



Medians and Pedestrian Crossing Islands in Urban and Suburban Areas



Median and pedestrian crossing islands near a roundabout.

Source: www.pedbikeimages.org / Dan Burden

SAFETY BENEFITS:

RAISED MEDIAN

46%

Reduction in pedestrian crashes

PEDESTRIAN CROSSING ISLAND

56%

Reduction in pedestrian crashes

Source: *Desktop Reference for Crash Reduction Factors*, FHWA-SA-08-011, September 2008, Table 11.



Example of a road with a median and pedestrian crossing islands.

Source: City of Charlotte, North Carolina



Example of a pedestrian crossing island.

Source: pedbikeimages.org / Dan Burden

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 crossing island** (or refuge area) is a raised island, located between opposing traffic lanes at intersection or midblock locations, which separate crossing pedestrians from motor vehicles.

Pedestrian crashes account for approximately 15 percent of all traffic fatalities annually, and over 75 percent of these occur at non-intersection locations.¹ For pedestrians to safely cross a roadway, they must estimate vehicle speeds, adjust their walking speed, determine gaps in traffic, and predict vehicle paths. Installing raised medians or pedestrian crossing islands can help improve safety by simplifying these tasks and allowing pedestrians to cross one direction of traffic at a time.

Transportation agencies should consider medians or pedestrian crossing islands in curbed sections of urban and suburban multi-lane roadways, particularly in areas with a significant mix of pedestrian and vehicle traffic and intermediate or high travel speeds. Some example locations that may benefit from raised medians or pedestrian crossing islands include:

- Mid-block areas.
- Approaches to multi-lane intersections.
- Areas near transit stops or other pedestrian-focused sites.

¹ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, *Traffic Safety Facts - 2015 Data - Pedestrians*. Report DOT HS 812 375, (Washington, DC: 2017).

→ For more information on this and other FHWA Proven Safety Countermeasures, please visit <https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures>.



Safe Roads for a Safer Future
Investment in roadway safety saves lives