

Raised Crosswalks Raise Visibility for Pedestrians in Harrisburg

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

KEY ELEMENTS:



Improved visibility



Increase in yielding

Near-miss incidents in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania raised awareness of pedestrian safety at mid-block crossings in the heart of the Capitol. The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) studied key corridors and implemented a series of improvements, such as raised crosswalks, to increase pedestrian visibility and reduce vehicle speeds.



Figure 1. An officer directs traffic at the intersection of Commonwealth Avenue and North Street during peak hours.¹

IMPLEMENTATION

The traffic study's stakeholder committee included: PennDOT, City of Harrisburg, the Department of General Services (entity responsible for maintaining the Capitol grounds), and the Historic Preservation Committee. The study recommended improvements to increase the visibility of pedestrians, reduce vehicle speeds, shorten pedestrian crossing distances, and provide space for bicyclists.

Specific countermeasures and accommodations included:

- Intersection improvements (bulb-outs) at Forster Street and Commonwealth Avenue.
- Six raised crosswalks at key midblock locations along Commonwealth Avenue and North Street.
- A Road Diet that reduced travel lanes from two to one on one-way North Street, to provide space for a bicycle lane.
- A raised intersection at Commonwealth Avenue and North Street—the busiest intersection in the project site (a Capitol Police Officer directs traffic during the morning and afternoon rush).
- Intersection and pedestrian crossing improvements throughout the project site, including in front of the Capitol steps.

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EDC-4 STEP: https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/innovation/everydaycounts/edc_4/step.cfm

- Sidewalk widening along a two-block segment of Aberdeen Street that becomes Commonwealth Avenue and connects the Harrisburg Transportation Center to the Capitol Complex.
- Lighting, sidewalk, and ramp repair for the Market Street Underpass.
- ADA-compliant curb ramps throughout the project site.

Once the project was complete, PennDOT conducted a lunch hour education campaign two to three times a week. Staff and interns wearing matching t-shirts distributed safety tips and reminded people to use the crosswalks.

RESULTS

The project's performance has not been formally assessed since it opened in 2016. However, PennDOT staff and other users have reported that most people are using the crosswalks and drivers are yielding for pedestrians waiting to use the crosswalks. State transit funds completely covered the \$2.8 million project cost of the project because of the connection to the train station and multiple bus stops throughout the project site.

"These improvements will not only increase safety for travelers, but also provide a connection to the transportation center that will benefit commuters and Capitol visitors alike."

–Leslie Richard, PennDOT Secretary



Figure 2. Raised pedestrian crossing with in-street signage.¹

References

1. Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.