

CROSSWALK ACTION HANDBOOK



WISCONSIN
BIKE FED



Milwaukee Walks!



Welcome to MilWALKee Walks! We're so glad you're joining our efforts to make Milwaukee County a safer, more walkable place. Whether you're new to our mission or already a champion for pedestrian safety, this handbook is designed to guide you through an important aspect of our work - Crosswalk Actions - and help you make a meaningful and lasting impact in your community.

At MilWALKee Walks, we believe that walking and rolling should be a safe, enjoyable, and accessible experience for everyone. Whether you're wandering through your neighborhood or crossing a busy street, you deserve to be safe. With this handbook, you'll find everything you need to get started making a difference in your community. Your role and participation is vital.

Thank you for joining us on this journey. Let's get moving!

Sincerely,
The MilWALKee Walks Team

OUR MISSION

MilWALKee Walks is a program of the Wisconsin Bike Fed.

We educate neighborhoods across Milwaukee County about the pedestrian safety crisis, the rights and responsibilities of road users, and how you can be a part of making a safer, more walkable Milwaukee County.



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WHAT IS A CROSSWALK ACTION?



A Crosswalk Action is a public demonstration aimed at raising awareness about pedestrian safety. MilWALke Walks Ambassadors and volunteers hold signs that educate drivers about the legal requirement to yield to pedestrians. These actions highlight the crosswalk as a designated safety zone where vehicles must yield or stop if necessary, to ensure that pedestrians can cross safely, in accordance with the law.

Crosswalk Actions are NOT being crossing guards. Participants in Crosswalk Actions do not have a legal right to stop traffic. Instead, we are promoting the existing laws to yield or stop for pedestrians, bringing attention to the issue of pedestrian safety, and educating pedestrians and drivers.

Crosswalk Actions can provide support at tricky or dangerous crossing areas. Another great place for a Crosswalk Action is a community event such as a school open house or a local festival. Crosswalk Actions at these events generally provide more opportunity to engage with the public about the issue of pedestrian safety and to hear about their experiences and concerns. Crosswalk Actions are designed to be positive and engaging, encouraging interaction with pedestrians and drivers and creating a fun and friendly atmosphere, while emphasizing the importance of pedestrian safety.

By combining education, community engagement, and safety support, Crosswalk Actions make streets safer for everyone!

TIMELINE



Every Crosswalk Action looks different, depending on the location, time of year, and number of volunteers. We want it to meet the needs of your unique community! However, for planning purposes, we recommend considering the following timeline as you organize your Action. This will help to ensure that you feel prepared and have the support you need.

RECOMMENDED TIMELINE FOR A SUCCESSFUL CROSSWALK ACTION



BENEFITS OF IMPROVED PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

BY THE NUMBERS

Reduction in Pedestrian Crashes ¹

51% Increasing pedestrian crossing time at signalized intersections can reduce pedestrian crashes up to 51%

36% Raised pedestrian crosswalks are estimated to reduce crashes resulting in severe or fatal injuries by 36%

Reducing Vehicle Speeds ²

5-13mph

A traffic study in Salt Lake City, UT, found that streets with speed humps and other traffic calming measures saw average vehicle speeds reduced by 5-13mph.

Economic Benefits ³

Traveling by foot, bike, or public transportation reduces taxpayer costs related to road maintenance, motor vehicle crash damages, and the environmental impacts of motor vehicles.

Improved Public Health Outcomes ⁴

Creating safer spaces to walk, roll, and stroll help people meet their weekly recommended minimum 150 minutes of physical activity! This reduces risk of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and other chronic diseases, while improving mental health outcomes.

¹Federal Highway Administration. (2018). Toolbox of Pedestrian Countermeasures and Their Potential Effectiveness (FHWA-SA-18-041). United States Department of Transportation. <https://highways.dot.gov/media/11816>

²Ewing, R., Ameli, S.H., Banerjee, D., Sabouri, S., Hashim, A.H., & Wheeler, B. (2018). Effectiveness of Traffic Calming Measures in Salt Lake City. The University of Utah. https://www.slc.gov/transportation/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2021/05/U-of-U-Traffic-Calming-Effectiveness.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

³Litman, T. (2024). Economic Value of Walkability. Victoria Transport Policy Institute. <https://www.vtpi.org/walkability.pdf>

⁴Wang, M. L., Narcisse, M. R., & McElfish, P. A. (2023). Higher walkability associated with increased physical activity and reduced obesity among United States adults. Obesity (Silver Spring, Md.), 31(2), 553-564. <https://doi.org/10.1002/oby.23634>

BETTER WALKING CONDITIONS IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

Crosswalk actions that involve local residents help foster a sense of ownership and pride in their community. Increasing pedestrian traffic strengthens social ties, as people interact more in walkable neighborhoods and communities.

CREATING A CULTURE OF SAFETY

Visible safety measures and organized crosswalk actions can create a sense of security, encouraging more people to walk and drive responsibly. Consistent crosswalk actions create a culture where road safety becomes a shared value, improving community behavior.

SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Safer streets and communities directly benefit people with mobility challenges, seniors, and children. These vulnerable groups deserve safe ways to get around town. This improves transportation equity in our city.

ENCOURAGING SUSTAINABLE CHOICES

When strolling and rolling become easy transportation options, individuals rely less on their personal automobiles. This can help reduce air pollution, cut down on traffic noise, and lower carbon emissions.



HOSTING A CROSSWALK ACTION



Please reach out to MilWALKee Walks staff in advance so that we can help to support you in your planning and promotion efforts!

PREPARATION

Reach out to MilWALKee Walks

Before getting started, please reach out to MilWALKee Walks staff or Ambassadors. We are excited that you are interested in getting involved, and we can help out! Additionally, your work helps us achieve our organizational mission, so we would love to know what you are doing and to support and promote your work.

Choose a Location

Choose a crosswalk or intersection with pedestrian safety concerns. This could be an intersection with a history of pedestrian crashes, or a location with high volume of foot traffic (such as near a shopping center or farmer's market).

Choose a Date and Time

Schedule a time that aligns with high pedestrian or traffic flow for maximum impact. We generally host Crosswalk Actions of 1 hour in length. You might choose a different amount of time depending on your needs and your volunteer availability. If you are planning a Crosswalk Action during an event, like a farmer's market or festival, we recommend reaching out to the event organizers. It is best to let them know in advance that you will be there.

Organize Volunteers

Work with friends, colleagues, neighbors, members of local organizations or churches, MilWALKee Walks staff or Ambassadors, etc. to commit to the Crosswalk Action. Choose roles, such as holding signs, photography, or running an information table.

Promote the Event

Create flyers and social media images to advertise for your Crosswalk Action. We have templates in Canva if you would like to use these (See "Extras: Templates for Promotional Materials", pg. 17). Use social media groups, flyers and the local media to invite community members to participate. If you want to reach out to local media, see pg. 15 for tips. Ask MilWALKee Walks staff to add your event to the MKE Walks Google Calendar, Facebook Events, and Instagram.

Gather Materials

Pick up the Crosswalk Action Toolkit from MilWALKee Walks. Reach out to staff if you want to borrow the toolkit and if you need additional materials like extra yard signs, art supplies for make-your-own yard signs, or a data board

COSTUMES, MUSIC, AND MORE!

Think about what's already going on in your community, and incorporate those elements into your Crosswalk Action.



Halloween? Plan a Crosswalk Action during Trick-or-Treating, wear costumes, and hand out candy!



Outdoor music series? Plan a series of Crosswalk Actions before music starts so you can support pedestrian safety and have fun!



While it is important to bring education to every crosswalk, connecting your Crosswalk Action to existing community events and incorporating fun can make it easier to find volunteers and have a positive impact. Let us know if you want to borrow our chicken costume!

HOSTING A CROSSWALK ACTION

DAY OF THE ACTION

Setup

- Prepare your set up: for example, if you are bringing a table with information, set this up in a place that will not obstruct pedestrians.
- Ensure the area is visible and safe for Ambassadors, volunteers, and pedestrians.

Prepare Your Volunteers

- Arrive 10-20 minutes early to get a sense of the location, set up anything you have brought with you, and to welcome volunteers.
- When volunteers arrive, have a “huddle” to discuss the plan and ground rules:
 - Brief everyone on safety laws, their roles, and any other aspects of the event, like media, games, etc.
 - Stress the importance of legal and safe crossing behaviors.
 - Discuss the plan for crossing the intersection, roles for volunteers, and emphasizing that everyone should stay safe and positive.

Start with Crosswalk Education

- Hold up signs and walk with pedestrians as they cross the street.
- Remind drivers of their responsibilities to yield at crosswalks.
- Engage drivers and pedestrians
- Wave to drivers and share handouts when they stop.
- Encourage pedestrians to cross legally and safely.
- If hosting a data board or other engagement tools, encourage pedestrians to stop by the table.

TIPS FOR ENGAGEMENT



Smile!

Use a friendly tone to engage.



Keep the games simple and inclusive for everyone.



Prioritize safety by ensuring volunteers stay visible and cautious during the event.

HOSTING A CROSSWALK ACTION



DON'T FORGET!

Help MilWALKee Walks achieve our goals and reach more people by completing the **MilWALKee Walks Event Reporting Form**

WRAP-UP

End Positively

- Thank volunteers for engaging with the event.
- Highlight the importance of continued safety practices.
- Consider asking if volunteers would like to join for another Crosswalk Action in the future, or if they would like to get involved in any next steps.

Debrief & Share

- Gather feedback from volunteers and participants.
- Share photos and outcomes on social media to celebrate success and spread awareness.
- Promote the next event, if you are running more pedestrian safety events. Remember that for every volunteer who showed up, 10 more are following along and waiting for the right opportunity to get involved! Make it easy and use photos from your Crosswalk Action to promote future Crosswalk Actions, walk audits, public meetings, and more!

Final Wrap-up

- Be sure to send us the contacts of anyone who signed up for the MilWALKee Walks newsletter so that they can stay in touch with us!
- Return Crosswalk Action Toolkit to MilWALKee Walks. Let us know if anything is missing so we can replace it.
- Complete the MilWALKee Walks Event Reporting Form--QR code below!



THANK YOU! Your work is incredibly important and appreciated.



DO'S & DON'TS FOR CROSSWALK ACTIONS

DO'S

1. Follow the Law

- Always cross at legal crosswalks and obey traffic signals.
- Give drivers sufficient time to see you and yield/stop.
- Remember: you are not law enforcement! You are providing encouragement, not legal advice or action.

2. Use Clear, Positive Signage

- Hold up signs with simple, direct messages like: “Yield to Pedestrians” or “Slow Down”.

3. Engage Respectfully

- Smile, wave, and be polite to drivers, pedestrians, and volunteers.

4. Stay Safe

- Use sidewalks or designated areas when not crossing.

5. Make it Fun!

- Use costumes, music, or games to create a welcoming and engaging atmosphere.

DONT'S

1. Don't Block Traffic

- Avoid stopping vehicles unnecessarily or creating unsafe conditions.

2. Don't Cross Without the Right of Way

- Never step into the street when it's not your turn to cross, even for demonstration purposes.

3. Don't Argue with Drivers

- Stay calm and respectful, even if a driver is uncooperative or hostile.

4. Don't Forget to Clean-up

- Remove all signs, props, and materials from the area once the action is complete.

5. Don't Forget to Document

- Always take photos or notes to share the event's success and gather feedback for future actions.



EXTRAS:

Crosswalk Action Toolkit & Recommended Materials

Below is a suggested list of materials for running your Crosswalk Action! Work with MilWALKee Walks staff if you need assistance gathering the below materials, or if you want to borrow our Toolkit. MilWALKee Walks also has a Walk/Roll Audit Toolkit with important items for your event. Contact our staff if you would like to borrow this Toolkit.

Items in the Crosswalk Action Toolkit are marked with:



MUST HAVES

- Camera/Phone**
Take pictures and videos of the Crosswalk Action and participants to share on social media and use for future promotion.
- Informational Flyers**
Use these to promote the time, location, purpose of the Crosswalk Action, and how to contact the organizer.
-  **Yield to Pedestrian Signs**
Signs for holding during the action, as well as extra to give out as yard signs (with metal stakes).
-  **MilWALKee Walks Program Pamphlets**
Use to educate participants, drivers, and pedestrians about the MilWALKee Walks program and how to get involved.
-  **MilWALKee Walks Data Pamphlets**
Use to educate participants, drivers, and pedestrians about pedestrian safety data.
-  **Pedestrian Safety Law Cards**
Use to educate drivers and pedestrians about rights and responsibilities of road users.
-  **Pens**
For sign-in sheets
- Weather-appropriate clothes**
YOU are in control of whether or not you do your Crosswalk Action, depending on the weather. Be sure to dress appropriately for the weather of your Action.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

- Crash Data/Reports**
Neighborhood-specific crash data. Not automatically included as a part of the Toolkit, but ask us in advance if you want our help with this!
- Neighborhood-specific Posterboard**
Large board with information about safe driving and neighborhood-specific crash data. Not automatically included as a part of the Toolkit, but ask us in advance if you would like to borrow this!
- First Aid Kit**
For emergencies, especially if working with more vulnerable populations or in more extreme weather.
- Interactive Elements**
Like games or costumes. Not automatically included as a part of the Toolkit, but ask us in advance if you would like to borrow games or a chicken costume!
-  **Safety Vests**
MilWALKee Walks has vests to borrow. Vests are not required, and it is up to you if you want to wear a vest.
- Table & Tablecloth**
MilWALKee Walks has some tables available for lending. Not automatically included as a part of the Toolkit, but ask us in advance if you want our help with this!

EXTRAS:

Invite the Media

Media are an important part of promoting your event and spreading the message of pedestrian safety. Below, we have some suggestions and tips for working with the media.

CRAFT A STRONG MEDIA ADVISORY

A media advisory should be concise and contain key event details. Send your media advisory to media stations, or to specific journalists if you know them. See page 17 for a sample media advisory.

Headline

Use a compelling title like, “MilWALKee Walks Tackles Pedestrian Safety with Innovative Community Events” or “Crosswalk Action Day Shines Spotlight on Safer Streets for All in Milwaukee.”

What

Brief description of the event, including unique features (e.g., “Interactive stations demonstrating safe crosswalk design and the dangers of distracted driving”).

When/Where

Include the date, time, and specific location.

Why

Explain the importance, such as improving pedestrian safety, reducing crashes, or raising awareness about Vision Zero goals.

Who

Name any notable speakers, partners, or participants (e.g., local officials, safety advocates).

OFFER AND LEVERAGE COMPELLING STORIES

Offer stories that connect emotionally and appeal to everyone:

Personal Stories

Invite individuals impacted by pedestrian crashes to share their experiences.

Milestone Achievements

Highlight progress, such as a reduction in crashes or new traffic safety measures implemented through MilWALKee Walks’ advocacy.

Community Collaboration

Emphasize partnerships with local schools, businesses, or law enforcement.

SEND INVITATIONS EARLY AND FOLLOW UP

Initial Outreach

Send the media advisory at least 1 to 2 weeks in advance.

Follow-Up

Call or email reporters 2 to 3 days before the event to confirm attendance and gauge or peak their interest.

CREATE VISUAL AND INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES

Reporters value visuals and quotable moments. Here are some possible ideas.

Visuals

- Crosswalk actions with community members holding bright signs.
- Aerial footage or wide shots of pedestrian traffic at redesigned intersections. (For example, if someone in your group owns a drone and can send the footage to the media.)

Interviewees

- MilWALKee Walks staff, Ambassadors and volunteers.
- Local leaders or elected officials supporting the action/initiative.
- Community members benefiting from improved safety.

PROVIDE PRESS-FRIENDLY MATERIALS

Provide reporters with background to enhance their coverage:

Press Kits

Include fact sheets, high-quality photos if available and MilWALKee Walks mission statement.

Infographics

Show data on pedestrian crashes, speed reductions, or other impacts.

Quotes

Provide pre-approved quotes from residents, volunteers or partners.

SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY

Contact

Jane Smith
MilWALKee Walks Cultural Ambassador
414-555-5555
janecaresaboutcrosswalks@example.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Crosswalk Action at Jazz in the Park Shines Spotlight on Safer Streets for All in Downtown Milwaukee

WHAT

Join us for a Crosswalk Action aimed at raising awareness about pedestrian safety. MilWALKee Walks Ambassadors and volunteers will be assisting people in crossing the intersection by holding signs that educate drivers about pedestrian rights and driver responsibilities.

WHEN

Tuesday, June X, 20XX, from 5-6pm

WHERE

Cathedral Square Park, at the intersection of Jackson St and Kilbourn Ave

WHO

MilWALKee Walks is a program of the Wisconsin Bike Fed. We educate neighborhoods across Milwaukee County about the pedestrian safety crisis, the rights and responsibilities of road users, and how you can be a part of making a safer, more walkable Milwaukee County.

EXTRAS:

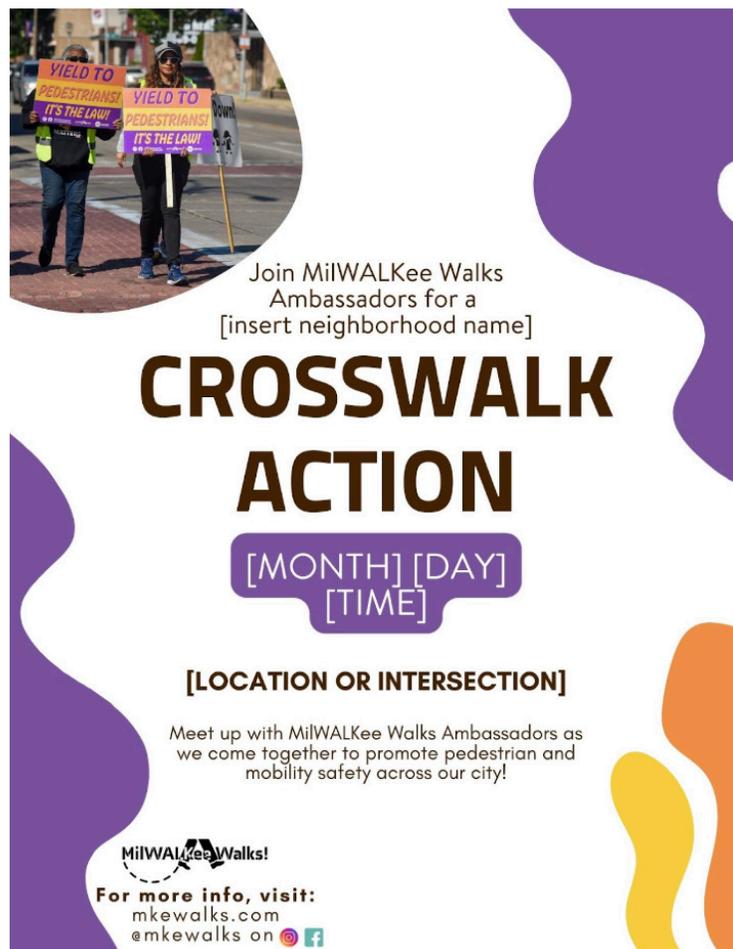
Templates for Promotional Materials

MilWALKee Walks has Canva templates for promotional flyers and social media graphics to help you with promoting your Crosswalk Action. Click the links below to edit and add your event details.

[Flyer template](#)

[Instagram post template](#)

[Instagram story template](#)



The flyer features a circular inset image of two people holding signs that read "YIELD TO PEDESTRIANS! IT'S THE LAW!". The main text is centered and includes placeholders for neighborhood name, date, time, and location. The design uses purple, orange, and yellow wavy shapes as background accents.

Join MilWALKee Walks
Ambassadors for a
[insert neighborhood name]

CROSSWALK ACTION

[MONTH] [DAY]
[TIME]

[LOCATION OR INTERSECTION]

Meet up with MilWALKee Walks Ambassadors as
we come together to promote pedestrian and
mobility safety across our city!

MilWALKee Walks!

For more info, visit:
mkewalks.com
@mkewalks on  

Sample flyer



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CONNECT WITH US!



@MILWALKEEWALKS

mkewalks.com