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W. Chester installs LEC signs

By LISA BROADT,

In May, the first street signs illuminated with Light Emitting Capacitor (LEC) technology were installed in West Chester at two intersections that handle more than 25,000 cars a day.

The signs at the corners of High and Gay streets and High and Market streets represent a step forward in safety, according to John Rooney, president of CeeLite, the producer of the LEC technology.

He said the new signs are essential to the intersections, which are highly trafficked and "where drivers and pedestrians need to make split-second decisions in order to avoid accidents."

The reflectivity of LEC-enhanced signs allows drivers to read them at a maximum distance, even without their headlights. The goal of the technology is to increase the safety of the intersections by making the signs more visible at night and in inclement weather.

The LEC-illuminated street intersection signs are less than one-quarter-inch thick, very lightweight and extremely durable. The technology produces signs with improved visibility and contrast, longer life, greater reliability and lower maintenance costs. They weigh about as much as non-illuminated reflective street signs, making them easy to install.

Malcolm Johnstone, executive director of the West Chester Business Improvement District, said the community has responded positively to the signs, which he said do not impede upon West Chester's small-town charm.

"They look great. I'm sure it is only a matter of time before every community is using them. Without being obtrusive, these new signs provide our motorists with instant street identification, even in adverse conditions."

Borough Manager Ernie McNeeley emphasized their cohesiveness with the rest of the area: "They are exactly like the metal green ones that PennDOT had installed prior so they don't look any different, it's just that they are lit at night."

The technology costs little to operate because of its low power consumption. For the street signs installed in West Chester, one sign will consume less power than a common 40 watt light bulb.

The low power consumption also reduces light pollution, eliminates the "halo" effect often created in hazy conditions and allows drivers to see the sign at any angle.

Rooney said the signs will need little maintenance for the next three years.

The signs were installed by Signal Service Inc. a West Chester company specializing in the traffic control industry. They sell products to five states and maintain more than 1,000 intersections in Eastern Pennsylvania.

CeeLite, headquartered in Blue Bell, donated the signs to the borough. The signs could potentially act as a model of safety for other intersections.

Said McNeeley, "It's very nice of the vendor to donate them as test signs and we will evaluate their effectiveness over time and see if we want to proceed with more."

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