

# TRAFFIC AND SAFETY INFORMATIONAL SERIES

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION #16

### **Wouldn't Installing a Traffic Signal Reduce the Number of Crashes at an Intersection?**

Installing a traffic signal does not necessarily increase safety at an intersection. In fact, especially when the traffic signal does not appear to be needed, some drivers may begin to ignore it, run yellow lights, or increase speeds in an attempt to avoid delays.

Therefore, local transportation officials make careful decisions concerning the use of traffic signals. Some of the factors they consider are described below.

#### **Too many traffic signals can negatively impact traffic flow**

Installing traffic signals where they are not needed can create traffic congestion, increase travel time, and frustrate drivers, who may drive impatiently and make inappropriate decisions as a result.

#### **Traffic signals are installed only where they are needed**

To make travel efficient and safe and to help ensure the proper observance of traffic signals, signals are usually installed only where they are absolutely necessary. At least one of nine conditions must be met for a traffic signal to be installed. These conditions include high vehicle and/or pedestrian volumes, a record of severe but correctable crashes, and school crossings where the gaps in the traffic flow are insufficient for children to cross safely.

#### **Other solutions may improve safety as effectively**

Many crashes at intersections are not caused by the lack of a traffic signal. Rather, inexperienced drivers, drunk drivers, and speeding are often the cause. Therefore, traffic signals do not always improve safety at an intersection.

Other solutions that might be considered include providing turning lanes, installing warning signs, improving roadway lighting, and/or installing a pedestrian crosswalk.

#### **For more information**

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