

FLASHING-YELLOW-ARROW LEFT-TURN SIGNAL: A BETTER LEFT-TURN SIGNAL

Motorists in Oakland County may have begun to notice a new style of left-turn signals sprouting up on Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) roads. The new signals are known as "flashing-yellow-arrow left-turn signals," and offer a safer, more efficient way to handle traffic turning left at busy intersections.

The signals are being introduced nationwide and ultimately will be required at intersections where there is a separate left-turn-arrow signal. The new signals are being introduced as a result of a national study, conducted for the Federal Highway Administration, which demonstrated that the new signals help to prevent crashes, move more traffic through an intersection and provide additional traffic management flexibility for road agencies.

WHAT IS A FLASHING-YELLOW-ARROW LEFT-TURN SIGNAL?

It's a new type of signal placed OVER the left-turn lane at a signalized intersection. One of the displays on the signal includes a flashing yellow arrow. Other displays on the signal are a steady green arrow, steady yellow arrow and steady red arrow.

In coming years, this type of signal will be used by RCOC in place of the flashing-red left-turn signals that are now common.

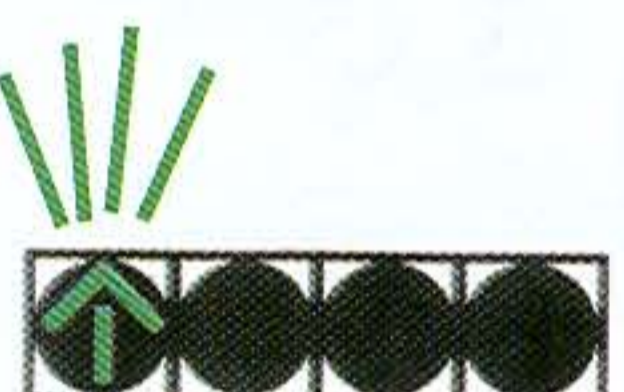
WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE NEW SIGNAL?

The new signals will make the intersections safer while reducing traffic delays. When the flashing-yellow arrow is displayed, motorists are allowed to turn left when available gaps in oncoming traffic are present. Motorists may also turn left when a green arrow is displayed and oncoming traffic has stopped. You should not turn left when the red left-turn arrow is displayed.

HOW WILL THE NEW SIGNALS OPERATE?

The four-arrow signal typically will operate in the following sequence:

STEADY-GREEN ARROW:
Left turns are allowed and oncoming traffic has a red signal.



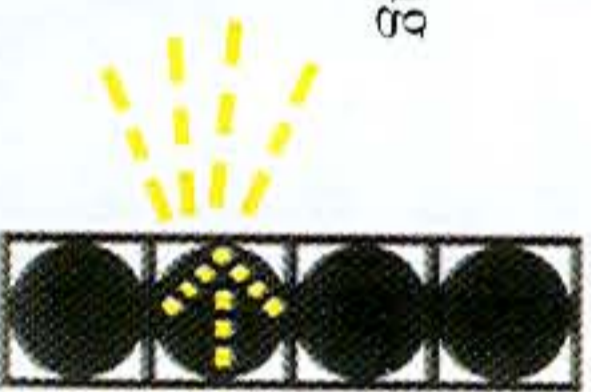
STEADY-YELLOW ARROW:
Much like the yellow signal in a traditional traffic signal, this yellow arrow warns drivers that the left-turn signal is about to turn red, and they should prepare to stop or complete their left turn if they are within the intersection.



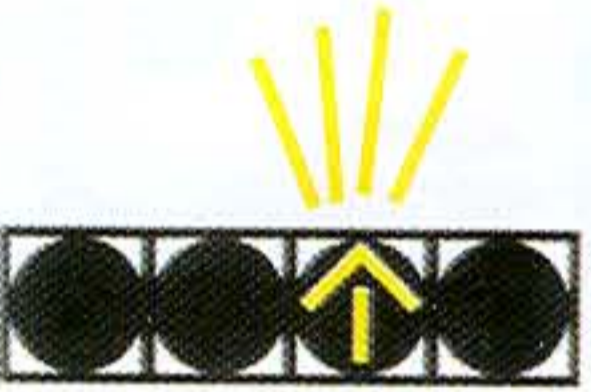
STEADY-RED ARROW:
At the end of the steady-yellow arrow, a steady-red arrow will appear. Motorists turning left must stop and wait.



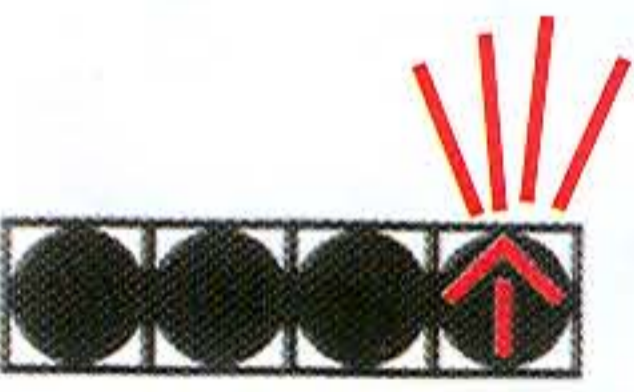
FLASHING-YELLOW ARROW:
This arrow will activate when oncoming traffic has a green light. Motorists may turn left when there is a sufficient gap in oncoming traffic (after oncoming traffic and pedestrians have cleared).



STEADY-YELLOW ARROW:
The left-turn signal is about to turn red and motorists should prepare to stop or complete their left turn if they are within the intersection. Oncoming through traffic will also have a solid yellow signal.



STEADY-RED ARROW:
Motorists turning left must stop and wait.



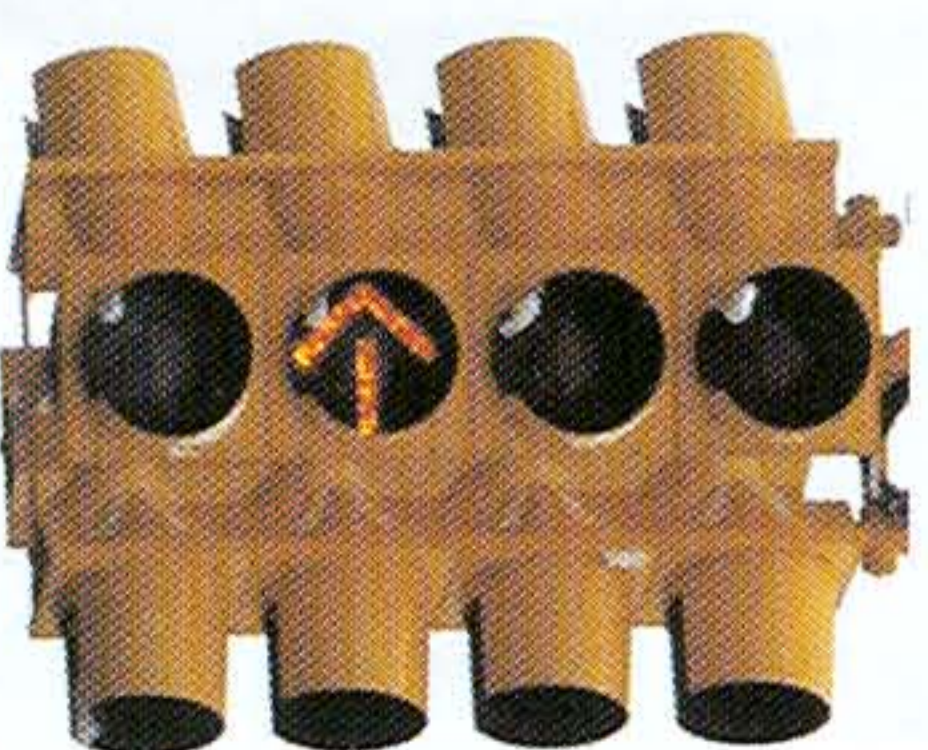
WHY IS THIS BETTER THAN TRADITIONAL TURN ARROWS?

The new signal configuration has been shown to be:

Safer
The national study demonstrated that drivers make fewer mistakes with the new signals than with traditional left-turn-arrow signals.

More efficient
The new signals provide traffic engineers with more options to handle variable traffic volumes.

More consistent
The new signals will be mandated throughout the U.S.; you'll see the same signals in every state.



WHERE WILL I SEE THESE SIGNALS?

In coming years, RCOC will be converting most intersections that have left-turn signals to flashing-yellow signals.

In fact, motorists will begin to see flashing-yellow-arrow left-turn signals at intersections across the United States. The Federal Highway Administration has begun the process of making these signals the standard for signalized left turns. It will, however, take a number of years for the standard to be adopted and implemented by all road agencies and municipalities nationwide.

For more information about flashing-yellow-arrow left-turn signals, visit the Web site <http://projects.kittelson.com/pplt/>.