



## Crosswalk Information

The Town of Zionsville frequently receives requests to provide marked crosswalks at locations other than intersections where vehicular traffic is required to stop for a sign or signal. A well-planned and well-managed transportation system takes into account all user types and needs, thus providing the safest, most efficient network. This necessarily includes the prudent use of crosswalks where conditions and situations warrant. Many neighborhoods are “just across the street” from a desired destination, whether it be as specific as a school, church or business, or as general as there being a multi-use pathway on the other side of the road. Before thinking that a marked crosswalk will solve an issue, it is important to recognize what marked crosswalks do and don’t do.



In the simplest breakdown there are two types of marked crosswalks. The first type is found at intersections where vehicular traffic is required to stop or yield in accordance with posted stop signs or traffic signals. In these cases, where vehicles are required to stop and follow posted traffic controls, drivers must generally yield to pedestrians before proceeding through an intersection. The second type is found where no stop conditions exist, and the marked crosswalk is away from any stop condition or traffic signal; these are commonly referred to as “mid-block” crossings.

The majority of people, drivers and pedestrians alike, are not aware of who has the right of way at a mid-block crossing, and when. Indiana state statute 9-21-8-36 states, “...when traffic control signals are not in place or not in operation, a person who drives a vehicle shall yield the right-of-way, slowing down or stopping if necessary to yield, to a pedestrian crossing the roadway within a crosswalk when the pedestrian is upon the half of the roadway upon which the vehicle is traveling or when the pedestrian is



*approaching closely from the opposite half of the roadway.”* This law, as stated, directs a driver to yield only when a pedestrian is already in the act of crossing or is otherwise upon the road. It does not give a pedestrian waiting to cross the right of way, rather the pedestrian is required to wait until there is a safe gap in the traffic. In other words, drivers are not required to stop for pedestrians merely waiting to cross. This lack of familiarity with state law invariably leads to confusion. Primarily, the pedestrian wishing to cross at a marked, mid-block crossing develops a false sense of security assuming that traffic will stop for them. Secondly, this pedestrian becomes frustrated that no one is stopping, and may consider making unwise decisions. Finally, when a driver elects to stop to allow a pedestrian cross, a driver coming from the opposite direction may not be aware of the waiting pedestrian. This results in a vehicle stopping travel in one direction, and the pedestrian being unsure about the other driver’s intentions resulting in a stalemate of sorts. When this occurs during peak travel time, significant backups will occur further frustrating even more drivers.

By local ordinance, any new, mid-block crosswalk location must be established by the Town Council. This is accomplished by presenting a request to the Safety Board, which is composed of three of the seven sitting Town Council members. If the Safety Board, upon receipt of the request and consultation with town staff, believes there may be merit, the Board will authorize an engineering study to determine if conditions do, in fact, warrant a marked mid-block crosswalk. As each location is different, an engineering study will look at multiple elements, primarily the number of pedestrians crossing within a certain time period, the posted speed limit, number of travel lanes along with other factors unique to the area. The study will investigate multiple conditions that may not be obvious to the casual observer. A marked crosswalk must support users of all types and be constructed in accordance with the directives of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Simply installing signs and pavement markings is not sufficient. The crosswalk must connect two pedestrian facilities at either side meaning that if no sidewalks exist on one side or another, it is likely not a suitable candidate area. Upon completion of a study, a recommendation is made to the Safety Board for their consideration. If there are suitable warrants and conditions supporting a crosswalk, the recommendation will include appropriate signage types, pavement markings and any other elements based on established engineering standards.

While everyone tends to believe a situation is unique, it is important that mid-block crosswalks mean the same thing across communities. What one is to do in one town should be the same as in any other, so no community should vary from established laws and practices. It is also important to consider that any marked crosswalk, with their inherent level of confusion, disrupts traffic flow. One should reflect on the potential negative impacts of multiple marked crosswalks along a busy roadway; traffic would be constantly stopping for pedestrians while thousands of drivers make their way to and from work and home each day. While the safe and appropriate passage of pedestrians across roadways is of the utmost importance, a legitimate question to pose is if a crosswalk is needed for safety, or merely convenience.