could prevent an increase in pedestrian crash potential.

Three main crosswalk visibility enhancements help make crosswalks and the pedestrians, bicyclists, wheelchair and other mobility device users, and transit users using them more visible to drivers. These include high-visibility crosswalks, lighting, and signing and pavement markings. These enhancements can also assist users in deciding where to cross. Agencies can implement these features as standalone or combination enhancements to indicate the preferred location for users to cross.

Safety Benefits:

High-visibility crosswalks can reduce pedestrian injury crashes up to:

40% [1]

Intersection lighting can reduce pedestrian crashes up to:

42% [2]

Advance yield or stop markings and signs can reduce pedestrian crashes up to:

25% [3]

High-visibility crosswalks

High-visibility crosswalks use patterns (i.e., bar pairs, continental, ladder) that are visible to both the driver and pedestrian from farther away compared to traditional transverse line crosswalks. They should be considered at all midblock pedestrian crossings and uncontrolled intersections. Agencies should use materials such as inlay or thermoplastic tape, instead of paint or brick, for highly reflective crosswalk markings.

Improved Lighting

The goal of crosswalk lighting should be to illuminate with positive contrast to make it easier for a driver to visually identify the pedestrian. This involves carefully placing the luminaires in forward locations to avoid a silhouette effect of the pedestrian.

Enhanced Signing and Pavement Markings

On multilane roadways, agencies can use "YIELD Here to Pedestrians" or "STOP Here for Pedestrians" signs 20 to 50 feet in advance of a marked crosswalk to indicate where a driver should stop or yield to pedestrians, depending on State law. To supplement the signing, agencies can also install a STOP or YIELD bar (commonly referred to as "shark's teeth") pavement markings.

In-street signing, such as "STOP Here for Pedestrians" or "YIELD Here to Pedestrians" may be appropriate on roads with two- or three-lane roads where speed limits are 30 miles per hour or less.

Source: FHWA

For more information on this and other FHWA Proven Safety Countermeasures, please visit https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures and https://highways.dot.gov/sites/fhwa.dot.gov/files/2022-06/techSheetVizEnhancemt2018.pdf.

FHWA-SA-21-049

1 (CMF ID: 4123) Chen, L., C. Chen, and R. Ewing. The Relative Effectiveness of Pedestrian Safety Countermeasures at Urban Intersections - Lessons from a New York City Experience. (2012).
2 (CMF ID: 436) Elvik, R. and Vaa, T. Handbook of Road Safety Measures. Oxford, United Kingdom, Elsevier, (2004).
3 (CMF ID: 9017) Zeeger et al. Development of Crash Modification Factors for Uncontrolled Pedestrian Crossing Treatments, FHWA, (2017).

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Safety Benefits:

13%

reduction in pedestrian-vehicle crashes at intersections.[1]

Leading Pedestrian Interval

A leading pedestrian interval (LPI) gives pedestrians the opportunity to enter the crosswalk at an intersection 3-7 seconds before vehicles are given a green indication. Pedestrians can better establish their presence in the crosswalk before vehicles have priority to turn right or left.

LPIs provide the following benefits:

- Increased visibility of crossing pedestrians.
- Reduced conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles.
- Increased likelihood of motorists yielding to pedestrians.
- Enhanced safety for pedestrians who may be slower to start into the intersection.

FHWA's Handbook for ***Designing Roadways for the Aging Population*** recommends the use of the LPI at intersections with high turning vehicle volumes. Transportation agencies should refer to the ***Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*** for guidance on LPI timing and ensure that pedestrian signals are accessible for all users. Costs for implementing LPIs are very low when only signal timing alteration is required.

An LPI allows a pedestrian to establish a presence in the crosswalk before vehicles are given a green indication. Source: FHWA

LPIs reduce potential conflicts between pedestrians and turning vehicles. Source: FHWA

For more information on this and other FHWA Proven Safety Countermeasures, please visit https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures and https://highways.dot.gov/sites/fhwa.dot.gov/files/2022-06/fhwasa19040.pdf.

1 (CMF ID: 9918) Goughnour, E., D. Carter, C. Lyon, B. Persaud, B. Lan, P. Chun, I. Hamilton, and K. Signor. "Safety Evaluation of Protected Left-Turn Phasing and Leading Pedestrian Intervals on Pedestrian Safety." Report No. FHWA-HRT-18-044. Federal Highway Administration. (October 2018)

FHWA-SA-21-032

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Safety Benefits:

Median with Marked Crosswalk

46%

reduction in pedestrian crashes.[2]

Pedestrian Refuge Island

56%

reduction in pedestrian crashes.[2]

Medians and Pedestrian Refuge Islands in Urban and Suburban Areas

A **median** is the area between opposing lanes of traffic, excluding turn lanes. Medians in urban and suburban areas can be defined by pavement markings, raised medians, or islands to separate motorized and non-motorized road users.

A **pedestrian refuge island** (or crossing area) is a median with a refuge area that is intended to help protect pedestrians who are crossing a road.

Pedestrian crashes account for approximately 17 percent of all traffic fatalities annually, and 74 percent of these occur at non-intersection locations.[1] For pedestrians to safely cross a roadway, they must estimate vehicle speeds, determine acceptable gaps in traffic based on their walking speed, and predict vehicle paths. Installing a median or pedestrian refuge island can help improve safety by allowing pedestrians to cross one direction of traffic at a time.

Transportation agencies should consider medians or pedestrian refuge islands in curbed sections of urban and suburban multilane roadways, particularly in areas with a significant mix of pedestrian and vehicle traffic, traffic volumes over 9,000 vehicles per day, and travel speeds 35 mph or greater. Medians/refuge islands should be at least 4-ft wide, but preferably 8 ft for pedestrian comfort. Some example locations that may benefit from medians or pedestrian refuge islands include:

- Mid-block crossings.
- Approaches to multilane intersections.
- Areas near transit stops or other pedestrian-focused sites.

Example of a road with a median and pedestrian refuge islands. Source: City of Charlotte, NC

Median and pedestrian refuge island near a roundabout. Source: www.pedbikeimages.org / Dan Burden

For more information on this and other FHWA Proven Safety Countermeasures, please visit https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures and https://highways.dot.gov/sites/fhwa.dot.gov/files/2022-08/techSheet_PedRefugeIsland2018.pdf.

1 National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2020, March). Pedestrians: 2018 data (Traffic Safety Facts. Report No. DOT HS 812 850). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

2 (CMF ID: 175) Desktop Reference for Crash Reduction Factors, FHWA-SA-08-011, September 2008, Table 11.

FHWA-SA-21-044

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Safety Benefits:

Sidewalks

65-89%

reduction in crashes involving pedestrians walking along roadways.[3]

Paved Shoulders

71%

reduction in crashes involving pedestrians walking along roadways.[3]

Walkways

A walkway is any type of defined space or pathway for use by a person traveling by foot or using a wheelchair. These may be pedestrian walkways, shared use paths, sidewalks, or roadway shoulders.

With more than 6,200 pedestrian fatalities and 75,000 pedestrian injuries occurring in roadway crashes annually,[1] it is important for transportation agencies to improve conditions and safety for pedestrians and to integrate walkways more fully into the transportation system. Research shows people living in low-income communities are less likely to encounter walkways and other pedestrian-friendly features.[2]

Well-designed pedestrian walkways, shared use paths, and sidewalks improve the safety and mobility of pedestrians. Pedestrians should have direct and connected network of walking routes to desired destinations without gaps or abrupt changes. In some rural or suburban areas, where these types of walkways are not feasible, roadway shoulders provide an area for pedestrians to walk next to the roadway, although these are not preferable.

Transportation agencies should work towards incorporating pedestrian facilities into all roadway projects unless exceptional circumstances exist. It is important to provide and maintain accessible walkways along both sides of the road in urban areas, particularly near school zones and transit locations, and where there is a large amount of pedestrian activity. Walkable shoulders should also be considered along both sides of rural highways when routinely used by pedestrians.

Example of a sidewalk in a residential area. Source: pedbikeimages.org / Burden

Paved shoulder used as a walkway. Source: pedbikeimages.org / Burden

For more information on this and other FHWA Proven Safety Countermeasures, please visit https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures and http://www.pedbikesafe.org/PEDSAFE/countermeasures_detail.cfm?CM_NUM=1.

FHWA-SA-21-047

1 National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2020, March). Pedestrians: 2018 data (Traffic Safety Facts. Report No. DOT HS 812 850). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
2 Gibbs, et all. Income Disparities in Street Features that Encourage Walking. Bridging the Gap, (2012, March).
3 Gan et al. Update of Florida Crash Reduction Factors and Countermeasures to Improve the Development of District Safety Improvement Projects. Florida DOT, (2005).

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Safety Benefits:

Reducing driveway density

5-23%
reduction in total crashes along 2-lane rural roads.[3]

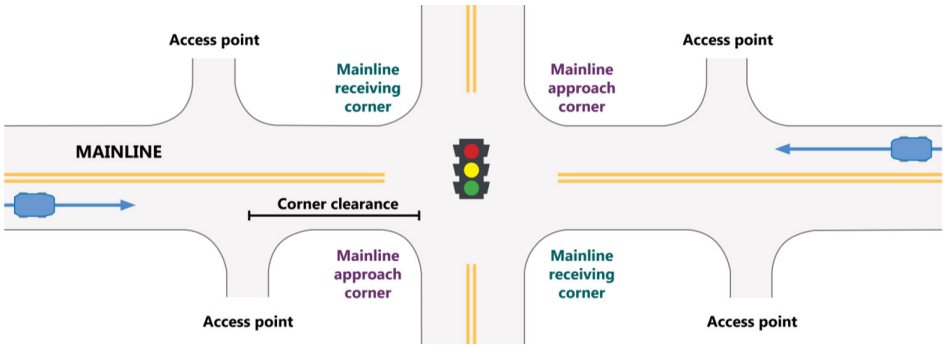
25-31%
reduction in fatal and injury crashes along urban/ suburban arterials.[4]

For more information on this and other FHWA Proven Safety Countermeasures, please visit https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures and https://highways.dot.gov/safety/intersection-safety/cam.

FHWA-SA-21-040

Corridor Access Management

Access management refers to the design, application, and control of entry and exit points along a roadway. This includes intersections with other roads and driveways that serve adjacent properties. Thoughtful access management along a corridor can simultaneously enhance safety for all modes, facilitate walking and biking, and reduce trip delay and congestion.



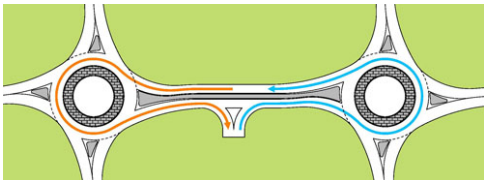
Schematic of an intersection and adjacent access points. Source: FHWA

Every intersection, from a signalized intersection to an unpaved driveway, has the potential for conflicts between vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. The number and types of conflict points—locations where the travel paths of two users intersect—influence the safety performance of the intersection or driveway. FHWA developed corridor-level crash prediction models to estimate and analyze the safety effects of selected access management techniques for different area types, land uses, roadway variables, and traffic volumes.[1]

The following access management strategies can be used individually or in combination with one another:

- Reduce density through driveway closure, consolidation, or relocation.
- Manage spacing of intersection and access points.
- Limit allowable movements at driveways (such as right-in/ right-out only).
- Place driveways on an intersection approach corner rather than a receiving corner, which is expected to have fewer total crashes.[2]
- Implement raised medians that preclude across-roadway movements.
- Utilize designs such as roundabouts or reduced left-turn conflicts (such as restricted crossing U-turn, median U-turns, etc.).
- Provide turn lanes (i.e., left-only, right-only, or interior two-way left).
- Use lower speed one-way or two-way off-arterial circulation roads.

Successful corridor access management involves balancing overall safety and mobility for all users along with the needs of adjacent land uses.



Tandem roundabouts with a continuous raised median eliminates left-turn and across-roadway conflicts. Source: FHWA

1 Gross et al. Safety Evaluation of Access Management Policies and Techniques. FHWA-HRT-14-057, (2018).
2 Le et al. Safety Evaluation of Corner Clearance at Signalized Intersections. FHWA-HRT-17-084, (2018).
3 Harwood et al. Prediction of the Expected Safety Performance of Rural Two-Lane Highways. FHWA-RD-99-207, (2000).
4 (CMF ID: 179,178) Elvik, R. and Vaa, T., Handbook of Road Safety Measures. Oxford, United Kingdom, Elsevier, (2004).

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Appropriate Speed Limits for All Road Users

There is broad consensus among global roadway safety experts that speed control is one of the most important methods for reducing fatalities and serious injuries. Speed is an especially important factor on non-limited access roadways where vehicles and vulnerable road users mix.

A driver may not see or be aware of the conditions within a corridor, and may drive at a speed that feels reasonable for themselves but may not be for all users of the system, especially vulnerable road users, including children and seniors. A driver traveling at 30 miles per hour who hits a pedestrian has a 45 percent chance of killing or seriously injuring them.[1] At 20 miles per hour, that percentage drops to 5 percent.[1] A number of cities across the United States, including New York, Washington, Seattle and Minneapolis, have reduced their local speed limits in recent years in an effort to reduce fatalities and serious injuries, with most having to secure State legislative authorization to do so.

States and local jurisdictions should set appropriate speed limits to reduce the significant risks drivers impose on others—especially vulnerable road users—and on themselves. Addressing speed is fundamental to the Safe System Approach to making streets safer, and a growing body of research shows that speed limit changes alone can lead to measurable declines in speeds and crashes.[2]

Safety Benefits:

Traffic fatalities in the City of Seattle decreased 26 percent after the city implemented comprehensive, city-wide speed management strategies and countermeasures inspired by Vision Zero. This included setting speed limits on all non-arterial streets at 20 mph and 200 miles of arterial streets at 25 mph.[5]

One study found that on rural roads, when considering other relevant factors in the engineering study along with the speed distribution, setting a speed limit no more than 5 mph below the 85th-percentile speed may result in fewer total and fatal plus injury crashes, and lead to drivers complying closely with the posted speed limit.[6]

For more information on this and other FHWA Proven Safety Countermeasures, please visit https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures and https://highways.dot.gov/safety/speed-management/reference-materials.

Applications

Posted speed limits are often the same as the legislative statutory speed limit. Agencies with designated authorities to set speed limits, which include States, and sometimes local jurisdictions, can establish non-statutory speed limits or designate reduced speed zones, and a growing number are doing so. While non-statutory speed limits must be based on an engineering study, conducted in accordance with the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD) involving multiple factors and engineering judgment, FHWA is also encouraging agencies to use the following:[3]

- Expert Systems tools.
  - USLIMITS2.
  - NCHRP 966: Posted Speed Limit Setting Procedure and Tool.
- Safe System approach.

Based on international experience and implementation in the United States, the use of 20 mph speed zones or speed limits in urban core areas where vulnerable users share the road environment with motorists may result in further safety benefits.[4]

Considerations

When setting a speed limit, agencies should consider a range of factors such as pedestrian and bicyclist activity, crash history, land use context, intersection spacing, driveway density, roadway geometry, roadside conditions, roadway functional classification, traffic volume, and observed speeds.

To achieve desired speeds, agencies often implement other speed management strategies concurrently with setting speed limits, such as self-enforcing roadways, traffic calming, and speed safety cameras. Additional information is in the following FHWA resources:

- FHWA Speed Management website.
- Self-Enforcing Roadways: A Guidance Report.
- Noteworthy Speed Management Practices.
- Jurisdiction Speed Management Action Plan Development Package.
- Traffic Calming ePrimer.

1 Reducing the speed limit to 20 mph in urban areas: Child deaths and injuries would be decreased.
2 Lowering the speed limit from 30 to 25 mph in Boston: effects on vehicle speeds.
3 FHWA's Methods and Practices for Setting Speed Limits: An Informational Report, (2012).
4 Recommendations of the Academic Expert Group for the 3rd Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety.
5 https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/speedmgt/ref_mats/fhwasa20047/sec8.cfm#foot813
6 Safety and Operational Impacts of Setting Speed Limits below Engineering Recommendations.

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Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB)

A marked crosswalk or pedestrian warning sign can improve safety for pedestrians crossing the road, but at times may not be sufficient for drivers to visibly locate crossing locations and yield to pedestrians. To enhance pedestrian conspicuity and increase driver awareness at uncontrolled, marked crosswalks, transportation agencies can install a pedestrian actuated Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) to accompany a pedestrian warning sign. RRFBs consist of two, rectangular- shaped yellow indications, each with a light-emitting diode (LED)-array-based light source.[1] RRFBs flash with an alternating high frequency when activated to enhance conspicuity of pedestrians at the crossing to drivers.

For more information on using RRFBs, see the Interim Approval in the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)*.[1]

Safety Benefits:

RRFBs can reduce crashes up to:

47%

for pedestrian crashes.[4]

RRFBs can increase motorist yielding rates up to:

98%

(varies by speed limit, number of lanes, crossing distance, and time of day).[3]

RRFBs used at a trail crossing.
Source: LJB

Applications

The RRFB is applicable to many types of pedestrian crossings but is particularly effective at multilane crossings with speed limits less than 40 miles per hour.[2] Research suggests RRFBs can result in motorist yielding rates as high at 98 percent at marked crosswalks, but varies depending on the location, posted speed limit, pedestrian crossing distance, one- versus two-way road, and the number of travel lanes.[3] RRFBs can also accompany school or trail crossing warning signs.

RRFBs are placed on both sides of a crosswalk below the pedestrian crossing sign and above the diagonal downward arrow plaque pointing at the crossing.[1] The flashing pattern can be activated with pushbuttons or passive (e.g., video or infrared) pedestrian detection, and should be unlit when not activated.

Considerations

Agencies should:[2]

- Install RRFBs in the median rather than the far-side of the roadway if there is a pedestrian refuge or other type of median.
- Use solar-power panels to eliminate the need for a power source.
- Reserve the use of RRFBs for locations with significant pedestrian safety issues, as over-use of RRFB treatments may diminish their effectiveness.

Agencies shall not:[2]

- Use RRFBs without the presence of a pedestrian, school or trail crossing warning sign.
- Use RRFBs for crosswalks across approaches controlled by YIELD signs, STOP signs, traffic control signals, or pedestrian hybrid beacons, except for the approach or egress from a roundabout.

For more information on this and other FHWA Proven Safety Countermeasures, please visit https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures and https://highways.dot.gov/sites/fhwa.dot.gov/files/2022-06/techSheet_RRFB_2018.pdf.

FHWA-SA-21-053

1 *MUTCD* Interim Approval 21 - RRFBs at Crosswalks.
2 "Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacon" in PEDSAFE: Pedestrian Safety Guide and Countermeasure Selection System. FHWA, (2013).
3 Fitzpatrick et al. "Will You Stop for Me? Roadway Design and Traffic Control Device Influences on Drivers Yielding to Pedestrians in a Crosswalk with a Rectangular Rapid-Flashing Beacon." Report No. TTI-CTS-0010. Texas A&M Transportation Institute, (2016).
4 (CMF ID: 9024) NCHRP Research Report 841 Development of Crash Modification Factors for Uncontrolled Pedestrian Crossing Treatments, (2017).

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8%

of all fatalities on divided highways are due to head-on crashes.[1]

Safety Benefits:

Median Barriers Installed on Rural Four-Lane Freeways

97%

reduction in cross-median crashes.[2]

For more information on this and other FHWA Proven Safety Countermeasures, please visit https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures and https://highways.dot.gov/safety/rwd/reduce-crash-severity.

FHWA-SA-21-037

Median Barriers

Median barriers are longitudinal barriers that separate opposing traffic on a divided highway and are designed to redirect vehicles striking either side of the barrier. Median barriers significantly reduce the number of cross-median crashes, which are attributed to the relatively high speeds that are typical on divided highways. AASHTO's ***Roadside Design Guide*** (RDG) recommends guidelines for the use of median barriers on high-speed, fully controlled-access roadways for locations where the median is 30 ft in width or less and the average daily traffic (ADT) is greater than 20,000 vehicles per day (vpd). For locations with median widths greater than 50 ft and where the ADT is less than 20,000 vpd, a median barrier is optional. For locations where the median is between 30 and 50 feet, the RDG suggests an analysis to determine the cost effectiveness of median barrier installation. Median barriers can be cable, metal-beam, or concrete.

- **Cable barriers** are flexible barriers, made from steel cables mounted on weak steel posts, resulting in less occupant impact force as it absorbs energy from the crash, capturing or redirecting the vehicle. Due to larger deflection, median width is an important consideration. These barriers are more adaptable to slopes typically found in medians. Cable barriers tend to require more frequent maintenance and repair than other barrier types.
- **Metal-beam guardrails** are considered semi-rigid barriers, where the W-beam or box-beam is mounted to steel or timber posts. When impacted, they are designed to deform and deflect, absorbing some of the crash energy and redirecting the vehicle. Metal-beam guardrails often do not require maintenance after minor impacts. They deflect less than cable barriers, so they can be located closer to objects where space is limited.
- **Concrete barriers** are usually rigid and result in little to no deflection. They redirect rather than absorb energy from the impact. Rigid concrete barriers seldom require repair or maintenance. Some agencies have used portable concrete barriers as median barriers. These barriers require repositioning after an impact but are typically less maintenance than a post mounted barrier.

To reduce cross-median crashes, transportation agencies should review their head-on crash history on divided highways to identify hot spots. Agencies should also consider implementing a systemic approach to median barrier placement based on cross-median crash risk factors. Potential risk factors include:

- Traffic volumes.
- Vehicle classifications.
- Median crossover history.
- Crash incidents.
- Vertical and horizontal alignment.
- Median terrain configurations.

Median cable barrier prevents a potential head-on crash.
Source: Washington State DOT

1 Fatality Analysis Reporting System.
2 (CMF ID: 7040) NCHRP Report 794: Median Cross-Section Design for Rural Divided Highways, (2011).