

WBWC Pedestrian Campaign **Step One: Revise Ann Arbor's Pedestrian Ordinance (10:148)**

Problem: Motorists fail to yield to pedestrians at crosswalks in Ann Arbor which creates barriers in our community for the disabled, elderly and children, a safety issue for all of us, and furthers the "cars-rule" mentality prevalent in Michigan.

Goal: All pedestrians, regardless of ability or age, can cross the street safely and with ease at marked crosswalks across the City.

Proposed Solution:

- **Step 1:** Revise Ann Arbor's ordinance (Chapter 26, 10:148) to require motorists to yield for pedestrians both waiting to cross and within a marked crosswalk.
- Step 2: Develop and launch an innovative public education campaign to educate motorists of their responsibilities.
- Step 3: Develop and implement an on-going, coordinated targeted enforcement and public education campaign for motorists that fail to follow the law.

Background

In May 2009, WBWC hosted "Walk, Talk and Chalk" – an event which brought together community members for a walk around Ann Arbor's west side with the objective of identifying key issues that affect pedestrians. Participants identified a number of barriers to walking such as connectivity, sidewalk maintenance, poor enforcement, motorist behavior, and urban design; however, motorist behavior at crosswalks jumped to the top of the list as one of the top barriers to walking in Ann Arbor.

The Need for Improved Walkability in Ann Arbor

Although it is true that Ann Arbor has many of the attributes of a walkable city, and we have won many awards we can take pride in, we still have much work to do. You need only look to North Main Street with its crumbling sidewalks, urban design problems, connectivity issues and lack of focus on the pedestrian experience to know we can not yet rest on our laurels.

Furthermore, we're seeing a disturbing trend in Ann Arbor. The number of individuals walking to work has decreased in Ann Arbor—from 18% in 1980 to approximately 14% today. And, the number of pedestrian and vehicle crashes has increased in Ann Arbor each year since 2004 (43 crashes, 45 in 2005, 52 in 2008).

It is vital that City staff and policy makers remain committed to making Ann Arbor a more walkable city. Walking is by far the most popular recreational activity in Ann Arbor (2005-2011 PROS Plan). And, in addition to having great public support, walking also has great public health and environmental benefits and it creates a stronger sense of place by getting people out and interacting with the community in which they live. And the icing on the cake... walkable cities are a key ingredient to attracting new residents. Research continues to show that young professionals and empty-nesters want to live in walkable communities.



A²Walks

For many of the group members, 3rd and Huron (the intersection where the YMCA is located) was frustrating, but crossable, if the walkers were willing to dart across the street when there was a break in traffic. However, for a few of our disabled walkers, the intersection proved to be impassable. Because motorists did not stop at this marked intersection to allow pedestrians to cross, they were unable to cross the street without endangering themselves. We were also disturbed to discover that some of the residents at Lurie Terrace, the senior center on Huron Street, are actually taxied across the street to the YMCA to work out because Huron Street presents too great a risk for them to cross.

After the Walk, Talk and Chalk event, we visited other crosswalks across Ann Arbor to see if pedestrians fared better elsewhere. Sadly, they do not. For a look at motorist behavior at crosswalks across town, check out our video available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xsT5ZJUnBg0>

In October 2009, WBWC hosted a pedestrian forum, the first in the city and perhaps the state, examining the issue of motorist behavior at crosswalks and its relationship to our pedestrian ordinance. WBWC wanted to determine if 1) our pedestrian ordinances provided sufficient protection for pedestrians and simply need to be enforced or 2) if revisions were necessary before the start of an education and enforcement campaign.

The Forum was moderated by WBWC and the panel included the following experts and community leaders: Susan Pollay, DDA Director; Eli Cooper, Transportation Manager; Pat Cawley, Project Manager Engineering; Officer Elizabeth Patton from AAPD, Kristen Larcom, City Attorney; Carolyn Grawi, Advocacy and Education Director for the Center for Independent Living; Robert Wagner, Director of Lurie Terrace the Senior Center on Huron Street; and Rory Neuner, Urban Policy Specialist for the Michigan Environmental Council.

The forum produced clear findings. Ann Arbor's current ordinance lacks clarity for enforcement and doesn't meet the needs of pedestrians trying to cross the street. It is not reasonable or safe to expect pedestrians, particularly children, elderly individuals, or the disabled, to step in front of a moving vehicle to get it to stop. Simplification of the ordinance and broadening it to require motorists to yield not only for pedestrians in the crosswalk, *but also for pedestrians waiting to cross*, is an important first step to improve the pedestrian environment in Ann Arbor. Once the ordinance is revised, an on-going public education and targeted enforcement campaign will be vital to changing motorist behavior.