



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

ROGER BERLINER
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 1

CHAIRMAN
TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM

November 2, 2016

TO: Montgomery County Delegation

FROM: Councilmember Roger Berliner, Chair, T&E Committee

SUBJECT: HAWK Signals

As you know, State Highway Administration (SHA) officials have pointed to the Maryland Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MdMUTCD) as their rationale for rejecting the installation of High-Intensity Activated crossWalk (HAWK) signals in the communities we represent. Despite extensive guidance on where and how to use HAWK signals in Chapter 4F of the Federal Highway Administration's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, the MdMUTCD's Chapter 4F contains only this sentence: "Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons shall not be used in Maryland."

The reasons for this change from the federal guidelines are not clear to me. What is clear to me, however, is that HAWK signals can improve pedestrian safety on SHA-administered roads. I am asking that you give serious consideration to introducing legislation during the 2017 General Assembly that would require the state to adopt either 1) the Federal Highway Administration Manual or 2) the specific language of Chapter 4F in the Federal Highway Administration Manual.

HAWK signals are used at marked pedestrian crossings that do not meet warrants for standard traffic signals. The signal remains dark to allow traffic to move through unless a pedestrian activates the device's push-button. At that time, drivers will generally see a flashing yellow signal for a few seconds, then a solid yellow signal indicating they should slow down and prepare to stop, followed by a double solid red signal requiring them to stop. This will allow the pedestrian to cross safely until the double red signals begin flashing. The signal will then go dark until activated again by a pedestrian.

A July 2010 study of HAWK signals by the Federal Highway Administration found that vehicle and pedestrian crashes were reduced by 69 percent. Another 2010 study of HAWK signals in Kansas found 97 percent of drivers complied with the signals, more than at crossings with a traditional signal or continuously flashing yellow signals. The District of Columbia, which employs HAWK signals on high-traffic roadways, has found that only about 1 in 4 drivers are willing to stop for pedestrians in non-signalized crosswalks, despite it being required by District law.



HAWK Signal in Arizona, via Federal Highway Administration

There is no reason why we shouldn't be using these signals at popular non-signalized crosswalks across Old Georgetown Road, Wisconsin Avenue, Massachusetts Avenue and others.

I was the lead sponsor of legislation requiring Montgomery County to establish a framework and deadline for a Vision Zero campaign to achieve zero traffic deaths. The work of the County's Vision Zero Working Group is ongoing, with a recommended action plan expected early next year. We have already seen too many tragedies occur in crosswalks, making improved crosswalk safety critical in the Vision Zero effort. HAWK signals are a proven solution in this regard that I believe we must embrace.

I look forward to working with you on this issue.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roger Berliner".

Roger Berliner
Councilmember, District 1
Chair, Transportation, Infrastructure
Energy & Environment Committee

