

Pedestrian crossing beacons — overhead flashing beacon

Definition

Overhead flashing beacons are pedestrian-activated flashing amber beacons installed on traffic signal poles and mast arms at uncontrolled crossing locations, typically along with regulatory/warning signage.

Objective

To increase driver awareness when approaching a marked crosswalk at an uncontrolled location, and to alert drivers to the presence of pedestrians and their intention to cross the roadway, so that drivers will stop for pedestrians.

Advantage

Increases driver compliance with laws to stop/yield for pedestrians in crosswalks.

Increases driver awareness of the presence of pedestrians.

Allows for normal traffic flow when not actuated.

Challenge

Does not have a steady red signal indication requiring traffic to stop.

Relatively high installation cost and some maintenance costs.

Visually-impaired may not know to activate the beacon.

Resources

Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/> (See Section 4L.03).

NCHRP Report: Improving Pedestrian Safety at Unsignalized Crossings http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp_rpt_562.pdf.

ITE Journal Review: NCHRP Report: Improving Pedestrian Safety at Unsignalized Intersections <http://www.ite.org/membersonly/itejournal/pdf/2007/JBo7EA34.pdf>.

Guidelines for the Installation of Marked Crosswalks (Virginia DOT) http://www.virginiadot.org/business/resources/Marked_20Crosswalks_20Final_20Guidelines_2012-14-05.pdf (Page 19).

Pedestrian Crossings: Uncontrolled Locations guidebook (Minnesota LTAP) http://www.mnltap.umn.edu/publications/handbooks/documents/ped_guidebook.pdf (Pages 22 and 23).



Images (clockwise from main image):

Example of an overhead flashing crosswalk beacon.
Source: Dan Burden.

Additional examples:
Source: Dan Burden, pedbikeimages.org.