

CROSSWALKS ACROSS TOWN

WESTBOROUGH, MA



CROSSWALKS

Location

Westborough, MA

Project size

Ongoing, with 12+ R920
Rectangular Rapid Flashing
Beacons installed since 2012

Client

Town of Westborough, MA

Client website

<https://www.town.westborough.ma.us/>



Photo: Bruce Tretter

Overview

Westborough, Massachusetts, celebrated its 300th anniversary in 2017; incorporated in 1717, it was the state's 100th town. Today, it is home to about 18,000 people in a diverse range of industries who actively enjoy the outdoors and all it has to offer. As such, the town's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee strives to improve the cycling and pedestrian conditions throughout the town by advising various town officials, committees, and departments on proposed recreational paths and physical improvements to street infrastructure. When the committee decided to review options for improving the town's painted crosswalks, they considered both funding restrictions and effectiveness of different crosswalk treatments.

Choosing Carmanah

The committee considered several crosswalk solutions, including standard static signs and in-road reflectors to make the crosswalk more visible. Somebody mentioned crosswalk flashing beacons. "I have to tell you, when I heard that I cringed: are you kidding me?" says Bruce Tretter, committee chair. But he agreed to go look at the crosswalk flashing beacons—also known as rectangular rapid flashing beacons or RRFBs—in a nearby town. Tretter says there were two pairs of RRFBs there where a multiuse trail crossed main roads: one was AC-powered with a bulky post, and "the cars kept going right through it." But the second one, which was a Carmanah light, was smaller, solar-powered, and bright. "That brilliant bright flash combined with the ease of construction, installation, maintenance, and price made Carmanah an immediate and unanimous decision for our committee."

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Our Solution

In this ongoing project, Carmanah has provided 12 pairs of flashing beacons for various locations in Westborough since 2012—with more on the go. “The lights on [the Carmanah] system are exceptionally bright,” Tretter says. Carmanah’s RRFBs are easy to mount or retrofit onto a range of pole types. And as a crosswalk treatment, they offer the best driver yield rate per dollar spent on the system thanks to their irregular flash pattern.

Requirements

Price was an important factor for the installation of crosswalk solutions. Five years ago, Tretter looked at another company for a price comparison on RRFBs. They told him the hardware and installation would total about \$16,000. Meanwhile, Carmanah’s RRFB was less than a third of that price, all in, and it allowed them to install more beacons with their tight budget.

Outcome

Tretter is the first to acknowledge that adoption of any new technology can be slow. “There’s a bit of a culture change, a bit of lag where people aren’t expecting to see it there, and all of a sudden the thing starts flashing—so they go through,” he says. “But once it’s there for a while, I think the stopping rate [improves] exceptionally.”

He spreads the word about the effectiveness of Carmanah’s RRFBs to others, including local developers who

RRFBs IN ACTION



Photo: Bruce Tretter

are adding crosswalk flashing beacons in their projects. He found out they were using “the really expensive ones,” so he sent them an email, introducing them to the Carmanah RRFBs. “It’s going to be a reduction in cost and also, as far as I’m concerned, an improvement in safety,” Tretter says.

“In riding bike trails in other towns, I’ve seen very expensive systems that have automatic, electronic eyes that touch the cyclist as they come through the intersection, and allegedly the lights flash. These lights are just like regular traffic lights with a hood on them. Cyclists can’t see that they’re actually on,” Tretter explains. “With [Carmanah’s], as soon as you push the button, there’s no doubt in your mind if the light is on or not—it’s right there.”

““ Carmanah’s lights work very well, and people in town remark about them. I haven’t heard a single negative comment. ““

– Bruce Tretter, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee Chair