

Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs)

Frequently Asked Questions

- **What is an RRFB?**

A Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon, or RRFB, is a pedestrian-activated warning device that consists of yellow LED rectangular flashing lights that draw attention to the crossing and provide information to approaching traffic that a bicyclist or pedestrian is trying to cross the street. Once the RRFB is activated, the rectangular-shaped beacons will begin to flash in an alternating, irregular pattern that is similar to emergency flashers on police vehicles.



- **What are the safety benefits of an RRFB?**

RRFBs are low-cost safety improvements that have been proven to enhance pedestrian safety at uncontrolled, mid-block crosswalk locations. The top three benefits of an RRFB are:

1. Improved “yield to pedestrian” compliance from motorists ,
2. Increased visibility and awareness of pedestrians and bicyclists who wish to cross the street, and
3. Clearly communicates with approaching motorists that there may be someone in the marked crosswalk when the beacons are flashing, reducing the threat of a rear-end crash for motorists who are yielding to a path user.

- **Why did we install an RRFB at the Badger State Trail crossing of McKee Road (CTH PD)?**

The City of Fitchburg wanted to improve the safety of the Badger State Trail crossing of CTH “PD” (McKee Road). Since the Badger State Trail was opened in 2010, there has been continued concern from both bicyclists and motorist over the at-grade crossing of McKee Road. The major concerns that have been expressed include the following:

- A lack of yielding to bicyclists and pedestrians from motorists,
- Safety concerns related to bicyclists and pedestrians having to cross 2 active lanes of traffic, and
- Concerns from motorists of being rear-ended if/when they yield to path users
- Confusion on who, or when, to yield to path users

The addition of the RRFBs will address all four of these concerns. It will provide a clear warning to approaching traffic in both lanes of McKee Road that someone is at the crossing and is trying to cross the street. The yellow flashing lights will alert drivers to the crossing and remind drivers of their requirement to yield to all path users.

- **How does the RRFB work at the Badger State Trail crossing of McKee Road?**

The RRFBs at the Badger State Trail crossing of McKee Road are designed to allow a pedestrian or bicyclist to cross one direction of travel at a time. This means that once a pedestrian reaches

the median, they will need to push a second button to activate flashers for the opposing direction of travel. This approach was chosen for many reasons. First, to cross all of McKee Road at once is a long distance which would require a longer flash time. The goal was to minimize the flash time in each direction of travel and only have the lights flash for the direction of travel that a person was actively trying to cross. Also, depending on the time of day, it may not be necessary to push the button to cross both directions of McKee Road. At times when traffic volumes are low in one direction, a person can choose to cross without activating the flashers.

- **For Motor Vehicle Drivers:**

- **Who am I supposed to yield to at a crosswalk?**

At shared-use path crossings such as Badger State Trail, drivers are supposed to yield the right-of-way to any path user who is in the marked crosswalk. This includes bicyclists and pedestrians. In the case of the Badger State Trail, bicyclists are required to stop before entering the crosswalk. However, once stopped, bicyclists are allowed to enter the crosswalk in the same manner as a pedestrian and should be yielded to by drivers similar to pedestrians.

- **What am I supposed to do when I see the flashing lights?**

If you see flashing lights as you approach a pedestrian crossing, watch carefully for bicyclists and pedestrians who may be trying to cross the road. If you see someone who is waiting to cross, make eye contact and slow down your vehicle to communicate that you're going to yield the right-of-way. Once the person has crossed your path and is safely out of your lane of travel, you may continue slowly through the crosswalk.

- **For Pedestrians and Bicyclists:**

- **What do I do once I push the button?**

Once you push the button to activate the flashers, look in the direction of approaching traffic to determine when, or if, it is safe to enter the crosswalk. Before entering the crosswalk, be sure that approaching traffic in both lanes of travel have seen you and are slowing down or stopping to allow you to cross. Once you get to the median, push a second button to activate the flashers for the opposing direction of travel. Again, look in the direction of approaching traffic, wait for traffic to yield in both lanes of travel and enter the crosswalk. Continue to watch traffic as you cross the road until you are safely across the street.

- **Can I still cross the road if I don't push the button?**

Yes. It is not required for you to push the button and activate the RRFBs. Use of the RRFBs is optional and dependent on your comfort level to use them. If traffic is light on McKee Road, it may not be necessary to use the RRFBs at all.