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Specific Pedestrian Best Practices – Recommendations & Resources

First, thank you to Dan Hartman for the response he sent through to our letter of May 12th

I disagree with Dan's assessment that current plans for pedestrians are adequate and believe even a cursory examination of leading literature on the subject demonstrates that Golden falls far short in meeting pedestrian crossings 'best practice'.

A simple review of two leading national set of guidelines - the 'Pedestrian Safety Guide and Countermeasure Selection System' ('PedSafe') and the 'Recommended Guidelines for Crosswalk Installation' – both prepared by the Federal Highway Administration (US Department of Transportation) demonstrates that **Golden fails to meet many of its specific guidelines**. I cite below a range of examples to illustrate this important point.

These and a wide range of other resources on the subject may be found on the Federal Highway Administrations' pedestrian web site (FHWA) at: www.walkinginfo.org/rd/devices.htm or from the list of resources noted at the end of this letter. These FHWA guidelines were based on a major study of 1,000 marked crosswalks and 1,000 unmarked crossings in 30 U.S. cities*

Dan also specifically refers to an outdated and frankly unsupportable assertion that improvements in signage may result in increased pedestrian accident rates. As the Federal Highway Administrations' leading study on the subject notes:

"When citizens request the installation of marked crosswalks, some engineers and planners still refer to the 1972 study by Bruce Herms(3) as justification for not installing marked crosswalks at uncontrolled locations. That study found an increased incidence of pedestrian collisions in marked crosswalks, compared to unmarked crosswalks, at 400 uncontrolled intersections in San Diego, California." 'Safety Effects of Marked vs. Unmarked Crosswalks at Uncontrolled Locations' Executive Summary and Recommended Guidelines Federal Highway Administration FHWA-RD-01-075)

However, the FHWA notes that this **almost 40 year old** "study did **not** conclude that all marked crosswalks are "unsafe" *ibid*. More recent studies, though somewhat contradictory have produced no clear evidence to support Dan's assertion.

The Federal Highway Administration specifically does say: *"installing marked crosswalks should not be regarded as a magic cure for pedestrian safety problems. However, they also should **not** be considered as a negative measure that will necessarily increase pedestrian crashes"* (*ibid*).

I encourage you to look at these resources and make your own assessment of whether Golden meets their guidelines. While the recent investments in crossings are gratifying and welcome I believe that many of Golden's pedestrian crossings still fall far short of many of these recognized 'best practices'.

Just some of the areas in which Golden falls short of these guidelines include:

1. Multi Lane Roadways without Islands.

The Federal Highway Administrations' guidelines specifically note that *"wide multilane roadways without adequate crossing islands create an unsafe environment for many pedestrians"* 'PedSafe – Pedestrian Safety Guide, Federal Highway Administration'.

This is exactly the situation that pedestrians find themselves in crossing both Ford (by Clear Creek) and at several points on Washington. Few if any crossings in Golden have a true refuge island – with the design specifications outlined in these guidelines.

Indeed, given the speeds and traffic volumes at the Washington, Ford and other major city streets – the Federal Highway Administration guidelines suggest a range of changes are warranted including advance and pedestrian signage/signals (see 2.), refuge islands, curb extensions, traffic calming devices and others.

2. Advance Signage & Clear Visibility.

“Advance pedestrian warning signs should be used where pedestrian crossings may not be expected by motorists” PedSafe – Pedestrian Safety Guide, Federal Highway Administration.

There are few if any advance signs at crossings in Golden. The Federal Highway Administration’s guidelines note these are particularly important at mid block crossing locations (eg: Ford at Clear Creek) and in locations where *“there are many motorists who are unfamiliar with the area”* (*ibid*) – such as crossings on the major through roads in town – Ford, Jackson and Washington etc. The Ford at Clear Creek crossing specifically fails another important FHWA guideline – clear visibility of the crossing and signage – with the rise in the road to the bridge and trees obscuring vision of the sign and road markings for drivers heading north on Ford from 12th street.

Other advance signage noted in the Federal Highway Administration guidelines includes road markings indicating where motorists should stop for the crossing. No crossings in Golden have such markings.

3. Pedestrian Signals and Signs.

“Installing traffic signals and pedestrian signals where warranted” .” ‘Safety Effects of Marked vs Unmarked Crosswalks at Uncontrolled Locations’ FHWA.

As noted in our earlier letter – no crossing in Golden outside of those at traffic lights have pedestrian signals.

The Federal Highway Administration guidelines would seem to suggest that such signals are “warranted” (along with other road engineering treatments) on multi lane roads where the speed is 35 miles per hour or higher – ie: crossings on Washington and Ford.

Though the guidelines do not specifically recommend directive signs such as ‘State Law Requires....’ many towns are implementing such signs – which can be seen as part of the all important educational program noted in 5.

4. Pedestrian Guidelines for Americans with Disabilities.

Golden’s sidewalks (or lack thereof) and pedestrian crossings are sometimes challenging for able bodied people – however, they particularly fall short of the guidelines laid out by the Federal Highways Administration to comply with the Americans for Disabilities Act.

I would specifically ask if the City of Golden has completed a review of *“the street system to identify other barriers to accessibility and prioritize the needed improvements”* ‘PedSafe – Pedestrian Safety Guide, Federal Highway Administration’. Such a review is legal requirement of the Rehabilitation Act (1973) and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

5. Education and Enforcement.

PedSafe also discusses the importance of “*programs to enforce existing traffic laws and ordinances for motorists*” ‘PedSafe – Pedestrian Safety Guide, Federal Highway Administration’.

The Golden Police by their own admission put little effort into monitoring pedestrian crossings or enforcing pedestrians’ right of way. As noted in our May 12th letter other Police Departments take more assertive actions. Such traffic enforcement however, is just part of the solution – enforcement and education must include **both** pedestrians and motorists to ensure to both parties are aware of their responsibilities. The Federal Highway Administration lays out a range of education and enforcement programs which the City of Golden should review closely for specific recommendations (see resources below).

In summary, I believe that the City of Golden falls far short in meeting ‘best practice’ in its current pedestrian crossings. The range of examples above and the resources quoted below clearly illustrate this point. Most powerful however, is for anyone to simply see for themselves. Go to a crossing such as at Ford at Clear Creek – ideally at a busy time in the day and see if your experience is ‘pedestrian friendly’.

I repeat our request that the City or the appropriate City agency commission an immediate and urgent review of pedestrian crossings and prepare a set of recommendations based on the best practices cited in this letter – or other resources as appropriate. Hiring an independent, expert consultant may be a sound investment.

If Golden wants to be ‘pedestrian friendly’ there is simply no other option. I also believe there is a moral and legal obligation for the City of Golden to ensure that pedestrian crossings meet ‘best practice’. As the Federal Highway Administration guidelines stress “*People will want to walk everywhere they can, and a comfortable, inviting, and safe environment should be provided for them*”.

Lets make Golden such a city. look forward to your feedback.

Kind Regards



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*** Resources noted below.**

Resources:

- ❖ Pedestrian Safety Guide and Countermeasure Selection System ("PedSafe") prepared by the Federal Highway Administration (US Department of Transportation)
- ❖ Safety Effects of Marked vs. Unmarked Crosswalks at Uncontrolled Locations: Executive Summary, Final Report and Recommended Guidelines. Federal Highway Administration FHWA-RD-01-075
- ❖ Florida Pedestrian and Bicycle Research Reports - Federal Highway Administration
- ❖ The Effects of Innovative Pedestrian Signs at Unsignalized Locations: A Tale of Three Treatments - Federal Highway Administration
- ❖ Year 2 Field Evaluation of Experimental "In-Street" Yield to Pedestrian Signs - Federal Highway Administration
- ❖ An Evaluation of High-Visibility Crosswalk Treatment - Clearwater, Florida - Federal Highway Administration
- ❖ Pedestrian Crosswalk Case Studies: Richmond, Virginia; Buffalo, New York; Stillwater, Minnesota - Federal Highway Administration