Whether you are trying to cross on a narrow residential street where parked cars limit one’s view or a four-lane state owned highway such as Powell Boulevard it can feel like you are taking great risk to get to the other side.

This tutorial will help those who wish to understand local crosswalk laws, when a marked crossing is the best option, where concerns around unsafe crossings should be addressed and the role that funding plays in crosswalk decisions.

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1. WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Before taking any action please consider what your objective in advocating for a marked-crosswalk is, as they are not always the appropriate solution. Understanding your objective will help you in taking the correct action. Are you hoping for:

- a. Increased pedestrian safety and improved infrastructure?

- b. More enforcement around crosswalk violations?

- c. Reduced speeds and traffic calming on your street?

Jump to section 7.
First and foremost it is important to recognize that every corner is a crosswalk in the City of Portland. Cars are required, by law, to give the pedestrian the right-of-way. Portland Bureau of Transportation generally will not mark crosswalks at unsignalized locations, particularly if they are multi-lane streets, unless there are additional Improvements that increase safety of pedestrians.

EVERY CORNER, marked or unmarked, is a crosswalk!
If someone shows intent to walk cars must stop!
3. IS A MARKED CROSSWALK THE BEST SOLUTION?

The question is whether a marked-crosswalk will make pedestrians safer or not.

Studies show that marked crosswalks without signals or additional infrastructure such as; islands, signage and appropriate landscaping, give pedestrians a false sense of security, decreasing, rather than increasing, safety.

Circumstances, in which a crosswalk may be considered, according to the Traffic Investigation’s Traffic Manual, are

- To help orient pedestrians in finding their way across a complex intersection
- To help show pedestrians the shortest route across traffic with the least exposure to vehicular traffic and traffic conflicts.
- To help position pedestrians where they can be seen best by oncoming traffic.

Traffic Manual SOURCE

Crosswalks may be marked under other unique circumstances in which a pedestrian’s safety is not further compromised. Even if you do not have The City of Portland’s desired infrastructural components you may still pursue advocacy for a marked crosswalk.

For more detailed information on marked vs. unmarked-crosswalks pertaining to safety please reference the Zeeger Report.
4. Who should you contact about your concerns?

a. First, you will need to determine who owns the road. Both Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) and Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) have jurisdiction over streets within city limits. If you are concerned about a residential street in all likelihood you will be contacting the city bureau, however if you are concerned about a major thoroughfare such as Powell Blvd (State Highway 26) or 82nd Avenue (State Highway 213) you may need to contact the state bureau.

b. REPORT, REPORT, REPORT. In any and all instances please call (503)823-SAFE. From here your concern will be addressed by an engineer to determine what, if any, action will be taken.

c. Your neighborhood Association (NA) is also a good “first stop” as many of them are familiar with the Bureau of Transportation and already have established relationships with city staff. They are also a great resource if you wish to gain advocacy support from the community. To find out how to address your neighbors and get on your neighborhood association’s agenda visit SE Uplift’s website.

PBOT
503-823-5185

ODOT
1-888-ASK-ODOT

Report ALL traffic safety concerns to 503-823-SAFE

Need community support to advocate for your desired safety improvement? Visit your neighborhood association
5. WHAT IF TRAFFIC NEVER STOPS?

If the question is not whether a crossing is marked or not, but rather a question of enforcement, there are several options:

a. **Oregon Walks** is a nonprofit organization that helps concerned citizens take the right approach when advocating for safer crossings. From “crosswalk actions” to workshops on pedestrian safety they have many resources available.

b. Find out if there is has been a recent [crosswalk enforcement action](#) at the intersection of concern.

c. Talk with your neighborhood association and area businesses/institutions to advocate for their support in requesting enforcement efforts.

Find out which [neighborhood](#) you live in.
6. WHAT ROLE DOES FUNDING PLAY?

As mentioned above in the excerpt from the Traffic Manual (section 3) there are specific reasons for providing a marked crosswalk and it is unlikely that a crosswalk will be marked unless these criteria are met. Additionally, more than just a crosswalk is generally warranted. Signals, islands, landscape improvements and other infrastructure can be a necessary part of installing a marked crossing. These infrastructural improvements can range from a few thousand dollars for a painted crosswalk to hundreds of thousands of dollars for a traffic signal. Funding is always a factor and can shape the outcome.

FUNDING OPTIONS TO CONSIDER:

a. Is there a new development, and therefore a developer, that may have an interest in providing additional infrastructural improvements?

b. Are there potential programs or grant funds available for pedestrian or bicycle infrastructure?
   • Safe routes to schools
   • Bicycle infrastructure & safety improvements
   • Portland Development Commission’s Community Livability Grant

c. Are there community members, nonprofit organizations or corporations that may have a stake in the intersection in question?

Find out which neighborhood you live in
7. IF YOUR OBJECTIVE IS “TRAFFIC-CALMING”, CROSSWALKS ARE NOT THE ANSWER.

Fortunately or unfortunately crosswalks are not considered traffic calming devises by The City of Portland or The State of Oregon. If your concerns are around visibility, speed and safety or unclear signage, please consider these alternative infrastructural upgrades:

a. Improved landscaping
b. Tree planting and/or trimming
c. Speed bumps
d. Round-a-bouts
e. Intersection repair & murals
f. More ideas found here and here. The web is chalk-full of great ideas that people are trying all around the globe.

“Intersection Repair is the citizen led conversion of an urban street intersection into public square.”

“These spaces are designed in ways that make drivers move more slowly and expect pedestrians.”

-City Repair
8. WHAT OTHER RESOURCES ARE THERE REGARDING CROSSWALKS AND SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS?

a. Oregon Department of Transportation Brochure
b. Know Your Signals
c. Crosswalk Brochure from ODOT
d. Portland Walks--Video
e. Every Corner Is A Crosswalk Animated Film Short
f. Traffic Safety Law Animated Film Short

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