



Walkable Washington

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Contact us for information about Feet First policies

314 1st Avenue S
Seattle, WA 98104
www.feetfirst.org
info@feetfirst.org
206 652 2310

Case Study

Walkable Washington

The Walkable Washington program grew out of the Feet First Cities Program. It showcases exceptional pedestrian-oriented improvements, community groups, and outreach programs; maintains a statewide network for key contacts, and stakeholders including an annual symposium; and provides assistance with Safe Routes to School, walking audits, and other educational activities, and programs.



Crosswalk Ordinance Project, Spokane Spokane, WA

Description and purpose:

In June 2014, the City of Spokane adopted an ordinance proposed by Council Member Candace Mumm to enhance or build 'functional' crosswalks. The ordinance was implemented as a result of studies showing that economic development is enhanced by 'urban walkable' areas, and that there is a shift away from 'drivable sub-urban' environments.

Residents of Spokane, including the public, professionals, students, and parents had expressed their interest repeatedly for an improved pedestrian environment in the city. The City of Spokane then looked at what they could do to improve the environment and then adopted this ordinance.

Twenty areas of high traffic activity were identified through a massive public process. Some of the resulting areas included business corridors, pools, parks, and hospitals. The ordinance outlines that when the streets



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are repaired, a number of designs for pedestrian-friendly crosswalks must be used, ranging from a simple marked crosswalk to raised grade crosswalks. Other innovations such as mid-block crosswalks, elevated intersections without curbs which eases crossing for those with disabilities, or pedestrian refuges on wide streets are also encouraged under the ordinance.

Historically, in the city, pedestrians had to be hit five times in three years for a crosswalk to be built.

In the last 10 years, there were 20 pedestrian traffic deaths, and over 1000 people injured as pedestrians. The City of Spokane needed to step in and raise the bar for improving the safety of the pedestrian environment.

As a result, the City of Spokane, along with the State of Washington and the City of Seattle, were the first government entities to adopt the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) guidelines in urban street design and bike path design, Comprehensive Plan policies requiring a more robust pedestrian environment near pedestrian generators and in targeted commercial areas.

These guidelines offer more flexibility and independence for engineers to solve problems from the pedestrian's point of view, from the way people walk, instead of following design constraints and limitations. Pedestrian traffic operates differently from bikes and cars, as they can travel the shortest distance between two points in any direction, and only need a small amount of space.

Costs and funding

Per the Crosswalk Ordinance, when streets are resurfaced or reconstructed, transportation elements for all modes

are integrated into the project. This includes American Disability Act (ADA) ramps, lanes for bikes (when the street is so designated on the City's master bike plan) and crosswalks for pedestrians. Funding for crosswalk construction will be provided by the same source of funds used to reconstruct streets. These sources may include federal, state and local funds. The City of Spokane also has a traffic calming fund. Every neighborhood is eligible to apply for traffic calming projects once per year. It is anticipated many neighborhoods will use this source of funding to install crosswalks in their neighborhood. Also, property and sales tax data for areas targeted for crosswalks was collected prior to the Crosswalk Ordinance adoption. Measurable financial benefit will be documented when the 20-year street levy expires.

Community involvement

Hundreds of citizens participated in the Horizons process in 2001, the visioning for the City's Comprehensive Plan. In the course of developing the Crosswalk Ordinance, a walkability summit in the spring of 2014 was held in Spokane, and many in the community were invited, especially those who may have access to funds: the health district, schools, neighborhood associations involved in pedestrian planning, engineering staff, planning staff, and a federal grants development department. Extensive public participation was also held during community assembly meetings, advisory board meetings, as well as the Plan Commission workshops and meetings. Citizens testified in favor of the ordinance at a public hearing held by the Spokane Plan Commission. The commissioners found it consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan and voted unanimously in support of the measure, and City Council adopted the



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crosswalk ordinance in September 2014.

Spokane's Crosswalk Ordinance took effect on October 25th, 2014 and the first street project under the ordinance will be constructed in Spring 2015.

Challenges and solutions

The main challenge was a vehicle-oriented culture in the Streets and Engineering Departments that lacked a pedestrian perspective. During the development of the program and the discussion with the Spokane community, significant attention was focused on the cost and engineering aspects of the Crosswalk Ordinance. A single crosswalk costs the city \$80 to paint but this, however, would be a small amount compared to what the project would save the city and the cost of injuries associated with unsafe crosswalks. According to the Spokane Police Department, "more than 20 pedestrians have died and more than 1,000 have been injured on Spokane streets."

The solution was the election of a City Council majority determined to codify the City's Comprehensive Plan. The Ordinance has received unanimous support from Spokane City's Community Assembly, which is composed of all the city neighborhoods, as well as the Spokane Regional Health District.

Innovations

Midblock crosswalks are not used much in city and could be increased. One midblock crossing has been installed downtown, adjacent a city park. Others will be installed in pedestrian generating areas when streets are resurfaced or reconstructed.

Benefits and results

Spokane's Crosswalk Ordinance Project has sparked excitement from local businesses. They are supportive of people getting out of their cars and making more walking trips, increasing the amount of foot traffic in the city's local shops and businesses. This phenomenon is already manifest in Spokane's International District where a road diet reduced the traffic from four lanes to three. The Crosswalk Ordinance Project will also be beneficial to local children who walk to school and support the Safe Routes to School program; the crosswalks amplify their visibility to vehicles, making walking to school a safer and more viable option for local families.

Project Contacts

Richard Rush

Legislative Assistant to Council Member Candace Mumm

City of Spokane

509.625.6718

rrush@spokanecity.org

Resources

Spokane Crosswalk Ordinance

<https://beta.spokanecity.org/projects/crosswalkordinance/>

City of Spokane - City Council Meeting Agenda

[https://static.spokanecity.org/documents/projects/](https://static.spokanecity.org/documents/projects/crosswalkordinance/adopted-crosswalk-ord-c35141.pdf)

[crosswalkordinance/adopted-crosswalk-ord-c35141.pdf](https://static.spokanecity.org/documents/projects/crosswalkordinance/adopted-crosswalk-ord-c35141.pdf)



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