

Sabbath Signal Timing

LADOT operates specific pedestrian signals in a very special way during the Jewish Sabbath and other holidays. We call it "Sabbath Timing".

It all started around 1973 when an Orthodox Jew in the Fairfax District was cited for crossing against a pedestrian signal during the Jewish Sabbath (sundown Friday to sundown Saturday). The pedestrian had not pressed the push button. Rabbis then approached the Department of Traffic and requested that signals be timed during the Sabbath so that the Walk signals come on automatically instead of requiring the press of a push button. An automatic Walk was requested since it is against their orthodox religious practices to operate machinery or electrical devices during those times. The rationale is that believers should dedicate time to focus on the spiritual and not on everyday conveniences.

The Department pondered the issue and decided to accommodate their need. First, the routing to the synagogue was identified and signalized intersections with push buttons were modified to go into automatic Walk during the Jewish Sabbath. Soon, rabbis at other synagogues learned of this pilot accommodation and requested similar treatment near their sites.

Today, LADOT has special Sabbath signal timing at over 50 signalized locations in North Hollywood, Encino, Tarzana, Hancock Park, the Fairfax District, Century City and other locations. For each new request, routes to the synagogue are identified that are accommodating but not unnecessarily disruptive to traffic flow. With the sophisticated controllers of today, the Hebrew calendar is programmed to recognize the weekly Sabbath, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkoth, Passover and Shavuot and to be respectful to the practices of a special community of pedestrians.