

Crosswalk Improvements Aid Pedestrian Safety

As Pinellas County motorists are discovering, an increasing number of marked and signalized pedestrian crosswalks are showing up between intersections. Although they may cause some delay for motorists, they could be a lifesaver for pedestrians.

A 2006 University of South Florida Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) report, *Pedestrian Safety at Mid-Block Locations*, prompted transportation engineers and planners around the State to look more closely at pedestrian safety improvements in mid-block areas. Comparing Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles data between 1986-1993 and 1994-2001, CUTR reported that while fatal pedestrian injuries decreased by 20 percent at intersections they increased by 6 percent at mid-block crossings. Non-fatal injuries decreased by 5 percent at intersections but increased by 12 percent at mid-block locations.

The MPO has been working closely with the County's local governments, police and the School Board to address pedestrian safety through education, enforcement and engineering

MPO Long Range Transportation Plan Policy 2.5.3. *Pedestrian crossings in road corridors shall be designed to place a priority on the safe movement of pedestrians. These crossings shall also be designed to utilize advanced technology to facilitate safe passage for pedestrians.*

strategies. The installation of crosswalk improvements represents the engineering part of this approach. The City of Largo for example, installed four mid block median crosswalks on Clearwater Largo Road between West Bay Drive and Wyatt Street in 2006. They include rectangular rapid flash beacon (RRFB) lights, landscaping, textured surface and regulatory signs. In addition to the physical improvements, the speed limit was reduced from 40 miles per hour (mph) to 30 mph.

The RRFB lights, which are pedestrian controlled, solar powered and equipped with an audible message, have proven to be highly effective in getting motorists to yield to pedestrians. Field tests conducted by the City of St. Petersburg, which has pioneered the application of the RRFB technology, showed motorists yielding to pedestrians over 85

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Clearwater-Largo Road, Largo



22nd Avenue North, St. Petersburg

Pedestrian Flag Program

Gulf Beach communities from Clearwater to St. Pete Beach are taking part in the Pedestrian Flag Program which was launched in 2010 by the Florida Department of Transportation in cooperation with the MPO and Gulf Beach municipal governments. There are 54 unsignalized mid-block crosswalks on Gulf Boulevard from 75th Avenue to 5th Avenue where



yellow reflective flags are provided for pedestrians to carry along the crosswalk to improve their visibility and gain the attention of motorists. The Pedestrian Flag Program is the latest in a series of pedestrian safety initiatives on the corridor, including the addition of 12 marked crosswalks and a uniform reduction in the speed limit to 35 miles per hour, implemented since 2005. There were 12 pedestrian fatalities on Gulf Boulevard from 2000 to 2005. More information on the Flag Program is available at www.walkwisetampabay.com.

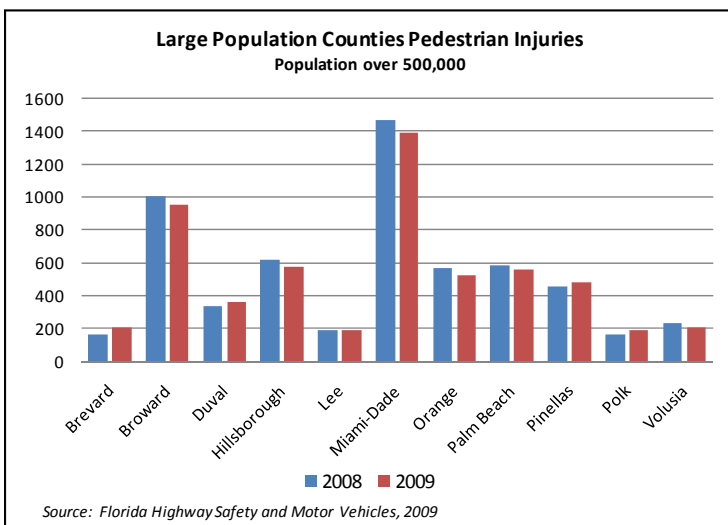
*The **Pedestrian Safety Bill (SB 154)**, which became law in 2008, requires that "the driver of a vehicle at any crosswalk where signage so indicates shall stop and remain stopped to allow a pedestrian to cross a roadway when the pedestrian is in the crosswalk or steps into the crosswalk and is upon the half of the roadway upon which the vehicle is traveling or when the pedestrian is approaching so closely from the opposite half of the roadway as to be in danger."*

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percent of the time when the lights are activated. The success of the RRFBs have resulted in the expansion of these signals around the County. Pinellas County installed one in front of Palm Harbor University High School on Omaha Road in 2010 and St. Petersburg, currently in the process of adding to their current supply, will have a total of 42 installed by the end of the month.



With 23 percent of bicycle and pedestrian accidents in Pinellas County occurring in parking lots, Pinellas County has been working with development projects to include buffered/landscaped walkways in their site plans. Pictured above is Crystal Beach Plaza in Palm Harbor.



As with most of Florida's urban counties, Pinellas County's per capita pedestrian crash fatality rate of 3.02 fatalities per 100,000 persons is comparable with the state average of 2.99 per 100,000 persons. Over the past five years [2003-2008], on average, 28 people per year have died in Pinellas County pedestrian crashes, nearly 100 people per year have sustained incapacitating injury, and an additional 260 people per year have sustained less severe injuries. If the County's rate could be brought to the national average, lives saved would increase to nearly 60 people per year.

- Pinellas County Pedestrian Safety Action Plan, 2009