Pedestrians are legitimate users of the transportation system and they should be able to use the state highway system safely and without unreasonable delay. Providing marked crosswalks is one of many ways to facilitate crossings.

There have been many studies regarding the safety effects of marked crosswalks. Some studies contradict others regarding when a crossing location should be marked or unmarked, making the decision process challenging. Some studies indicate that as traffic volume and speeds increase, such as on a state highway, pedestrian accidents may increase more at marked crosswalks than at unmarked crosswalks.

When considering how to provide safe crossings for pedestrians, the question should NOT simply be: “Do I want a marked crosswalk or not?” Instead, the question should be: “What is the most effective measure that can be used to help pedestrians safely cross the street?” Selecting the appropriate measures depend on site conditions.

The Colorado Department of Transportation follows the national guidelines outlined in the federal Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, the Traffic Control Devices Handbook, the Traffic Engineering Handbook, and other references. These references cover all aspects of the placement, construction and maintenance of all approved traffic control devices.

All traffic devices, including crosswalk markings and signs, must conform to the federal and state regulations for dimensions, color, wording and graphics. Uniformity of traffic control devices protects the clarity of their messages and ensures that signs or paint markings convey the same meaning at all locations.

Legal crosswalk locations can be either marked or unmarked. Colorado statutes at section 42-1-102 (21) C.R.S., define a crosswalk as: “...that portion of a roadway ordinarily included within the prolongation or connection of the lateral lines of sidewalks at intersections or any portion of a roadway distinctly indicated for pedestrian crossing by lines or other marking on the surface.”

Accordingly, legal crosswalks exist at all public street intersections whether marked or unmarked. However, the only way a crosswalk can exist at a mid-block location is if it is marked.

A marked crosswalk is any crosswalk, which is delineated by white painted markings placed on the pavement. Crosswalks consisting of pavement materials or colored concrete are 'unmarked' crosswalks unless white paint is also present. A crosswalk may be marked with special paint, thermoplastic materials, plastic tape, and other approved materials.
Crosswalks are marked at intersections where there is substantial conflict between vehicle and pedestrian movements, where significant pedestrian concentrations occur, where traffic movements are controlled. Examples of such locations are:

- Approved school crossings.
- Signalized and four way stop intersections.

Marked crosswalks for schools follow somewhat different criteria. Besides crosswalks at the immediate school site, other marked crosswalks may be approved if certain criteria is met and the nearest point of the crosswalk is not more than 600 feet from a school building or grounds.

Crosswalks should be marked at all intersections along the suggested route to school where the volume of children reaches about 40 in a two hour period. They should also be marked where there is conflict between vehicles and students trying to cross the street and where students may be permitted to cross between intersections.

The best safety measure is to educate children on how and where to safely cross the street.