

Moving Together: Getting Around A-Town



New Flashing Beacon on Mill Street at Minuteman Bikeway

by Scott Smith

The Town of Arlington, in coordination with the new Alta Brigham Square residential development on Mill Street (formerly Brighams Ice Cream Factory), has recently installed a flashing light at the intersection of Mill Street and the Donald R. Marquis Minuteman Trail (Minuteman Bikeway). It was installed to increase driver awareness and to help minimize the risks to path users.

An overhead sensor detects when a pedestrian or bicyclist on the path is approaching Mill Street from either direction. A warning beacon is then activated: flashing yellow for drivers on Mill Street; flashing red for path users. The beacon stays on long enough to allow a slow-moving pedestrian to cross the street, while alerting drivers that someone is about to cross the street. Such beacons have been found to be effective at improving safety at crosswalks elsewhere in the country.

Some motorists stop unnecessarily when no one is in the crossing, anticipating approaching pedestrians and/or bicyclists. While we appreciate such caution, the objective is to maintain reasonable, safe traffic flow while still protecting path users. If the way is clear (no flashing beacons), there is no need for the driver on Mill Street to stop. Remember, the State's crosswalk law says that **a motorist or cyclist using the road must:**

- **yield to a pedestrian in a marked crosswalk**
- **not pass another vehicle that has stopped for a pedestrian, and**
- **not block the crosswalk.**

A cyclist or pedestrian on the path who is approaching stopped traffic at the crosswalk must exercise appropriate care. Stopped traffic is not a reason to enter the intersection recklessly from the path. If you are a path user, please remember that the stopped motorist may not have even seen you, and may be preparing to start again. It is your responsibility to enter the intersection only when it is safe to do so.

For path users approaching Mill Street,

- **Pedestrians should check first and then cross when it is safe to do so.**
- **Bicyclists on their bikes must yield to drivers and pedestrians, including those crossing the path from the Mill Street sidewalk.**
- **A cyclist who chooses to walk becomes a pedestrian, and may cross like one.**

Finally, remember that everyone—motorists, cyclists and pedestrians—has the common-law duty to exercise reasonable care to avoid hitting others on the road. You must drive at a speed reasonable for the conditions, and if someone is already in the crosswalk and is about to cross your path, you must stop. Remember that the right-of-way is something that you give (Mass RMV Drivers Manual, p. 69), not something that you have.

The Town through the Transportation Advisory Committee and the Bicycle Advisory Committee will be monitoring the operation of the flashing beacon over the next several months. Based on the results of this effort, additional measures may be considered to improve safety and operations further.

If you have any questions or comment please contact Laura Wiener, Senior Planner, at 781 316-3091, or lwiener@town.arlington.ma.us.

Scott Smith is a member of the Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee and Arlington's Transportation Advisory Committee.