

Advocating for Pedestrian Safety

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. If we have a lot of traffic in our neighbourhood, should we put up a “children at play” sign?

There is no research that shows that these signs are effective. One of the challenges with these signs is that they are not standard. Drivers may or may not understand the message of the sign. There is also no enforcement attached to these signs. These signs may also provide a false sense of security to parents and children. Having the sign posted may encourage parents and children to be less cautious on the streets.¹

2. Motorists don't obey the safety signs in my neighbourhood. How are placing these signs helpful?

In some cases simply installing a safety sign is not enough to change driver behaviour or improve pedestrian safety. Signs should be used in conjunction with enforcement and other improvements that physically change the roadway environment.²

3. How can a traffic signal improve pedestrian safety?

Having more time to cross a street, giving pedestrians a head start, or timing a signal so vehicles cannot turn while pedestrians cross the road, can all improve pedestrian safety. Consult with your local municipality, town or city to see if improvements at particular intersections are possible.³

4. Why can't we just install stop signs at every intersection to slow traffic?

Residents often believe that stop signs are the best way to reduce traffic speed. Using too many stop signs can cause disrespect among drivers. This may cause them not to stop at the sign or to drive faster between signs. Certain conditions must be met before stop signs should be added as an effective solution to traffic control. There should be a community-wide plan to address this issue. Check with your local municipality, town or city to see if more stop signs are a solution for your neighbourhood.⁴

5. Won't installing speed bumps slow down traffic?

You may first think of speed bumps when thinking about slowing traffic. Consideration must however be given to the impact on noise level, emergency vehicles, school buses, transit and bicycle access. If you think this is a possible solution for your neighbourhood, contact your local municipality, town or city.⁵

6. Isn't it better to drive the speed of traffic rather than the speed limit?

Speed limits are set to control the flow of traffic and ensure the safety of all road users. In no way do the safety gains resulting from speed reductions conflict with the “needs” of vehicle traffic:

speed reductions have no effect at all on the accessibility of neighbourhoods and have only minimal effect on driving speeds. The instances where traffic is brought to a stop or slowed down in towns and cities most often involve parking manoeuvres, traffic lights, and giving way to other traffic.⁶

7. Does driving the speed limit benefit my pocket book?

Yes. Driving the speed limit can reduce your fuel consumption equivalent to not driving your car for 33 days every year! By driving the limit you can save 9 cents on every litre of gas consumed. When we look at aggressive drivers vs. calm drivers the savings are even greater. If aggressive drivers followed the speed limit they would save 19 cents on every litre of gas consumed. The most wasteful gas consumption activities include: idling, sudden stops, sudden starts and speeding between lights or stop signs. The travel time saved by speeding is insignificant – a mere 4%.⁷

8. Do photo-radar and other speed enforcement cameras reduce speeding?

Yes. Speed management schemes, including photo radar, can be successful in calming traffic.⁸ Automated speed enforcement cameras, such as photo-radar, can be a cost effective way of reducing speeds. Fixed cameras are usually easily identified by drivers. Both mobile (vehicle-based) and fixed (permanently in place) speed cameras send the message that speeding will not be tolerated.^{9, 10}

9. I often see motorists running red lights in my neighbourhood. Do red-light cameras work at reducing this problem?

Yes. Red light cameras have been shown to be effective in reducing red-light running as well as reducing the number of car crashes at an intersection.¹¹ However, based on available research, it is unclear about the effect of red light cameras on pedestrian injury rates.¹²

References:

- ¹ Wisconsin Department of Transportation, *Effectiveness of children at play warning signs* Transportation Synthesis Report, September 25, 2007.
- ² US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, *A Resident's guide to creating safe and walkable communities*. February, 2008
- ³ US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, *A Resident's guide to creating safe and walkable communities*. February, 2008
- ⁴ US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, *A Resident's guide to creating safe and walkable communities*. February, 2008
- ⁵ US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, *A Resident's guide to creating safe and walkable communities*. February, 2008
- ⁶ European Commission, Directorate-General for the Environment, *Kids On the Move*, Office for the Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg, 2002
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/youth/original/air/kids_on_the_move_en.pdf accessed April 2008
- ⁷ Correspondence with the Ecology Action Centre March 2008 www.ecologyaction.ca
- ⁸ Mountain LJ, et al. Are speed enforcement cameras more effective than other speed management measures? The impact of speed management schemes on 30mph roads. *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, 2005, 35:742-754.
- ⁹ *Speed management: a road safety manual for decision-makers and practitioners*. Geneva, Global Road Safety Partnership, 2008, 65.
- ¹⁰ *Bringing down the road toll: the Speed Camera Programme*. Report of the New Zealand Controller and Auditor-General, April 2002 (<http://www.oag.govt.nz/2002/speed-camera/docs/speed-camera.pdf>) Cited in *Speed management: a road safety manual for decision-makers and practitioners*. Geneva, Global Road Safety Partnership, 2008, 65.
- ¹¹ Hakkert, AS and Gitleman, V. The effectiveness of red-light cameras: a meta-analysis of the evaluation studies. *Road and Transport Research*, 2004.
- ¹² Aeron-Thomas AS, Hess S. Red light cameras for the prevention of road traffic crashes. *The Cochrane Database of Systemic Reviews* 2005, Issue 2, 2005.