



PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

by Douglas H. Frazer

The safety of our residents is one of the core functions of village government. From time to time, residents approach the village board and staff about perceived hazards to pedestrians. The village board and staff take these concerns seriously. In fact, our study, monitoring, and management of traffic safety issues is not intermittent; it is ongoing.

One set of concerns involves motorists who are speeding. The village has implemented a number of traffic calming measures. These have included radar speed detection signs and street signs. In February of 2018, the village board and staff agreed to try out, on an experimental basis, four way stop signs at the corner of Regent and Bradley Roads. After a year of collecting data, staff concluded that the two additional stop signs made no difference on traffic patterns. That is what is confounding. Traffic safety, the data that is collected nationwide in connection with many different settings and populations, and over many different timeframes, can be counter intuitive. What seems like it should work sometimes has the opposite effect. Take crosswalks. Residents have suggested crosswalks in Fox Point and, in general, crosswalks are an important tool in traffic flow and pedestrian safety. However, the data shows that driver compliance is higher for marked crossings only when their installation is limited and where there is a high incidence of use.

Marked crosswalks can give pedestrians a false sense of security. Often pedestrians may take crossing opportunities assuming they are seen by oncoming vehicles because of the crosswalk. This may not be the case. Studies have suggested that it is often safer for pedestrians when crosswalks are left unmarked because pedestrians are more aware and cross with caution.

Perhaps a logical place for a crosswalk is across Lake Drive at two or three strategic locations. Staff has considered this option and has conducted preliminary analyses on locations at Beach Drive, Dean Road, and Green Tree Road. A more thorough evaluation is needed to consider where the crosswalk is connected on the east side of the road. An additional complication is that motorists are accustomed to a clear path (no stoplights or stop signs) extending from Brown Deer Road on the north to Silver Spring Road on the south.

Finally, the village periodically evaluates what an extensive sidewalk or trail project would entail. A rough estimate of costs suggests that this type of project would be cost prohibitive, particularly when you factor in the utility relocation cost and tree removal expense.

Fortunately, the data indicates that Fox Point currently does not have an overriding hazardous pedestrian or traffic safety issue. By one measure Fox Point ranks 202 in the state in terms of "loss" from bicycle crashes, pedestrian crashes and deer crashes. From 2014 to 2018 the village experienced two pedestrian crashes and two bicycle crashes on local roads. Over the same period the village had seven reported deer crashes.

In short, pedestrian issues in the village are infrequent. Moreover, simply using crosswalks as a safety device may not enhance safety and, perhaps counter intuitively, instead create a larger pedestrian hazard.

Important pedestrian safety tips for all residents to follow:

- Be predictable. Follow the rules of the road, and obey signs and signals.
- Walk on sidewalks when available.
- If no sidewalk, walk facing traffic as far from traffic as possible.
- Keep alert at all times.
- Whenever possible, cross streets at crosswalks or intersections.
- If a crosswalk or intersection is not available, locate a well-lit area where you have the best view of the traffic.
- Be visible. Wear bright clothing during the day and reflective materials or use a flashlight at night.

Traffic safety is an important issue. The village wishes to work closely with its residents to best insure a safe environment for pedestrians.

Douglas H. Frazer is a Fox Point resident and neighborhood contributor as well as the village president. The views expressed are his own and not necessarily those of the Village, the village board, other village board members, or Best Version Media, LLC.

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