

Policy for Pedestrian Crossing Determination at Uncontrolled Intersections and Mid-block

City of Evanston
Public Works Agency
August 14, 2017

Every year, City staff receives requests for additional designated crosswalks at uncontrolled intersections (those without a traffic signal or 4-way stop) and in mid-block locations. Such requests are often located near schools and parks and are targeted to sensitive populations. Because marked pedestrian crosswalks can create a false sense of safety for crosswalk users, it is important that each crosswalk implemented be done in a thoughtful way to provide the safest crossings possible. Some locations may not be suitable for crosswalks, and these should be identified and removed from consideration.

This policy discusses the method and timelines for evaluating and implementing pedestrian crosswalks. The policy serves as a general guideline for the processing of each request and timing of request review and implementation varies based on each location and resources required to complete.

Procedure for a Crosswalk Request:

This section describes the procedure for requesting and implementing a crosswalk request. At each step, the alderman will be kept informed and included in the discussion.

1. Crosswalk requests should be submitted to the Public Works Director.
2. If the request was not made by the ward alderman, the alderman will be made aware of the request within a week of the request.
3. If the Director approves, the request will be submitted to the Traffic Engineer for review. The Traffic Engineer will evaluate the location and make recommendations regarding the appropriateness and any necessary safety features needed for implementation. If the pedestrian crossing is recommended, a cost estimate will be developed and funding identified. This will be completed within 3 weeks of receiving the request and the alderman will be advised.
4. Upon direction from the Alderman, a schedule will be developed for the installation of the crosswalk, taking into account staffing and funding availability. (See below for further information on schedule.)

Pedestrian Crossing Evaluation Criteria:

The evaluation and recommendation regarding a new pedestrian crossing designation consists of the following:

1. Pedestrian generators & type of crossing:

Evanston is a walkable city with extensive sidewalks. Pedestrian crossing happens at almost all of the intersections, and not all requested intersections can be marked. There are already about 60 marked pedestrian crossings, and it is better to limit these crossings to locations where it is really needed for better driver compliance. Therefore, each additional crossing request is reviewed to see if there is a pedestrian generating facility nearby that creates more than normal crossing activity. The type of pedestrian crossing is also taken into account to see what additional safety measures need to be taken. There are three types of crossings that are considered specialty crossings:

- School crossings
- Senior crossings
- Park crossings

These types of crossings automatically trigger a higher level of safety features when they are under consideration.

2. Proximity of existing crossings:

In general, it is safer for a pedestrian to cross at a signalized intersection that has a pedestrian phase and countdown signals, or at an all-way stop intersection where traffic has to come to a stop.

If there is an existing marked crossing nearby, pedestrians are advised to cross at that location. If the existing location is a designated school crossing it is a good practice to not mark another crosswalk at a nearby intersection. Designated school crossing locations have a crossing guard and include extra signage such the flashing LED push button signs and in-street "Stop for Pedestrian" crosswalk signs. If a new location is marked nearby, school children may cross there instead of at the location with the crossing guard, thus creating safety concerns.

At locations near signalized intersections, drivers tend to pick up speed after moving through the green light. The pedestrian may not realize this and start crossing the street. The driver is often not looking for a crosswalk to occur so soon after a stoplight.

3. Street conditions (lanes, speed, visibility, gaps in traffic flow, parking):

Marking a pedestrian crossing on four-lane streets is not advisable unless there is a median in between the lanes where pedestrians can shelter and additional flashing LED signs can be placed. One vehicle may stop for a pedestrian but the vehicles behind or next to it may not see the pedestrian and proceed in the other lane, creating a safety issue. In some cases, the stopped vehicle can prevent the pedestrian from seeing other vehicles, adding to the hazard.

Visibility of the pedestrians and vehicles is also taken into consideration for other situations. The driver needs to have adequate clearance to see the pedestrian, make eye contact and safely slow down. Where speeds are higher, the distance needed to an appropriate reaction time can be difficult to accommodate. Generally, parking needs to be removed to increase the line of sight – this can be a challenge in neighborhoods where parking is limited. Viaduct locations are a problem due to restricted sight lines and issues finding locations to place the proper signs.

If any accident data is available, it is reviewed to see if marking a crossing will mitigate the situation.

If there are adequate gaps in traffic flow to allow pedestrians enough time to cross the street, crosswalk markings may not be needed.

4. Sidewalks & ADA requirements:

A crossing cannot be marked unless there are existing sidewalks and ramps that are ADA compliant so that people with disabilities can properly cross the street and access the sidewalk.

It should be noted that even at marked crossings with signage, sidewalk bump-outs, crossing flags, and LED push button flashing signs, pedestrians complain that drivers do not stop. Drivers also have expressed concerns that pedestrian step into the crosswalk without providing adequate time for them to respond.

Review and Implementation Timeline:

The timeline for review and implementation depends on the location, the measures that need to be taken, and the coordination with internal projects and outside agencies as follows:

1. Markings and Signage Only Installation: If a location requires only markings and signage changes, the implementation depends on the timing of the request and approval. Crosswalk markings are often included in the

yearly pavement marking contract, and ADA ramps/sidewalk can be installed in the annual 50/50 Sidewalk Program.

Schedule for Implementation: Upon approval, signage can typically be installed within two weeks, but pavement marking is weather-dependent and can only be installed during warmer temperatures, and both are usually needed to provide adequate safety. Therefore, construction of approved installations will take place in the next available Spring or Fall construction season, provided that funding is available.

2. Sidewalk Bump-outs and Infrastructure Construction: At locations where sidewalk bump-outs are recommended and approved, it could take up to a year to design, fund, and construct the sidewalk. Normally, these are included as part of the larger contract, and the schedule of the larger contract dictates when the crosswalk will be installed. Because of their locations, these types of modifications often require changes to the sewer system and/or drainage structure locations. Such changes require additional effort to implement and must be completed prior to the installation of the bump-outs.

Schedule for Implementation: Construction of approved installations will take place in the next available Spring or Fall construction season, provided that funding is available.

3. On IDOT Streets: At locations that are under Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) jurisdiction, it may take two years for IDOT to review the request and grant the final permit for construction. The initial process involves the City sending a formal request letter to IDOT for review of the location. If tentatively approved by IDOT, design drawings and specifications are prepared. Various bureaus within IDOT then review the drawings. Reviewers may request more pedestrian crossing related data before giving final approval and issuing the permit to do the work.

Schedule for Implementation: IDOT approval typically takes 4-6 months, but can extend the schedule up to one year. Once IDOT approval is received, construction of approved installations will take place in the next available Spring or Fall construction season, provided that funding is available.