

## **TRAFFIC AND SAFETY INFORMATIONAL SERIES FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION #24**

### **WHY DON'T WE HAVE CROSSING GUARDS AT ALL SCHOOL CROSSINGS?**

The primary objective at a school pedestrian crossing is the protection of children. The chances of meeting this objective increase if the school children and drivers can easily interpret, understand, and follow the traffic control devices (e.g., signs) in the area of the crossing. This understanding is accomplished by keeping the signing and/or traffic control within school zones consistent throughout a particular jurisdiction. Adult crossing guards are used at some school crossings in order to supply adequate crossing breaks in the traffic flow, but this type of traffic control can be expensive and the need must be closely evaluated.

#### **HOW ARE SCHOOL CROSSINGS LOCATIONS DETERMINED?**

A properly designed route to school should not require the use of adult crossing guards. However, this depends on the location of the school, the roadway network, and the location of the child's home. A safe travel route must be selected for young pedestrians going to and from school, and the roadway crossings along that route should be at locations that have adequate and existing traffic control to guide the child. In some cases, the route selected (which might include a designated school crossing) may require children to travel a longer distance. Crossings along a school route are determined by the existing traffic control, sidewalk availability, the number and age of children using the crossing, and the total extra walking distance required. If necessary, better traffic control along the route may be needed at the crossings. These improvements can include better signs, flashing lights, pavement markings, traffic signals, crossing guards, pedestrian walkways, and altering the slope of a roadway.

#### **EVALUATING THE NEED FOR A CROSSING GUARD**

For a number of reasons, the use of an adult crossing guard must be closely evaluated. The city of Arlington, Texas, for example, uses a hazard index to assess the need for adult crossing guards. This process allows the requests for crossing guards to be prioritized for the entire city. Alternatives to adult crossing guards are also investigated. The hazard index was discussed in "Crossing Guard Analysis" (*ITE Journal*, July 1989) and includes the following factors:

- traffic volume
- street width
- traffic speed
- sight distance
- safe stopping distance
- number of children
- age of children

Arlington has used this method to allocate available resources and maximize the benefits of adult crossing guards that are used. The approach allows the city to place crossing guards at the most appropriate and effective locations. The factors are considered by the city when a school crossing guard is requested at a particular location. In some cases, the implementation of a school crossing guard is appropriate, and in other cases alternative improvements are more feasible. The factors listed above could be used to assist in this type of decision making.

## WHAT CAN BE DONE INSTEAD OF USING A CROSSING GUARD?

A crossing guard at a school crossing is not always appropriate or feasible. The following table includes some solutions (including school guards) to the deficiencies often found along a route used by school children to walk to school.

**TABLE 1 Examples of Some Solutions for Deficiencies to a School Walking Route**

<b>Typical Crossing Deficiency</b>	<b>Solutions to Consider</b>
High traffic volume	Interrupt traffic flow; relocate designated route
High pedestrian volumes at crossings	Revise walk route; widen crossing; provide crossing guards
High vehicle speeds	Install warning signs; provide school zone speed limit
Frequent crashes	Provide public education; redesignate walk route; bus students; increase level of control and enforcement
Child perception deficiencies	Provide public education and student training
Children with disabilities	Provide special education or transportation; provide crossing guards or controls
Driver (or child) violation of warning devices	Increase enforcement; provide public (or student) education; review and modify placement of warning devices

Adapted from *School Trip Safety Program Guidelines*. Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), January 1985.

### **For more information**

For more information, please contact \_\_\_\_\_.