Road Safety Brief - 2024-7

The Where and How of Mid-block Crosswalks

Your community may be considering the installation of, or may have already installed, a mid-block crosswalk. Many communities in Connecticut, and around the country, have been installing mid-block crosswalks for several years. Pedestrians often cross mid-block out of convenience, especially when an intersection crossing is not easily accessible or near to where they want to cross. This can be unsafe if proper crosswalk amenities are not provided.

Drivers do not expect pedestrians to be crossing at mid-block locations. This is why having adequate lighting, signage and additional countermeasures, if necessary, can help improve safety. Longer crossings may need extra measures to keep pedestrians safe.

Where to consider mid-block crossings

Older neighborhoods, with narrow streets, slower moving vehicles, short blocks and many controlled intersections do not typically need midblock crosswalks. However, where multi-lane roads, higher vehicular speeds, high volume pedestrian traffic and longer distances between intersections exist, mid-block crosswalks may be necessary. Mid-block crossings are often placed near major pedestrian destinations, such as schools, shopping centers, or transit stops.

Crossing Design

If traffic calming is required, the crosswalk can be constructed as a raised crosswalk. However, when the distance between intersections is lengthy and the volume and speeds are higher, mid-block crosswalks may require additional measures.

Source: FHWA

- Crosswalk visibility enhancements – To bring more attention to a mid-block crosswalk, consider a high-visibility pattern (i.e., continental, ladder) instead of transverse lines and be sure to use retro reflective material. The use of “Yield Here to Pedestrians” signs and associated markings can be helpful on a two-lane approach to a mid-block crosswalk, to give drivers advance warning. In-road signs can also be placed at the crosswalk location. Additionally, proper crosswalk lighting provides better visibility of a pedestrian to a driver, especially in areas where street lighting may not be present.
- Road diets/roadway reconfiguration – On a multi-lane roadway, reducing the lanes can calm traffic and create a safer, shorter crossing for pedestrians.
- Medians and refuge islands – For long crossings, to provide a safe place for pedestrians in the middle of the road, so they can cross one direction of travel at a time. They also help direct pedestrians to the preferred crossing location. Raised medians can also provide traffic calming.
- Curb extensions/bump outs – These devices shorten the crossing distance for pedestrians and provide better visibility for pedestrians and drivers, as the pedestrian is able to safely stand further out into the view of drivers.
- Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) – Where additional visibility is needed, beyond static warning signs, RRFBs can be installed. These pedestrian-actuated signs have flashing lights that warn drivers of a pedestrian crossing.
- ·Pedestrian hybrid beacon (PHB, formerly known as HAWK signal) – At mid-block crosswalks where the vehicular speeds may be higher, a PHB assists pedestrians by stopping vehicles at the crosswalk. It is a signal that includes a sign instructing motorists to “stop on red” and a “pedestrian crossing” overhead sign. It can be activated passively or by a pedestrian pushing a button. When activated, the overhead signal begins flashing yellow and then solid yellow, advising drivers to prepare to stop. It then switches to a solid red light and shows the pedestrian a “Walk” indication. Finally, it shows a flashing red signal indicating that motorists may proceed when safe after coming to a complete stop. The pedestrian sees a flashing “Don’t Walk” sign indicating the number of seconds left to cross.

Source: FHWA

Many of these devices are FHWA Proven Safety Countermeasures, and more information on them can be found here. Additional information on what the Connecticut Department of Transportation is doing to improve pedestrian safety can be found here.

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