

Demonstration Project Questions & Answers

Q: What is the purpose of a demonstration project?

A: Demonstration projects are short-term projects (1-2 weeks in duration) that are intended to instantly improve safety for those walking and to make drivers more aware of where people are crossing a roadway. They serve as a low-cost method of “demonstrating” techniques that can be used to improve pedestrian safety.

Q: What is a pedestrian island?

A: Pedestrian islands are located in the middle of the road to act as a refuge should a pedestrian begin crossing the road and a vehicle not yield. However, pedestrian islands have proven to be an effective way to slow vehicle traffic and increase yield rates at crossings. Further, Pedestrian islands are effective as people walking only have to cross one direction of traffic at a time while also reducing the distance of the crossing, both of which aid in improved safety.

Q: What is a curb extension?

A: Curb extensions are installed along side of roadways to shorten the crossing distance for a pedestrian and to improve both the visibility for drivers and pedestrians.

These are often used on roadways with on-street parking near a crosswalk or intersection. The image on the left shows the view for a pedestrian when standing along a traditional curb at a crossing. Parked vehicles block the view of oncoming traffic. The picture on the right shows the view for a pedestrian when the curb extension is allowed. The pedestrian is able to see approaching vehicles better and motorists are able to see the pedestrian before they enter the roadway.



Q: Why aren't crosswalks included with the demonstration projects?

A: The demonstration projects are intended to be temporary (1-2 week) projects that use inexpensive materials. The paint used for the demonstration projects is tempera paint and does not hold up well to vehicle traffic. Crosswalk installation also requires traffic control and lane closures, both of which add cost and difficulty to these simple projects.

Q: Why are curb extensions & pedestrian islands being tested instead of building missing sidewalks?

A: Demonstration projects are intended to improve the safety of existing crossings and facilities. While it would be ideal to build missing sidewalks so that pedestrians to limit street crossings, this requires a significant amount money and time. The demonstration projects try to instantly improve safety until more long-term projects, like sidewalks, can be installed.

Q: What is the purpose of the pedestrian island and what impact does it have on vehicle turning movements?

A: Pedestrian islands are really intended to improve the safety of the roadway by making the road feel narrower to motorists. While the island does not encroach into the driving lane, the vertical delineators (the posts) make the road feel tighter, causing drivers to slow down or use more caution near them.

Likewise, vehicles must use more caution when turning as the pedestrian island does not allow vehicles to “cheat” the turn. All the turning radii used for the demonstration projects meet engineering standards and are reviewed by a licensed engineer.

The picture to the right is a good example of how motorists have been improperly turning. For many drivers this habit has become comfortable and the demonstration projects requires changing driving behavior.



Q: Wouldn't flashing beacons at these crossings be more effective?

A: Flashing beacons are a great countermeasure to improve pedestrian safety, but they are costly and take time to install. The demonstration projects instantly improve safety until more permanent projects can be constructed. Often times curb extensions and pedestrian islands are used in conjunction with flashing beacons.

Q: I have observed vehicles not yielding to pedestrians standing in the pedestrian island. Does this mean they aren't effective?

A: The demonstration projects do not change the behavior of all drivers immediately. The demonstration projects change the roadway environment and add safety features, but they can't change a driver's decisions. However, studies have shown that curb extensions and pedestrian islands result in more drivers yield to pedestrians more often. Often the demonstration projects will make drivers more aware of a crossing or encourage slower vehicle speeds, but they are not an enforcement tool. This is a great example of how engineering and construction projects aren't the only solution to pedestrian safety. It takes engineering, education (both for drivers and pedestrians), and enforcement to create a safe walking environment.

Q: What happens when the demonstration project is removed?

A: The city or county can decide to make no improvements after the demonstration project is removed. Or, the jurisdiction can opt to move forward with a semi-permanent or permanent project. The demonstration project design may be modified before moving forward. Semi-permanent projects are cost-effective, can be implemented quickly, and last for several years. Permanent construction usually consists of concrete, which is expensive and can take several months or years to implement.