Medians and Pedestrian Refuge Islands in Urban and Suburban Areas

A **median** is the area between opposing lanes of traffic, excluding turn lanes. Medians in urban and suburban areas can be defined by pavement markings, raised medians, or islands to separate motorized and non-motorized road users.

A **pedestrian refuge island** (or crossing area) is a median with a refuge area that is intended to help protect pedestrians who are crossing a road.

Pedestrian crashes account for approximately 17 percent of all traffic fatalities annually, and 74 percent of these occur at non-intersection locations. For pedestrians to safely cross a roadway, they must estimate vehicle speeds, determine acceptable gaps in traffic based on their walking speed, and predict vehicle paths. Installing a median or pedestrian refuge island can help improve safety by allowing pedestrians to cross one direction of traffic at a time.

Transportation agencies should consider medians or pedestrian refuge islands in curbed sections of urban and suburban multilane roadways, particularly in areas with a significant mix of pedestrian and vehicle traffic, traffic volumes over 9,000 vehicles per day, and travel speeds 35 mph or greater. Medians/refuge islands should be at least 4-ft wide, but preferably 8 ft for pedestrian comfort. Some example locations that may benefit from medians or pedestrian refuge islands include:

- Mid-block crossings.
- Approaches to multilane intersections.
- Areas near transit stops or other pedestrian-focused sites.

**Safety Benefits:**

**Median with Marked Crosswalk**

46% reduction in pedestrian crashes.\(^2\)

**Pedestrian Refuge Island**

56% reduction in pedestrian crashes.\(^2\)

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