

About WalkBoston

WalkBoston plays an important role ensuring walker-friendly/safe designs and has an impressive record of getting cities, towns, state agencies, developers, institutions, and elected officials to provide for the needs of walkers. Every additional dollar helps our message be heard. Donate online at walkboston.org.

We work to transform communities into more walkable places and reintroduce people to walking as a convenient, healthy and low-cost transportation choice. People who depend on walking most especially benefit from our advocacy.

How we can help you

- Advise on walking improvements for your community.
- Provide guidance, moral support, technical assistance.
- Present on ped design, advocacy and Ped101.
- Help set up advocacy groups and strengthen them.
- Demonstrate how these techniques are working across Massachusetts and elsewhere.

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45 School Street | Boston MA 02108 | 617.367.9255 | www.walkboston.org



simple fixes for walkable streets



MAKING MASSACHUSETTS MORE WALKABLE



Codman Square/2015: After a student was hit while crossing the street, WalkBoston helped Codman Academy students and teachers improve safety near the school. The students learned how to do a walk audit and presented their findings to the Boston Transportation Department (BTD). BTD installed the improvements shown as one of the City's first Vision Zero projects. All of these changes are low-cost and effective safety measures.

Short money goes a long way toward improving walking conditions

Communities can make real change to the safety and quality of their streets without spending a lot of money. Featured here are nearly two dozen proven low-cost ways to create safe, dynamic, accessible spaces for all people who use them – and many require only some paint. Each tool falls in one of four categories: create relationships, paint with a purpose, add signs or make streets lively. These solutions help create clear and safer behaviors for everyone.

These modest changes are a great place for communities to start improving the safety of their streets. Approval and completion of projects like these are often easier than projects requiring engineering changes to the built environment, such as curbs and raised crossings. These simple fixes can either be permanent or used to test design alternatives before choosing a final design or investing in construction.

Finding funds to make changes in streets can be a challenge. Many of the methods described here are so inexpensive that community residents can

try them out on a shoestring budget. For example, an in-street yield sign costs less than \$300, and a “Drive like your kids live here” yard sign costs less than \$20.

The photos above illustrate a variety of simple changes that create a safer environment for walking, biking and driving. By using paint and temporary flex posts the crossing distance was shortened, travel lanes were narrowed and visibility at the crossing was greatly improved.

One last piece of low-cost advice: Before any physical changes are made, an important step toward improving safety is fostering good communication, both with and between decision-makers and with your neighbors.

WalkBoston's toolkit “Strategies for improving pedestrian safety through low-cost traffic calming” summarizes dozens of local projects, providing objectives, impacts and costs. Many photos show these low-cost fixes in action.

Download it for free at walkboston.org/low-cost.



Create relationships

IT'S FREE AND MAY BE THE MOST EFFECTIVE TOOL

Know the actors: Identify the decision-makers (elected officials; planning, public works and police departments; traffic and parking commissioners, etc.). Explain your concerns, while being mindful of their challenges. When things go right, thank them privately and publicly—make them part of the safety team.

Work with neighbors: Local residents always have ideas for improving safety. Make your positive presence felt at community meetings. Contribute to and support plans that are tailored to encourage safe walking and community vitality.

Encourage a cohesive municipal approach: A holistic, consistent and clearly communicated approach to safety, design, education and enforcement serves a community well. Work toward understanding standard safety improvements for pedestrians and community priorities. Question plans that do not advance pedestrian safety.

Promote ideas that are low cost and achievable: Small-scale, low-cost installations can be tried prior to permanent projects, and can help to get community buy-in for permanent improvements.

Provide alternatives: If poorly conceived or designed projects are promoted, offer better solutions based on best practices. Get assistance from knowledgeable traffic engineers, planners, landscape architects, lawyers or WalkBoston.

Design: Garfinkle Design/ninagarfinkle.com



Paint with a purpose

IMMEDIATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Well-marked crosswalks: Intersections and heavily-used midblock crossings need wide, well-painted crosswalks. A 10-foot crosswalk is ideal. Keep the paint fresh to ensure visibility. Signs may be needed to make pedestrians aware of unexpected traffic movements such as right turns on red.

Lane markings: Painting fog lines – the road edge lines that define a single vehicle lane of 10 or 11 feet – helps reduce vehicle speeds. Stripes that mark parking lanes and bicycle lanes have a similar effect.

Curb bump-outs: Make streets narrower by painting a curb extension directly on the street. Bump-outs make walkers more visible, shorten crossing distances and provide larger waiting areas.

Tighter corners: A tight painted corner (think small downtown vs. highway interchange) makes drivers reduce their speeds when turning. This also shortens the crossing distance for walkers.

Improved visibility at intersections: “Daylighting” an intersection, as in the photo above, refers to providing clear sight lines between pedestrians crossing and drivers in cars. People walking and driving can see one another better if vehicles are parked farther back from corners and crosswalks.

Advanced yield “shark teeth” markings: Triangles painted directly on the street warn drivers of an upcoming crossing so they are reminded to slow down.



Make streets lively

TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT FEATURES

Parklets: Usually created in one or more on-street parking spaces, parklets create new sidewalk space for people to gather, sit or eat. Additionally, when people gather closer to the roadway, drivers automatically slow down. A parklet can be a seasonal and temporary installation, ideally located in a business district.

Pop-up parks: Often larger than a parklet and can enliven underutilized public sidewalks, streets, or plazas for people to use. For instance they might take over an entire street on a summer Sunday to encourage walking or create a place for seating and games. They are always temporary.

Benches: Places to sit allow old and young to eat, rest, talk, gather, enjoy the weather and read.

Trees & Planters: In addition to providing shade, beauty and improving environmental conditions, street trees are a useful safety tool, making streets feel narrower and slowing traffic. Planters create a safety buffer between vehicles and people walking.

Banners: Overhead banners help create a sense of place and a distinctive community character. They can add decorative elements to a streetscape and advertise events.

Lighting: Pedestrian-scale lighting (about 12–16 feet high) illuminates sidewalks, benches, bus stops and other amenities that make walking feel comfortable. Temporary holiday and event lighting creates an inviting sense of place.



Add signs

IN, OVER AND BESIDE THE STREET

In street yield to ped signs: A reflective, flexible sign in the middle of an unsignalized crossing reminds people driving that they must yield to people walking. These signs narrow travel lanes and slow traffic.

Pedestrian crossing signs: Roadside signs provide visual cues for drivers to slow down and look for people in crosswalks. They can be mounted on reflective posts or include flashing lights to improve their visibility.

Slow zone signs: Drivers can be warned that reduced speed limits are in place for schools, senior centers, parks, etc.

Wayfinding signs: These help people find their way around a community and encourage walking. They can include directional arrows, walk times and distances to local landmarks and services. Sign systems can be permanent or temporary.

Resources

HOW TO'S AND FUNDING

- WalkBoston Toolkit: walkboston.org/low-cost
- MAPC Technical Assistance Program: mapc.org/TAP
- MassDOT: masscompletestreets.com
- ioby: crowdfunding that helps neighbors grow good ideas one block at a time. ioby.org
- Tactical Urbanist's Guide: tacticalurbanismguide.com
- Boston Complete Streets: bostoncomplete-streets.org