



Tennessee Transportation News

Highlights:

- SmartFIX40 I-40 Closure Information
- Freeway And Tollway Operations Conference
- Are crosswalk lights worth the high cost?

Also in this Issue:

TSITE Info	2
Local Meetings	3
SmartFIX40	4
ITE History	5
Southern District ITE Meeting Agenda	6
World Wide Web	7
Freeway and Toll Ops Conference	8
Crosswalk Lights Worth the Cost?	9
German Town Ditches Traffic Lights	12



Letter from W. Jeff Davis, PhD, PE

Co-Chairman 2008 SDITE Annual Meeting LAC

I would like to invite you to Charleston, South Carolina for the 56th Annual Southern District ITE Meeting, March 31-April 2, 2008.

The technical program will inform you about the latest innovations in our profession. There will be sessions on traffic signal design and operation, speed enforcement cameras, corridor planning, and many more. ABD members will demonstrate the latest technology and assist you with problems you deal with every day. You'll also learn from our talented students through the third William H. Temple Scholarship Challenge.

Teaming is also an integral part of all Southern District ITE Annual Meetings. There is no better place to form partnerships to tackle difficult challenges. Perhaps your counterpart in another agency can help solve a problem or maybe you and another company can join forces on that next project.

One of the most rewarding aspects of our Southern District ITE Annual Meetings is the renewal of old friendships and the making of new ones. Southern District ITE is, in many ways, like a big family, and each year the Annual Meeting functions like a big family reunion. However, each year we add new members to our ranks so that they too can start their own tradition.



This meeting provides a means by which we can engage our fellow transportation professionals.

The meeting will be held at the Francis Marion Hotel in downtown Charleston. You'll be happy with the plush rooms and amenities that the Francis Marion offers. Charleston will be in full bloom during the meeting and guests will surely enjoy exploring the historic city. The ABD event will be a "beach party" at The Citadel's Beach House on Isle of Palms. Good food, great music, and dancing will make the evening enjoyable for all.

We earnestly hope you will make plans to attend the 56th Annual Southern District ITE Meeting. You'll have fun, learn new things, renew old friendships, and make new friends all in one of the most beautiful places in the United States.



Your 2008 TSITE Officers

President:	Stephen Meyer, P.E.
Vice-President:	Kevin Cole, P.E.
Secretary-Treasurer:	Chris Kirby, P.E.
Section Representative(07-08):	Cindy Pionke, P.E.
Section Representative(08-09):	Jeff Hammond, P.E.
Immediate Past President:	Greg Judy, P.E., PTOE
Affiliate Director:	Dan Vincent

See attachment for additional information on the new MUTCD sign retroreflectivity requirements.



Discussion New
MUTCD Sign Retroref

Read about New MUTCD Retro-reflectivity Requirements

TSITE 2008 Calendar



SDITE Annual Meeting	March 31-April 2, 2008	Charleston, SC
TSITE Spring Meeting	May 15, 2008	Johnson City, TN
TSITE Summer Meeting	July 31 - Aug 1	Montgomery Bell State Park
ITE Annual Meeting	August 17 - 20	Anaheim, CA
TSITE Fall Meeting (Joint Meeting with Alabama ITE)	October 23-24, 2008	Chattanooga, TN

Membership Update Form

Thanks for your interest in helping us keep the most up-to-date membership directory possible. To update your information, click on the link below, fill in the information blanks, save the edited file, and e-mail it back to Travis Falls (Membership Committee Chair) at tfalls@rwa.com.

To access the membership data form, click www.tsite.org/Survey/tsite_membership%20form.doc

Have you been to your local area ITE meeting lately?



Local Area ITE Meetings

Nashville area members meet informally for breakfast on the last Wednesday of each month at the Shoney's Restaurant at the Coliseum. Meetings start 7:30 am and last about an hour. Any interested persons are welcome.

For information call or email Greg Judy at greg.judy@neel-schaffer.com

(615) 383-8420.

Knoxville area members meet informally for breakfast on the last Thursday of each month at the Shoney's Restaurant on Walker Springs Road. Meetings start 7:30 am and last about an hour. The meetings are used to update members on ITE activities and area transportation topics. Any interested persons are welcome.

For information call or email Mark Geldmeier at atmgeldmeier@ci.knoxville.tn.us

(865) 544-5331.

Chattanooga area members meet at 11:30 AM informally for lunch on the second Friday of each month at the Wally's Restaurant at 6521 Ringgold Road, East Ridge, TN 37412. The restaurant is located in the northwest quadrant of the interchange of I-75 and Ringgold Road. There are no meeting fees, only the cost of the buffet meal

For information call or email John Van Winkle at atvanwinkle@mail.chattanooga.gov

(423) 757-5005.

MARTIN E. LIPINSKI RECEIVES COORDINATING COUNCIL AWARD FROM THE INSTITUTE OF TRANSPORTATION ENGINEERS

AUGUST 5, 2007, WASHINGTON, DC—Martin E. Lipinski, professor at the University of Memphis in Memphis, TN, USA, received the 2007 Coordinating Council Award at the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) 2007 Annual Meeting and Exhibit, being held August 5-8, 2007 in Pittsburgh, PA, USA.

Mr. Lipinski received the award in recognition of the outstanding Transportation Education Council project entitled "Recruitment Toolbox for Transportation Professionals," selected as the best project completed during 2006 by an ITE Council.

The ITE Coordinating Council Award recognizes outstanding technical committee contributions to the ITE Coordinating Council Program. Selection is based primarily on the significance of the committee's contributions to the transportation engineering profession, the extent to which it met its objective and the value and usefulness of the form in which its work is reported.

For a complete listing of all of ITE's 2007 award winners, visit the ITE Web site at www.ite.org.

The Institute of Transportation Engineers is an international educational and scientific association of

transportation professionals who are responsible for meeting mobility and safety needs. Through its products and services, ITE promotes professional development of its members, supports and encourages education, stimulates research, develops public awareness programs and serves as a conduit for the exchange of professional education.

Founded in 1930, ITE serves as your source for expertise, knowledge and ideas through meetings, seminars and publications, and through its network of more than 17,000 members working in more than 92 countries.



SmartFIX40 I-40 Closure Information

Knoxville, Tenn. -- Beginning on **May 1, 2008**, a short section of Interstate 40 between James White Parkway (exit 388A) and Hall of Fame Drive (exit 389) will be closed for reconstruction. Local eastbound traffic will continue to use James White Parkway (exit 388A) and local westbound traffic will continue to use Hall of Fame Drive (exit 389) to access the downtown area, the South Knoxville Bridge and Neyland Drive.

Traffic that normally passes through downtown on I-40 should use I-640 or I-275 to bypass the closure. The closure will last for approximately 14 months.

Northbound I-75 motorists traveling into Knoxville from Chattanooga are encouraged to continue on I-40 toward downtown, then use the newly improved I-275 northbound. By using I-275, northbound I-75 motorists will avoid potential long delays on I-640. A lot of planning and coordination goes into closing a major section of interstate. Installing more than 100 signs, constructing a temporary ramp from James White Parkway to I-40 westbound and modifying the I-640 interchanges with I-40 will take time to complete. There will be a 17-day period in May when the bulk of this work will take place. Some of the signs on the interstate system and local arterial routes will be installed before May.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Where exactly will the interstate be closed on May 1, 2008?

A: A section of I-40 will close between James White Parkway (exit 388A) and Hall of Fame Drive (exit 389).

Q: Why does I-40 need to be closed?

A: An "accelerated construction" approach is being taken in order to reduce construction time by at least 23 months, resulting in only a 14-month closure and the rerouting of I-40 to through traffic. An extremely aggressive construction schedule was developed with heavy contractor incentives and disincentives. Speeding up construction will also reduce the impact on the community and local economy. With community satisfaction as a project goal, SmartFIX40 represents a hallmark project for TDOT, the city of Knoxville, and the local community.

Q: How can I get to downtown and the UT Area?

A: Traveling from the east, motorists can use I-40 westbound, then take Hall of Fame Drive (exit 389) to access downtown and UT. Another option is Magnolia Avenue (US 11). Traveling from the west, James White Parkway (exit 388A) will be open; however, other options are Alcoa Highway (exit 386B), 17th Street (exit 387) and Henley Street (exit 388).

Q: How do I access I-40 from the downtown area?

A: Both I-40 east and westbound will be accessible from

James White Parkway during the 14-month closure. A temporary ramp will be constructed from James White Parkway to I-40 westbound. James White Parkway to I-40 eastbound was opened to traffic in September 2007.

Q: Will there be signs to direct motorists?

A: Yes. New signs will be installed on I-40, I-640, I-75, I-275 and arterials leading to the interstate system.

Q: Will any changes be made to I-640?

A: Yes. Both interchanges of I-640 and I-40 will be modified. A third lane will also be added to increase capacity.

Q: What are the projected impacts on I-640 during the closure?

A: The department projects that approximately 40,000 extra cars and trucks will utilize I-640.

Q: If I live in west Knoxville, how do I get to the Knoxville Zoo?

A: The most direct route to the Knoxville Zoo is I-640, onto I-40 westbound to Rutledge Pike (US 11W) exit 392.

Q: If I live in east Knox County, how do I get to the Civic Auditorium/Coliseum?

A: I-40 westbound will remain open to local traffic. Motorists can use Hall of Fame Drive (exit 389) to access the Civic Auditorium/Coliseum.

Q: How do I get more information about the closure?

A: You may contact the SmartFIX40 Project Office (corner of N. Sixth Avenue and Hall of Fame Drive) at **865-329-4640** or visit the project website at www.smartFIX40.com for the most recent project news and information.

SmartFIX40 is a project of the
Tennessee Department of
Transportation
Project hotline: (865) 329-GO-40

www.smartfix40.com



Tennessee Section ITE Mission

The mission of the Tennessee Section of the Institute of Transportation Engineers (TSITE) is the professional development and growth of the traffic and transportation industry, promoting safe and efficient flow of people, goods and services. TSITE will work diligently with the Southern District Institute of Transportation Engineers and International ITE to maintain and further enhance our professional organization by developing and supporting safe standards and sound guidelines for the practice of traffic and transportation engineering. In order to achieve this end, TSITE will grow its membership, contribute to the

knowledge base by research and experience, promote the practice of traffic and transportation engineering, and actively engage young and talented professionals to pursue the challenges in transportation. By this pursuit, TSITE should establish itself as a strong ITE section and contribute to a stronger District and international organization. source of information. Your customers or employees will look forward to its arrival.

Report on Tennessee DOT's SmartWay System

Report on Tennessee DOT's SmartWay System

Link to story and video report on WVLT-TV:

<http://www.volunteertv.com/etm/headlines/13521737.html>

Link to TDOT SmartWay:

<http://www.tdot.state.tn.us/tdotsmartway/>

TSITE Past Presidents

Year	President	Year	President
1966-67	Earl C. Williams	1989	Louis E. Taylor
1967-68	Ralph G. Lewis	1990	Billy W. Allen
1968-69	Richard D. Warpoole	1991	Allan B. Cantrell
1969-70	William N. Ferro	1992	W. Mark Geldmeier
1970-71	Robert A. Fosnaugh	1993	John W. Heid
1971-72	Jack C. Marcellis	1994	Robert E. Bailey
1972-73	Jack B. Humphreys	1995	Robert P. Murphy
1973-74	James W. Yarbrough	1996	John Van Winkle
1974-75	George D. Barnes	1997	Alan L. Childers
1975-76	William L. Moore, Jr.	1998	David H. Moss
1976-77	T. Darcy Sullivan	1999	John F. Gould
1977-78	Edward L. Boyd	2000	Hollis Loveday
1978-79	Robert W. Bowers	2001	Craig Hanchey
1979-80	Donald G. Dahlinger	2002	Cindy Pionke
1980-81	Donald H. Mauldin	2003	Anthony Todd
1981-82	Dr. Martin E. Lipinski	2004	Bill Kervin
1983	Edward E. Watt	2005	Jeff Hammond
1984	Charles S. Sullivan	2006	Steve Allen
1985	Robert L. Haynie	2007	Greg Judy
1986	Samuel L. Parnell		

Southern District ITE Meeting Agenda

The theme for the 2008 District 5 Annual Meeting is

ITE Mega Issues: A trek through the S.O.U.T.H.

S.O.U.T.H. is an acronym for:

S: Safety and security

O: Outreach and leadership

U: Unique and innovative design

T: Transportation workforce development

H: Highway capacity and operations

Safety and Security

Improving Safety Analyses
Crash Prediction Analysis
Work Zone Safety
Evacuation and Emergency Response
Perspectives on Risk Assessment
Improving School Safety
Tools for Improving Safety

Outreach and Leadership

Strategies for Improving Public Agency and Consultant Relationships
Improving Public Policy
Partnerships for Creative Financing

Unique and innovative Design

Context Sensitive Design
Innovations in Traffic Control Devices
Pedestrian and Bicycle Planning and Design

Transportation Workforce Development

Programs and Tools for Enhancing Transportation Workforce Development
Professional development

Highway capacity and Operations

Active Management of Highways
Improving Intersection Operations
Access Management for Safer Streets
School Area Traffic Controls
Measuring Performance
Traffic Impact Analysis

Links to the World Wide Web

Effectiveness of Iowa Red-Light Running Programs Evaluated in New Report

www.iowadot.org/morgue/news2008/01080802.htm

Newly Revised Operations Performance Measurement Program Web Site from Federal Highway Administration

Link to further information:

http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/resources/news/news_detail.asp?ID=403

New and Improved: ITS/Operations Resource Guide from US DOT

www.its.dot.gov/press/announcement/resource_guide.htm

Tennessee DOT Launches Web Site to Aid Commuters

Link to AP story:

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2007/dec/19/tdot-launches-web-site-aid-commuters/>

Link to news release from the Tennessee Department of Transportation:

<http://www.tdot.state.tn.us/news/2007/121907.htm>

Link to Tennessee Smart Commute: <http://www.tdot.state.tn.us/smartcommute/>

The National Work Zone Safety Information Clearinghouse

New video about www.workzonesafety.org

Traffic Analysis Toolbox Volume I: Traffic Analysis Tools Primer

http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/trafficanalysistools/tat_vol1/vol1_primer.pdf

Traffic Analysis Toolbox Volume II: Decision Support Methodology for Selecting Traffic Analysis Tools

http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/trafficanalysistools/tat_vol2/Vol2_Methodology.pdf

Traffic Analysis Toolbox Volume III: Guidelines for Applying Traffic Microsimulation Modeling Software

http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/trafficanalysistools/tat_vol3/vol3_guidelines.pdf

FREEWAY AND TOLLWAY OPERATIONS CONFERENCE

www.2008FTOC.com
Fort Lauderdale, Florida
June 15-19, 2008

There are many reasons why you should come to the 2008 Freeway and Tollway Operations Conference. Here are the top 5!

5. Great Prices - Registration is only \$400 (until March 15) and hotel rooms are available at the prevailing Per Diem government rate (for a limited time).

4. Family Friendly - The special evening activities are open to your companion for a nominal fee. Daytime activity options are endless as Fort Lauderdale is one of the top vacation destinations in the United States!

3. Outstanding Accommodations and Services - The Hyatt Regency Bonaventure, the 2008 FTOC venue, is a newly remodeled conference center, hotel, and spa. It is also a member of the "Green" Hotels Association (www.greenhotels.com). The conference hosts will be coordinating your transportation throughout the week, including to and from the Fort Lauderdale International Airport.

2. Interactive Learning - Not only will there be numerous speaking sessions offered, but also a speakers' poster session. Inside the exhibit hall, more than 20 companies will have their latest and greatest on display.

1. Professional Growth - Over 300 transportation professionals from around the world will be coming together to network and discuss the latest issues in freeway and tollway operations. We want YOU to be a part of it!

Don't put off your registration any longer. The 2008 Freeway and Tollway Operations Conference is something that you will not want to miss! Visit www.2008FTOC.com for conference information and registration.

Are crosswalk lights worth the high cost? Tucson fourth in pedestrian deaths in U.S.

ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Dozens of pedestrian-activated crosswalks designed to make it safer to navigate busy streets have gone up around Tucson since 2000 with a price tag of about \$7 million — but there is little evidence they've made it safer for pedestrians.

Authorities have installed 61 of the crosswalks, dubbed 'HAWKs' — short for High-intensity Activated crossWalks — across the city, garnering national recognition and bolstering plans to erect even more of the devices here. But an analysis of the numbers behind the crossings shows their efficacy is questionable.

While the city has seen a decrease in the overall number of accidents in which pedestrians were injured or killed, one expert in crime analysis said the trend started before the devices came on the scene, rendering their role minimal. And traffic accidents have increased or remained the same at some spots where the devices are installed.

City officials themselves continue to worry about pedestrian safety at and near the crossings, noting that the signals often are ignored or misused by pedestrians. Police regularly see jaywalkers near the crossings and motorists often are frustrated by the amount of time the devices add to their commutes.

City officials defend the systems, saying they can be effective if people use them correctly. The \$120,000 devices also buy peace of mind in busy areas, a cost they say is well worth the money the city and school districts pay for them.

Experts agree that as long as pedestrians and cars mingle on the same surface, injuries can occur — Tucson has ranked as high as fourth in the nation in recent assessments of pedestrian fatalities, adjusted for population. But the evidence is unclear if HAWKs are the best way to protect those on foot.

"You need to protect yourself — you can't just walk out into an intersection fat, dumb and happy, thinking, 'Just because I'm in a crosswalk means I can't get hurt,'" said Tucson Police Department Sgt. Tim Beam, a detective in the traffic unit.

The tradeoff

The numbers behind the crossings aren't easy to analyze because signal devices aren't the only factor involved in pedestrian safety.

On the surface, they seem to work: Thirty-six of the city's 61 HAWK crossings were installed between 2003 and 2005, a period that, adjusted for population change, saw a 16 percent drop in pedestrian-related accidents.

But the overall decline dates to at least 1999, a year before the first HAWK went up and five years before the majority of the devices were installed. For the past eight years, there has been an overall decrease of 14 percent — from 227 to 208 — in the number of reports, a percentage also adjusted for population growth.

That means most, if not all, of the 2003-05 drop likely would have occurred anyway and cannot be attributed to HAWKs, said retired Tucson Police crime analyst Donald Ijams, who was with TPD for 28 years.

Time of day, color of clothing, location, improved car safety, better brakes and increased traffic from tourism also could be affecting the trend, he said.

"Another big problem is the drop-in-the-bucket syndrome — there are a lot of intersections and only a few HAWKs," Ijams said.

Longer-term trends in pedestrian safety here can't be determined because TPD data-recording methods changed in 1999, skewing historical data.

Another set of numbers shows accident rates near some HAWKs have held relatively steady, or even increased.

Are crosswalk lights worth the high cost? (Con't from page 9)

Tucson Department of Transportation administrator Richard Nassi said anytime a traffic light is installed, accident rates can be expected to rise 20-40 percent on the side of the road that didn't stop before.

Intersections with HAWKS were found to have considerably lower crash rates than normal traffic lights, but police data shows that at least one intersection, Speedway and Plumer Avenue, accident rates increased after a HAWK installation. The intersection was one of two reviewed in a study on the devices' effectiveness, done by a private firm. The cause behind most was cited as "failure to reduce speed," denoting a rear-end collision.

The data calls into question the justification of the cost of HAWKs. Each unit is paid for by a combination of neighborhood improvement funds, school district support and the city transportation department — all taxpayer dollars.

Jaywalking still a problem

Ironically, pedestrians themselves are the biggest variables in the question of how effective HAWK crossings are. That's because even if a signal is in place, it's up to pedestrians if they want to use it — and many don't.

Beam, the TPD traffic sergeant, said the majority of the incidents he sees are the fault of pedestrians' poor judgment.

"I've sat and watched pedestrians 50 feet from a HAWK simply run across the street," he said. "We can put a HAWK on every corner and if the pedestrians aren't going to use them correctly and if the drivers are going to ignore them, they don't do you a bit of good."

Tucsonan Casey Yeaton uses a HAWK daily to get to his job at Cuvee World Bistro, 3352 E. Speedway, and said he thinks the systems are a poor use of tax dollars because he still sees people jaywalking frequently.

"I think it really sucks for motorists," he said. "If I was on the other side, I wouldn't be too happy."

There have been several studies to measure the effectiveness of the signals, and officials agree lighted crosswalks — like HAWKs — are more effective than traditional crosswalks at stopping traffic. But traffic compliance was the main focus in the studies, with little mention of pedestrian compliance.

A study independently contracted by city transportation officials in May 2006 noted that most accidents involving pedestrian injury or death occurred when pedestrians ignored the signals, but it did not provide insight into how often pedestrians jaywalk.

Michella Stallcup, a manager at Cafe Diva, 2965 N. Campbell Ave., said she sees jaywalkers "all the time" near the HAWK by her work and said the crossings are "stupidly-placed."

Despite that, Stallcup said the effects on traffic are worth the peace of mind for those on foot.

"Even if it's not good for the motorists, it's the pedestrian who should win out in the end, besides it's only, what, another 10 seconds that they (drivers) have to wait?" she said.

Effects on traffic

A HAWK light cycle can last up to 45 seconds, depending on street width. That, coupled with the signal's uneven integration with light cycles, can equal frustration for drivers.

Nassi, who designed the crossings, said newer models are timed to "generally fit the light cycles," during rush hours but older versions are triggered almost immediately when the button is pushed, which can break up traffic flow. On weekends, all HAWKs are programmed to trigger directly after they're activated.

Are crosswalk lights worth the high cost? (Con't from page 10)

Motorist feedback on the devices is understandably negative, said city transportation spokesman Michael Graham.

"I don't get a lot of calls from people saying, 'Hey, these are great,' " he said.

Some relief may be on the way in the form of wireless technology. Two weeks ago, a \$1 million grant was approved by the Federal Highway Administration — taxpayer money — to integrate new technology that lets the HAWK communicate directly with the nearest traffic lights, and will wait to activate the signal until the majority of traffic has passed through.

So far, only the HAWK at Broadway and Plumer Avenue has been upgraded — and the technology will be used only during rush hour.

Although technology might smooth out the traffic flow, some say there are bigger problems. For Tucson motorist Chris Hall, it's the location of the signals that doesn't add up.

"They put them in the most inopportune spots," Hall said. "And they go off suddenly and don't give you much warning."

But the birds are here to stay and there are 12 more of the devices set to be installed in 2008, Nassi said.

His idea, adapted from similar systems in Europe, is popping up all around the country.

Location, location, location

The decision on where to put a HAWK depends on several conditions.

The device must be installed at least 600 feet from a traffic light and the area must have a minimum of 20 pedestrians cross per hour. Those qualifications are waived, however, if the location in question is in a school zone because safety for children takes precedence.

For non-school locations though, transportation officials rely mainly on calls from neighborhood associations or residents to warrant installations.

Nassi said the agency's field research of an intersection consists of one measurement on one day. For example, if officials receive calls about a certain area requesting a HAWK, they go out during rush hour and count the number of pedestrians that cross. If the number is 20 or more, the request is considered warranted.

The major influence on placement and installation comes from neighborhood associations that want to give residents a convenient way to get across busy streets.

Private investors also can front the cost to have one installed, even if the area doesn't meet the usual requirements. Jim Click Automotive paid for one to be installed near its Ford dealership on the southeast corner of Wilmot Road and 22nd Street in 2002.

All of the 12 proposed HAWKs will go up near schools and their estimated \$2 million cost will be funded by the Regional Transportation Authority.

The technology also is being tailored to match the pace of pedestrians, adding on more time for slower people. Three infrared sensors buried under the road will read the heat signature from a human body and 'see' where the pedestrian is, Nassi said. The sensors aren't set up to decrease time for faster walkers. The technology is being tested right now at Oracle Road and Kelso Street.

Still, the bottom line, he said, is that the integration of technology is void when it's ignored.

Are crosswalk lights worth the high cost? (Con't) from page 11

"None of these devices can protect you if you don't use them," he said. "Safety comes more from behavior than from machines."

Where Tucson Stands

Tucson was ranked the fourth-worst city in the nation for pedestrian fatalities in a report released in 2004 by the National Center for Statistics and Analysis. The report counted the number of deaths per 100,000 population and did not take injuries into account.

The 2005 version of the report did not have city rankings but found there had been a 13 percent decrease nationwide in pedestrian fatalities since 1995. Even though Tucson has put up more than 60 pedestrian-activated crosswalk signals — unique in the nation — fatality and injury rates here haven't dropped any more than cities that don't have the fancy lights.

Numerous reports have concluded that pedestrian fatalities and injuries are more likely to occur at night and when pedestrians ignore posted safety devices.

The 2006 report is still being compiled.

According to Tucson Police Department records, there have been 198 injuries and 15 fatalities this year through Friday afternoon. There were 16 pedestrian fatalities in 2006.

German town ditches traffic lights to cut accidents

BERLIN (Reuters) - A town council in Germany has decided the best way of improving road safety is to remove all traffic lights and stop signs downtown.

From September 12, all traffic controls will disappear from the centre of the western town of Bohmte to try to reduce accidents and make life easier for pedestrians.

In an area used by 13,500 cars every day, drivers and pedestrians will enjoy equal right of way, Klaus Goedejohann, the town's mayor, told Reuters.

"Traffic will no longer be dominant," he said.

The idea of removing signs to improve road safety, called "Shared Space", was developed by Dutch traffic specialist Hans Monderman, and is supported by the European Union.

The EU will cover half of the 1.2 million euros (789,000 pounds) it will cost Bohmte to ditch its traffic lights.

Monderman's ideas have already been implemented in the town of Drachten in the north of the Netherlands, where all stop lights, traffic signs, pavements, and street markings have gone.

"It's been very successful there," Goedejohann said, adding that accidents in Drachten had been reduced significantly.

Officials in Fuerstenberg/Havel, a small town north of Berlin, are also considering adopting the "Shared Space" scheme.

But not everyone is confident it will work.

"Just because it worked in the Netherlands doesn't mean it will work here," said Werner Koeppe, a road specialist at Berlin's Technical Traffic Institute.