



NEWS

ADA COUNTY HIGHWAY DISTRICT

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ACHD and VRT partnership bring new audible crosswalks to Ada County

Boise - A partnership between the Ada County Highway District (ACHD) and Valley Regional Transit (VRT) is helping to make crossing Boise State University roadways easier for pedestrians with vision and hearing limitations. The intersections of University Drive and Joyce Street and University Drive and Lincoln Avenue, both on the BSU campus, are now equipped with audible pedestrian crossings-- the first-ever in Ada County. The new pedestrian crossing devices provide a sequence of verbal and tactile cues to pedestrians crossing a road. The locations were selected from a priority list developed by the ACHD Americans with Disability Act (ADA) Advisory Committee and were installed at crosswalks already controlled by a traffic signal.

The devices were purchased with \$10,000 in federal stimulus money secured by VRT for Americans with Disability Act upgrades and were installed by ACHD, which will also maintain them.

“Automobiles have become so much quieter and intersection crossings have become more complex. This combination has made it more challenging for the blind and visually impaired to safely cross our area roadways. Adding these audible devices will help to make crossing a busy intersection much easier to negotiate,” said Brian Jain with the Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

According to Jain, approximately twenty blind and sight impaired students are currently enrolled at BSU.

How the audible crossings work

A low beep is continually emitted by the device to help pedestrians locate the push button. The button includes a raised arrow to orient a pedestrian in the direction of the crossing (see attached photo). Once pushed, the device acknowledges the pedestrian, instructing them to “Wait” to cross. Once the Walk indication lights up, the push button vibrates, a feature which can be felt by a pedestrian with hearing impairment. Next, a voice command tells the pedestrian the *Walk* sign is on and they can cross the street. The voice command is repeated multiple times until the *Walk* indication is through its cycle. For those without vision or hearing limitations, the newly upgraded crossings work the same as standard signalized crosswalks.

Future use

ACHD will monitor the effectiveness of the audible pedestrian crossing devices and with the help of the ADA committee explore additional locations where they would be appropriate to install. The prioritized intersections will be included in ACHD's Pedestrian-Bicycle Transition Plan, which guides future sidewalk and roadway improvement projects for pedestrians and bicyclists in Ada County.

To view ACHD's Pedestrian-Bicycle Transition Plan, visit www.achdidaho.org and select *Bicycle Page*.

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