

BMTS Article Digest July – August 2019

BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee Members:

The following is a compilation of articles that may be of interest to BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee members. This and past digests can also be accessed in the Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee page of www.bmtsonline.com.

Scott

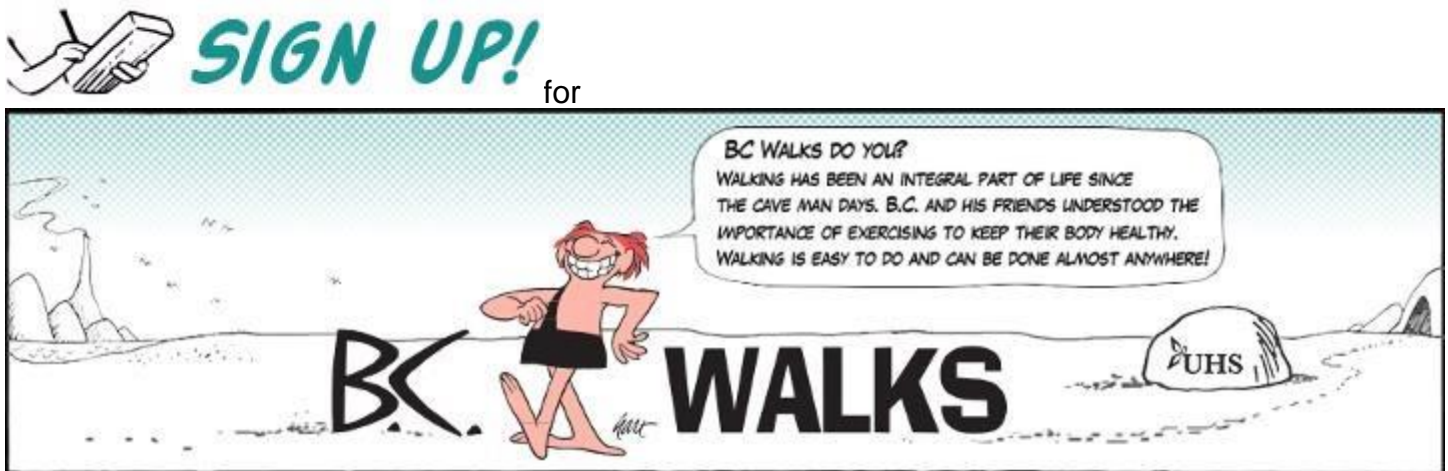


CenterLines

Take a look at the National Center for Bicycling & Walking's newsletter, **CenterLines**. You can also arrange to have it emailed directly to you.

See <http://www.bikewalk.org/newsletter.ph>

CenterLines is the bi-weekly electronic news bulletin of the National Center for Bicycling & Walking. **CenterLines** is our way of quickly delivering news and information you can use to create more walkable and bicycle-friendly communities.



Go to www.BCWalks.com!

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Thursday, 4 July 2019

Cars get safer, but not for people outside them

Deaths increase in 2018 for cyclists, pedestrians

Chris Woodyard

USA TODAY

LOS ANGELES – Cycling on picturesque Mulholland Highway through bucolic, tree-studded hills, Milt Olin probably never saw the car that killed him.

A distracted sheriff's deputy on patrol accidentally slammed his cruiser into Olin's bike from behind, sending him crashing into the car's windshield. Olin died at the scene.

It's the kind of nightmare scenario that haunts anyone who bikes or runs on public roads, and the latest government figures show the carnage is getting worse.

The number of bicyclists killed last year shot up 10%, according to estimates from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Pedestrian deaths rose 4%. The number of auto drivers and passengers killed in accidents slid for the third straight year, down 1% compared with 2017.

The cyclist and pedestrian death percentage estimates, a sharp reversal from declines the previous year, underscore a troubling trend: While cars have been getting safer for occupants, they remain potentially deadly for those outside the vehicle.

"It's much safer for the people inside" the car, said Bill Nesper, executive director for the League of American Bicyclists, an advocacy group.

"It's a serious thing because it's this steady stream of bicyclists and pedestrians being killed."

Automakers, backed by government safety regulators, have filled cars with features such as air bags and advanced child restraints to protect passengers in crashes. Improvements to protect walkers and bikers have moved more slowly.

A handful of automakers rolled out pedestrian and bicycle detection as part of their automatic braking systems, but most haven't. When they do offer it, it's sometimes an extra-cost option despite its potential to save lives.

One boost for the spread of pedestrian and cyclist detection technology: The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety will require automakers to have a high functioning pedestrian detection system as standard equipment on a model in order for it to earn the most coveted rating, Top Safety Pick Plus, starting in 2020.

The IIHS estimates automatic emergency braking will prevent 28,000 crashes and 12,000 injuries by 2025.

Volvo said its improving the detection system it introduced for pedestrians in 2010 and for bicycles in 2013. The automaker moved the sensor from the grille, where it can be blinded by snow or rain, to behind the windshield.

Automakers shelved the notion of installing air bags on the front of cars to try to protect cyclists or pedestrians in crashes, but they are exploring other ways to save bikers and walkers from serious injury or death.



Development continues on systems that would allow vehicles to electronically talk to each other in traffic, including warnings about hazards ahead such as bikers or walkers.

Milt Olin, 65, of Calabasas, Calif., was killed when his bike was struck by a patrolling sheriff's deputy in 2013. MILT OLIN FOUNDATION



Sunday, 7 July 2019

In Endicott, revitalization is within reach

Your Turn

Peter Newman Guest columnist

With visionary plans, determined leaders and financial support through the Greater Binghamton Fund, momentum is rising to enhance our beloved Endicott community, and Washington Avenue in particular.

The forthcoming digital marquee at the Endicott Performing Arts Center will mean more than an enhanced façade. The new sign will give the theater a fresh look, and it could also be the light that sparks further revitalization along Washington Avenue.

But that's not the only sign of revival.

The North Brewery is expanding its operations with the installation of a processing line to expand its footprint beyond greater Binghamton. The deteriorating Endicott Inn was demolished to make way for the possibility of a new hotel that will bring life to a long distressed property. Ideal Alley will become more inviting. Adaptive reuse of vacant structures and infill development will attract new residents, workers and visitors.

Planned streetscape improvements will create modern, memorable entrances that serve as attractive gateways to Endicott and Washington Avenue. The **enhanced pedestrian experience** will welcome new visitors and bring more customers into businesses like Endicott Florist, Originals Pizza, Phantom Chef, The Kuckoo's Nest and others.

We can't ignore the reality that it hasn't been easy for Washington Avenue businesses in recent years. Major employers cut their workforces — which dramatically reduced foot traffic and put the squeeze on retail enterprises.

However, it led us to this crossroads, where we get to decide: Do we dwell on what we've lost, or do build on the legacy that's been left behind?

We build! With a grassroots effort, one brick at a time. Endicott has invested the time in the past several years and now appears to be on the cusp of a turnaround.

This turnaround is driven by innovative and impact- focused businesses that are teaming up with community leaders and residents to guide the community's growth. Endicott is building on its legacy of innovation and hard work, and creating a roadmap to revitalization that people can believe in.

To understand this, look no further than the advanced manufacturing hub at the Huron Campus. The current site of BAE Systems is bustling with activity that is reminiscent, but certainly on a smaller scale, of the former occupant — IBM. There is also good reason to be optimistic about the potential economic impact of Imperium 3's planned lithium-ion battery factory.

With the efforts underway or planned, a revitalized Washington Avenue is within reach. Believe it.

But there's more work to be done — and a role for us all to play. Head to Washington Avenue, and take a walk with your family. Visit the businesses and help them thrive. As this revitalization surges forward, it's on us to make sure Washington Avenue's lights continue to shine brighter — and not just the one on EPAC's updated façade.

Peter Newman is M&T Bank regional president for Binghamton and the Southern Tier, and chair of the board of directors for the Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce.

GOVERNING

THE STATES AND LOCALITIES

Racing the Clock to Cross the Street? In One State, It'll Cost You.

Hawaii recently passed a law that would let police ticket pedestrians for starting to cross a street when the countdown starts. Other states let the walkers decide if they can make it.

BY: Daniel C. Vock | July 23, 2019

(Shutterstock)



Anyone who's ever used a crosswalk at busy intersection knows the feeling: You're about to step into the street, when the pedestrian signal switches from a white walking figure to a flashing orange hand. Do you try to make it across anyway?

More and more intersections these days include a countdown timer that shows just how many seconds pedestrians have before the signal changes. Traffic experts say the extra information helps walkers make better decisions; they make fewer risky crossings and speed up if it looks like the light is going to change before they get to the other side.

But in one state, it's now illegal for pedestrians to step into the street once the clock starts counting down.

In Hawaii, anyone who starts crossing after the countdown begins can be issued a ticket for \$130. Walkers who are already in the intersection when the countdown appears (at the start of the flashing orange hand or "Don't Walk" signal) will be allowed to finish.

Gov. David Ige signed the law along with three others that address pedestrian safety. Pedestrian deaths in Hawaii shot up from 15 in 2017 to 44 in 2018, the highest number since at least 2003.

The state transportation department told lawmakers in March that pedestrians shouldn't be allowed to cross once the numbers start flashing.

"This will decrease overall intersection safety especially for elderly persons and children, our most vulnerable pedestrians, as they may incorrectly judge the time needed to complete their crossing," the department explained in written testimony. "In addition, the result of more pedestrians crossing after the countdown begins comes the increase potential for pedestrian and vehicle accidents due to added pedestrian-vehicle conflicts, and less or smaller gaps in traffic for turning vehicles."

Proponents, including the Honolulu Police Department, said the changes would merely update a law written in 1981 to reflect changes in pedestrian signals. The police department also wanted to make sure that the law covered situations in which the flashing hand signal was broken but the countdown timer still worked.

Inconsistency Across States

A handful of Hawaii residents pushed state lawmakers to try a more permissive approach. California, they noted, recently changed its law in the opposite direction: Pedestrians are now allowed to cross during the countdown, so long as they get to the other side by the time it ends.

The federal Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), a highly detailed set of standards that is a sort of bible among traffic engineers, dictates that countdown timers have to accompany the upraised hand signal. States must adopt the MUTCD in order to qualify for federal transportation money, so they tend to follow it closely. (Not all cities' timers work in quite the same way. In Washington, D.C., the countdown actually covers the entire walking period, starting with the white "Walk" figure and continuing once the orange "Don't Walk" hand signal appears.)

But that doesn't mean states must interpret -- or enforce -- those signals the same way, points out David Hurwitz, a professor of civil and construction engineering at Oregon State University. In fact, for something as basic as yellow lights, states have three different approaches for what drivers are supposed to do: Either they are allowed to go through, they must stop, or they must stop unless it would be unsafe to do so.

In situations where there isn't consistency across states, local officials need to clearly convey their rules, Hurwitz says. That's especially true in a place like Hawaii, where tourists from all around the world come to visit.

"If you're going to adopt legal standards that might be different than what most states are doing currently [in order] to change behaviors, you really have to advertise what your expectation is for those users is," he says. "People aren't going to read the state laws before they come to Hawaii."

When it comes to changing behavior, the frequency of citations is more important than the size of the fines, he says. If dangerous pedestrian crossings are consistently a problem, traffic engineers may want to consider readjusting the amount of time they give pedestrians to cross the intersection and reduce the amount of time they have to wait, Hurwitz says.

But Timothy Gates, a Michigan State University engineering professor, says protecting pedestrians means improving conditions away from intersections. "If you've got a signal, you've at least got some semblance of protection there, with the separation of the right-of-way versus the mid-block crossing where there's no signal," he says. "That's where a lot of the fatalities happen."

Besides, he adds, the countdown timers give pedestrians plenty of time to cross. They usually figure that the pedestrian will move at 3.5 feet per second, in order to give elderly people and others with mobility problems time to get across. "I think it's perfectly reasonable to give a person wishing to cross the chance to make that judgment," he says.

This article was printed from: <https://www.governing.com/topics/transportation-infrastructure/gov-illegal-crosswalk-signal-timer-countdown.html>

Harper Stantz death: Driver gets 5-15 years in Binghamton drugged driving crash

Anthony Borrelli, Binghamton Press & Sun-Bulletin

Published 9:54 a.m. ET July 23, 2019 | Updated 2:55 p.m. ET July 23, 2019

Broome County DA Steve Cornwell explains the sentence for Kevin Wilcox in the drugged-driving crash that killed one teen and injured another. Anthony Borrelli, pressconnects.com

On a sunny, unseasonably warm afternoon March 11, Harper Stantz and Britney Laserinko were walking home after playing tennis at Recreation Park on Binghamton's West Side.

Four months later, 19-year-old Britney's memory of the moments after a Jeep struck them on the sidewalk exists in horrifying fragments. She remembers the emergency sirens. She remembers not being able to move or turn her head. And she remembers her frantic attempt to learn what happened to her 16-year-old friend.

"I will never be able to forget Harper's scream," Britney, who spent these past months recovering and working to regain the ability to walk, said in a statement read Tuesday in Broome County Court. "I felt responsible for Harper and still blame myself for not being able to save her. Now that she's gone, I feel lost."

Britney Laserinko, left, was seriously injured and Harper Stantz died after being struck by an alleged drugged driver on Binghamton's West Side. (Photo: Provided photo)

Standing a few feet away, in shackles and an orange jumpsuit, was 33-year-old Kevin Wilcox, who drove that Jeep while impaired by heroin, and who pleaded guilty Tuesday to the top charge against him: aggravated vehicular homicide. He was sentenced to five to 15 years in prison.

This case brings front and center the toll of the opioid crisis, said Broome County Court Judge Kevin Dooley, who described drug addiction as extending much deeper than ruining the lives of addicts. Harper died two days after the crash.



"I cannot imagine more innocent victims," Dooley said of the two girls, "and the ripple effect of the defendant's actions can never be calculated."

The judge said Wilcox had successfully completed Drug Treatment Court in 2005, but later he took painkillers to treat an injury. Then, Wilcox began using heroin.



Kevin L. Wilcox (Photo: Provided)

Given a chance to speak, Wilcox grew emotional Tuesday as he apologized to everyone he'd hurt — Britney and Harper's parents were seated in the courtroom gallery.

"I never thought that my problems would hurt someone else," Wilcox said. "I wish that day had never happened. I'm pleading guilty to accept my part in this."

How was the sentence decided?

Wilcox had been indicted on 15 charges, and the case was tentatively going to trial Aug. 12, but he agreed to Tuesday's guilty plea. He and his defense lawyer Thomas Jackson agreed to a pre-plea investigation by the Broome County Probation Department before deciding to accept a plea agreement.

Normally, when a defendant pleads guilty, sentencing is scheduled to a different date so the probation officials can compile that investigative report that assists with deciding the appropriate punishment. Because it was done ahead of Tuesday's plea, the sentence was handed down immediately after Wilcox admitted guilt.

Dooley said the maximum penalty Wilcox could have faced was 8½ to 25 years in prison for aggravated vehicular homicide. New York criminal law doesn't include a life sentence for homicides involving alcohol or drug impairment.

Man Proposes to Girlfriend after Spelling 'Marry Me' on Map of 15-mile Bike Ride

By Michael Bartiromo

Published July 29, 2019

Fox News

We're surprised she had any energy left to say "yes."

A cycling enthusiast in Texas recently asked his girlfriend to marry him after guiding her on a 15.7-mile bike route through the Houston area, which – unbeknownst to her – spelled out the words “Marry Me” when viewed on a map of the city.

The cyclist, Jon Blaze, initially shared the news on Reddit, where he claims he showed girlfriend Thau Nguyen the “nice surprise” at the end of the ride.

“She said YES!” he excitedly confirmed.

“We ride together at least twice a week. We also lead multiple social rides in Houston,” Blaze told KTRK, adding that he’s wanted to propose for over a year.



“I went from being so annoyed by all the crazy turns we did to being completely shocked and with the biggest smile on my face,” Nguyen added.

Blaze and Nguyen, who document their shared love of cycling on Instagram under the name Cycling.Couple, also shared photos from their engagement shoot.

Blaze also said he was lucky Nguyen didn’t ask too many questions during the ride.

“LOL she was a bit annoyed,” he wrote on Reddit. “She’s great, I’m so lucky.”



NATIONAL

Walking On Painted Keys: Creative Crosswalks Meet Government Resistance

July 16, 2019 5:06 AM ET

Heard on [Morning Edition](#)



Musicians walk on a crosswalk painted like a piano outside the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, N.Y. Increasingly, urban designers and transportation planners say this kind of art — colorful crosswalks and engaging sidewalks — leads to safer intersections, stronger neighborhoods and better public health.

Brett Dahlberg/WXXI

One of the newest pieces of public art in Rochester, N.Y., is right in the middle of Main Street. Or, more accurately, it's *on* the street.

Outside the Eastman School of Music, a group of volunteers repainted the crosswalk to look like three-dimensional piano keys in advance of the international jazz festival that happens here each year.

People walking by have been commenting on the artwork, but there's more here than meets the eye.

Intersections have had a pretty standard look in the United States for decades. The blank square of pavement, the white lines of crosswalks. Increasingly, urban designers and transportation planners say colorful crosswalks and engaging sidewalks lead to safer intersections, stronger neighborhoods and better public health. But the growing push for intersection creativity is meeting some resistance from the federal government.

And with pedestrian deaths in the U.S. at a 30-year high, those planners say, finding new ways to protect people from cars is becoming more urgent.

Just off Main Street, in Rochester's Beechwood neighborhood, there's another colorful intersection. The sidewalks here are green, the crosswalks are blue, and there's a big, red and yellow sun that covers the whole street. The art has been here a little over a year.

"Cars slowed down," says Joseph Hutchings, who has lived in the area for more than a decade. "Ain't nobody speeding up right here no more," he says. "People feel safer."



Children bike across this colorful intersection.

Courtesy of Common Ground Health

Hutchings says the intersection art makes a big difference for families. He says there are more children outside playing and more adults walking places or riding bikes.

Mike Bulger is a program coordinator at Common Ground Health, the Rochester nonprofit that planned the intersection redesign. He says that's exactly what the art is intended to do.

"It's a nudge toward the healthier option and the safer behavior," Bulger says.

One of the streets that runs through the intersection is an old streetcar route. It's a straight, wide road. "You can lay on the gas. You got plenty of room around you," Bulger says. But the eye-catching art is a reminder that "this isn't just a highway."

Bulger says slowing down traffic has ripple effects. It makes the space inviting. It's somewhere people want to be, instead of just get through. A growing number of urban planners and researchers, from the Federal Highway Administration, to AARP, to the Governors Highway Safety Association say that brings people outside, reducing crime and increasing the number of people getting around without cars.

When infrastructure encourages active transit, like walking or bicycling, the result is public health gains, says Ruth Steiner, who directs the Center for Health and the Built Environment at the University of Florida.

"The way an urban area is constructed speaks volumes about how people will navigate it," Steiner says.

"This is not an entirely new idea, using color to indicate pedestrian-friendly spaces," she says, "but I would say I'm encountering it more often now."

Indeed, [cities across](#) the country have embraced the idea.

Despite the Federal Highway Administration's finding that aesthetically pleasing intersections bring a range of benefits, the agency has taken issue with several examples.

Officials in St. Louis [decided](#) in 2016 to let the color in artistic intersections fade away after the highway administration said they could distract drivers.

A year later, the agency asked officials in Lexington, Ky., to remove a rainbow crosswalk downtown [because it created](#) "potential confusion for motorists" and danger for pedestrians.

In general, [the agency says](#), "crosswalk art is actually contrary to the goal of increased safety and most likely could be a contributing factor to a false sense of security for both motorists and pedestrians."

The city of Rochester says its artistic intersections have threaded the needle between being creative and following the rules.

"It is complicated," says Shawn Dunwoody, who oversaw the painting of the piano crosswalk. "You've got to find that balance."
