



# Median Crossing Islands

## Improving pedestrian and bicyclist safety at intersections and mid-block crossings

Median crossing islands visually narrow the roadway, which helps slow motorists. They also turn one longer crossing into two shorter ones, giving pedestrians and bicyclists refuge while they wait for an opportunity to complete the crossing. This makes crossing the street much easier, safer, and less stressful, especially for children, seniors, and people with mobility challenges.

**Crossing islands and raised medians are an FHWA-proven safety countermeasure that can reduce all crashes by 46% and all vehicle-pedestrian crashes by 56%.<sup>1,2,3</sup>**

- 1 REDUCE EXPOSURE**
  - As crossing distances decrease, pedestrians are less exposed to traffic and feel safer crossing the street.
- 2 PROVIDE A SAFE PLACE TO WAIT**
  - At locations with higher traffic volumes, some pedestrians may not be able to find a large enough gap to cross both directions at once.
- 3 SLOW TRAFFIC & ENCOURAGE YIELDING**
  - When motorists approach more slowly and there is good visibility, they are more likely to yield.
  - On single lane approaches, median crossing islands limit a motorist's ability to pass a vehicle that has stopped to yield to a pedestrian.
- 4 PROVIDE SPACE FOR AMENITIES**
  - Crossing islands and raised medians provide space for landscaping and additional roadway signage and lighting.

1 Bahar, G., Maslia, M., Wolff, R., and P. Park. Desktop Reference for Crash Reduction Factors. FHWA-SA-08-011. U.S. Department of Transportation, 2008. Table 11.  
 2 Bahar, G., M. Parkhill, E. Hauer, F. Council, B. Persaud, and C. Zegeer. 2007. Parts I and II of a Highway Safety Manual: Knowledge Base for Part II. (Unpublished material from NCHRP Project 17-27).  
 3 Federal Highway Administration. Proven Safety Countermeasures: Medians and Pedestrian Crossing Islands in Urban and Suburban Areas. FHWA-SA-17-064. [https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/ped\\_medians/](https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/ped_medians/)

## Complementary Measures

Crossing islands should be installed in conjunction with high-visibility crosswalk markings and warning signs. They may be combined with the following treatments to provide additional protection:

- Traffic calming features such as curb extensions and raised crosswalks.
- Pedestrian-activated warning beacons.
- Advanced stop lines.
- Street lighting.

## Where To Use Them

Crossing islands can be installed on any street that has sufficient space, such as streets with a center turn lane, parking lanes, wide travel lanes or curb reaction distances, or other excess width.

Crossing islands are highly desirable in the following locations:<sup>4</sup>

- Mid-block crossings on roads with four or more travel lanes, especially where speed limits are 35 mph or greater and/or where annual average daily traffic (AADT) is 9,000 or higher.
- Uncontrolled pedestrian crossings on roads where motorist yielding is low or crossing opportunities are limited.

<sup>4</sup> Federal Highway Administration. Safe Transportation for Every Pedestrian Countermeasure Tech Sheet: Pedestrian Refuge Island. FHWA-SA-18-062. U.S. Department of Transportation, 2018.



Example of median crossing island on a two-lane street (top) and on a four-lane street with a pedestrian crossing beacon (bottom).

### DESIGN RESOURCES

*MnDOT Traffic Engineering Manual, Chapter 13:  
Non-Motorized Facilities*

*MnDOT Report 2013-22: Minnesota's Best  
Practices for Pedestrian/Bicycle Safety*

*FHWA-HEP-16-005: Achieving Multimodal Networks:  
Applying Design Flexibility and Reducing Conflicts*

### RELATED INFOSHEETS

*Curb Extensions*

*Where To Expect People Walking*

*Enhanced Crossings*