

BMTS Article Digest March – April 2021

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 from the Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee page at <http://bmtsonline.com/about/committees>.

Scott

Pedestrian & Bicycle Information Center (PBIC) Messenger e-Newsletter

Go to <http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/newsroom/newsletters.cfm>.

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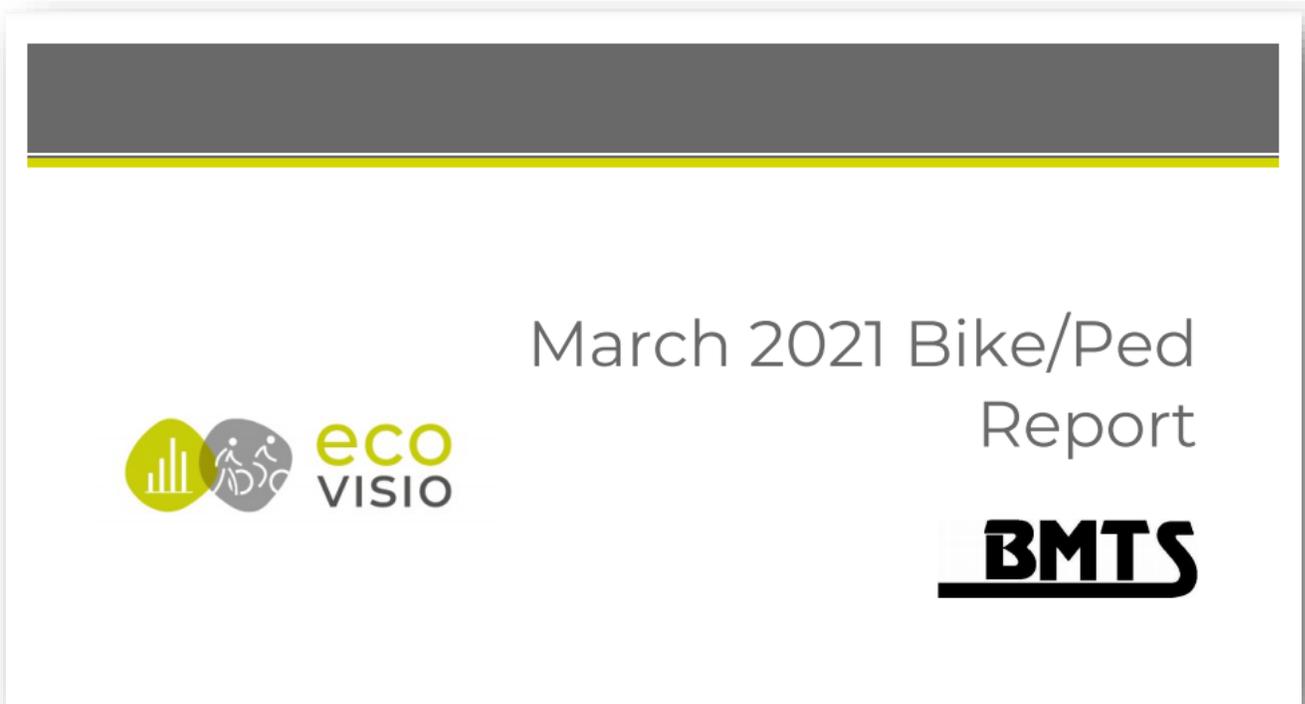


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See the **Two Rivers Greenway Pedestrian & Bicycle Counting March 2021 Report** at <http://bmtsonline.com/data/bikeped-counts>.



[Press and Sun-Bulletin](#) | [Page A05](#)
Wednesday, 10 March 2021

Waymo: Self-driving cars could have prevented most fatal crashes

Ryan Randazzo Arizona Republic USA TODAY NETWORK

Waymo self-driving cars would have avoided nearly every fatal crash, **including those with bikes and pedestrians**, in Chandler during a 10-year period, the company said Monday.

The Mountain View, Californiabased affiliate of Google, which operates dozens of autonomous vehicles in Chandler and the southeast region of metro Phoenix, made the bold proclamation while releasing the results of computer simulations of those crashes.

The only accidents Waymo vehicles didn't avoid or mitigate were those where they were rear-ended.

Waymo has long contended that it could program autonomous vehicles to operate more safely than human drivers, and the company says its analysis is strong evidence that computers can avoid the common, simple mistakes that kill people on the road.

"These are incredibly important results," said Trent Victor, director of safety research for Waymo, on a conference call with reporters. "It shows the Waymo driver is not only capable of driving safely on its own, but it is able to respond effectively when the opposing party makes a mistake. That is important because people make mistakes." He noted that the accidents were mostly avoided simply by driving responsibly, not by the autonomous vehicles taking extreme actions to avoid crashes.

Waymo said the data it is sharing shows the company is "living up to our obligation to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the technology we're building," and encouraged other autonomous vehicle operators to do the same.

While Waymo has millions of miles of on-road experience, fatal accidents only occur so often, and it will take billions of miles to definitively determine whether autonomous vehicles are actually involved in fewer fatal crashes than human drivers. Waymos have been in minor accidents in Arizona, but never a collision with a fatality.

That means it will take years before Waymo's operations on public roads yield enough data to determine if the white Chrysler Pacifica minivans and other test vehicles clad with a host of sensors are really safer than the licensed drivers in Arizona.

Waymo looked at 72 of the fatal accidents from 2008-17 that took place in the "geofenced" area in which it operates in Chandler. The company had a third party reconstruct them, and then simulated them in a computer environment where the Waymo system could be substituted for the human drivers, some of whom lost their lives.

The crashes examined and detailed in a white paper released by Waymo on Monday include a variety of circumstances, from red light running to jaywalkers, cyclists traveling the wrong direction on the road and even a skateboarder who was holding onto the back of another vehicle.

Crash reconstructions were based on police reports, Arizona Department of Transportation reports, photos, diagrams and even surveillance footage in some instances, according to Waymo.

Waymo's research didn't disclose personal information of crash victims, but did provide details of the accidents, such as the make of vehicles and speeds they traveled.

Waymo ran separate simulations for the incidents, one with an autonomous driver in place of the car that initiated the accident and another in place of the vehicle that was struck or forced to react, where that was applicable. Single-car accidents or those involving pedestrians didn't offer an opportunity to substitute two drivers. So, the 72 fatal crashes actually yielded 91 simulations.

"The simulated Waymo Driver completely avoided or mitigated 100% of crashes, aside from the crashes in which it was struck from behind, including

every instance (20) that involved a pedestrian or cyclist," Victor reported Monday on a company blog.

[Press and Sun-Bulletin | Page A10](#)
Thursday, 25 March 2021

Pedestrian death rate jumps despite pandemic

Eric D. Lawrence

Detroit Free Press USA TODAY NETWORK

Remember those images of empty streets, minus people and cars, from the early days of lockdown last year?

Those memorable photos, captured as the coronavirus pandemic was upending daily life, meant a drop, at least for a time, in the amount of vehicle miles being driven. Unfortunately, that didn't translate into a drop in pedestrian deaths.

Instead, a preliminary data analysis released Tuesday by the Governors Highway Safety Association shows a shocking 20% increase in the pedestrian fatality rate per 1 billion vehicle miles traveled during the first six months of the year.

"It's upsetting. It's really very, very unsettling to think we can have such a large reduction in traffic and no drop in pedestrian fatalities," said Richard Retting, director of safety/research for Sam Schwartz, the consulting firm that analyzed the information. "There's never been anything close to this on a rate basis."

While vehicles have become substantially safer for occupants, pedestrian deaths have skyrocketed over the past decade. A variety of factors are believed to be at play: more large trucks and SUVs on the road, distractions, vehicle speed and alcohol use.

People of color make up a disproportionate number of victims, and most fatal pedestrian crashes happen at night and away from intersections.

Despite the impact of COVID-19 on daily life, including a shift to remote learning and working from home, the number of fatalities in the first half of 2020 appears to have been close to the same as the prior year, with 2,957 pedestrian deaths for the first six months of 2020 compared with 2,951 in 2019, according to safety association projections.

The key figure, however, in the context of the pandemic is how that relates to the number of vehicle miles traveled, which dropped 16.5% compared with the same period in 2019. The pedestrian fatality rate of 2.2 per 1 billion vehicle miles traveled represents a 20% increase over the 2019 rate, according to the analysis of data from state highway safety offices.

Fatalities tend to go up in the second half of the year, Retting noted, saying people tend to be out and about more during the warmer summer months and for holidays like Halloween and Christmas.

The analysis found that 6,301 pedestrians died in the United States in 2019. That number is an increase of about 96 over the federal data released so far for the year but was adjusted to account for historical underreporting in the government's typical initial releases, according to the safety association.

Pedestrians accounted for about 17% of all traffic deaths in 2019, a percentage that has risen fairly consistently over the last decade.

However, the numbers, all based on preliminary data, point to some improvements as well.

Twenty states and Washington, D.C., recorded declines in the number of pedestrian fatalities, some of which were double-digit and percentage declines, compared with the first half of 2019. Delaware and Kentucky are projected to have three years of declines in pedestrian deaths.

Still, 27 states reported increases in their numbers during the same period.



A variety of factors are believed to be at play in the increase in pedestrian fatalities, including more large trucks and SUVs on the road.



The \$22 million [Route 434 Greenway](#) from downtown Binghamton into Vestal is taking shape.

Construction workers have been busy along the Vestal Parkway and in a residential neighborhood on the city's South Side after tree-clearing work that started in January.

Some people who live near Vestal Avenue and Ivanhoe Road fought the state Department of Transportation's plan to build a connecting path to the Greenway trail. Their efforts to prevent the link from being built were unsuccessful.

A few signs expressing opposition to the project remain posted in the neighborhood.

The construction project is closing one eastbound lane of Route 434 in Binghamton.

A section of the future Greenway along Route 434 in Binghamton. (Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News)

A water line will be installed starting at Murray Hill Road on the east side of the Binghamton University campus. Drainage work will be done along Vestal Avenue.

The 2.5-mile shared pedestrian and bicycle pathway is expected to be completed by the summer of 2023.



Workers at a construction site on Vestal Avenue at Ivanhoe Road on April 7, 2021. (Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News)