

Bergenthal, Dan

From: Branyan, George (DDOT) [George.Branyan@dc.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, January 17, 2006 9:40 AM
To: 'David Levinger'
Cc: Bergenthal, Dan
Subject: RE: Hi! Ped Flag study...?

Hello David:

We have done one evaluation of the flags but we still need a more complete policy for their use. I have only had one request for an additional flag location so far. I am proceeding with an operational policy of only installing the flags at commercial nodes on roadways with no more than 4 travel lanes and speed limits of 30 mph or less. While the study below shows strong increases in compliance by drivers, I have some reservations. I would rather get better compliance through awareness and enforcement, but my police are moving rather slowly in that direction. I have had reports that pedestrians use them in very different ways, and this worries me a bit. Some people follow the instructions on the plaque, but some act like crossing guards and walk out and stand in the middle of the road waving the flags to stop traffic. I worry about a multiple threat crash caused by a distracted and speeding driver.

While I do not hold to the oft abused notion of "a false sense of security" by pedestrians, I would say that some people are "emboldened" by the flags. Not a bad thing per se, but it really needs to be backed up by better awareness and enforcement on drivers. If we install them at another location, I want to make sure we get the message out to the community in a way that increases the consistency of how the flags are used. We have had two pedestrians with flags hit at this location (driver at fault in both).

We had Michael Baker Associates conduct a small scale pedestrian safety study at one of the two flag intersections in Chevy Chase in June of last year. Here are some excerpts from the study:

Location:

The flags are in use at the intersection of Connecticut Avenue and Morrison St., NW, Washington, DC. The closest signalized intersections are Connecticut Ave. and McKinley Street, approximately 350 feet to the north, and Connecticut Ave. and Livingston Street, approximately 370 feet to the south. Connecticut Avenue at this intersection is 6 lanes wide with two travel lanes in each direction and curbside parking. The posted speed limit is 30 mph. The 85th percentile combined N/S travel speed is 32 mph. The land use characteristics in this area include mixed neighborhood retail and residential. It is one of many commercial nodes along DC's major arterials.

Traffic Control Compliance:

A survey was conducted to determine driver compliance to pedestrian safety devices employed at the intersection. Of particular importance to the study was driver compliance to standard workman's flags which are provided to aid pedestrians in crossing Connecticut Avenue at that intersection. 50 pedestrians were surveyed. Of that number, 30% used the flags as an aid in crossing. The survey also showed that 18% of the pedestrians did not have a flag available at the flag stand for use when crossing. This is because all flags were on the other side of Connecticut Avenue at the time of crossing.

Pedestrians who crossed using the flags crossed the roadway in two phases. It was

observed that approaching drivers on the side of the roadway closest to the crossing pedestrians yielded to the pedestrians first. As the pedestrians reached the centerline of the roadway, vehicles traveling on the other side of the roadway yielded to the crossing pedestrians. The observed compliance rate was approximately 92.5% for pedestrians with flags.

For pedestrians without flags, it was observed that 73% of drivers DID NOT YIELD to the pedestrians in the crosswalk. These pedestrians were forced to await a gap in traffic in order to cross the roadway. The majority of these pedestrians used a gap in traffic in one direction to get to the centerline. After reaching the centerline, these pedestrians waited for an available gap in the other direction.

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BTW, the Washington Post had an article on the well behaved nature of Seattle-ites (?) including the pedestrians. It noted that it is not unusual to see a person standing on a corner in the middle of the night in the rain with no cars coming in either direction dutifully waiting for the WALK signal! Does this mean drivers are better behaved towards pedestrians??

Here's the link:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/12/AR2006011202135.html>

Take care,

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-----Original Message-----

From: David Levinger [mailto:david@feetfirst.info]
Sent: Thursday, January 12, 2006 4:54 PM
To: George Branyan
Cc: Dan.Bergenthal@slcgov.com
Subject: Hi! Ped Flag study...?

Hi George,

I am coming out to DC for TRB. Are you attending?

I'm interested in learning whether you've done any evaluation of the ped flag installations there? I'm cc'ing Dan Bergenthal from Salt Lake City. My email is inspired by another inquiry from the City of San Diego. You will likely receive a contact from them, too.

Best,

David

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David Levinger, PhD, PE
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