

Downtown crosswalks get timers

By Emilie Rusch 01.14.10
Journal staff Journal

Pedestrians in downtown Rapid City now have time on their side.

The city, with the financial help of Destination Rapid City, has installed countdown timers at all of the crosswalks on Main and St. Joseph streets between Fifth Street and Mount Rushmore Road to make navigating the busy downtown thoroughfares easier for pedestrians and motorists alike.

"There's a benefit to that information being out there," Public Works Director Robert Ellis said. "It gives people walking across the street more confidence. Do I need to hurry up?"

Destination Rapid City paid \$17,000 for the 64 timers that city staff installed this week, group consultant John Brewer said.

The timers still have a white walking figure, but a flashing red hand is accompanied by a timer that counts down the seconds until the corresponding traffic light will turn red.

Ellis said the city has been considering countdown timers for years but was waiting for a final ruling from the Federal Highway Administration on their safety. The FHA sets traffic control guidelines for all public rights of way.

"We didn't want to jump the gun," Ellis said, "Now, everyone's in agreement they're beneficial."

Moving forward, the city will install the timers every time a crosswalk signal needs to be replaced, Ellis said. Priority areas include school crossings and other areas with high pedestrian volume.

Brewer said Destination Rapid City saw the timers as a good opportunity to work with the city to make downtown pedestrian friendly. Tourism consultant Roger Brooks, whose report is guiding much of Destination's work, emphasized pedestrian friendliness as an integral part of revitalizing downtown.

"Those one-way streets are three lanes, and sometimes, the traffic gets a little fast," Brewer said. "We hope they make downtown a safer place and a friendlier place."



Photo Courtesy of Toby Brusseau

Keaghan Duffy, 8, waits to cross Wednesday at the corner of Fifth and Main streets. Destination Rapid City paid for the new countdown timers to be installed on Main and St. Joseph streets.