

BMTS Article Digest June – July 2023

BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee Members:

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Press and Sun-Bulletin | Page A01

Tuesday, 20 June 2023

Ross Park to get \$750K upgrades

A “hidden gem” on Binghamton’s South Side will be getting a whole lot more attention in the coming years.

The City of Binghamton has over \$750,000 earmarked to improve the Ross Park Trail, a project that will ultimately help visitors of all ages and abilities access Ross Park’s historic structures as well as its carousel, the neighboring Discover y Center and the Ross Park Zoo.

“When completed it will be a destination for people that want to get involved in walking on a recreational trail,” said Binghamton Mayor Jared Kraham. “Even in the condition it’s in right now, it’s really neat. You kind of appreciate the topography of the

South Side and the Zoo and the park itself. It's amazing how much land there is up there when you're actually walking it. It is much more than meets the eye."

Binghamton has received a pair of state grants for \$500,000 and \$250,000 to support trail upgrades at Ross Park. The money will cover design work and a "big chunk" of



construction, with the city also contributing funds toward the project. Kraham said the city has selected a design firm and its approval will come before City Council at an upcoming meeting.

Here's what you need to know.

What changes are planned for Ross Park?

The project will make Ross Park more accessible by repairing stairways and sidewalks in compliance with ADA standards, while implementing pedestrian safety measures like guide rails and fencing.

One of the larger aspects of the project will target improvements to the Morgan Road entrance. The redesign will aim to make the entrance more welcoming while improving traffic flow.

"Anybody who's driven into the Zoo knows it's a bit haphazard," said Kraham. "It just doesn't work how it should work. That design is going to be a big portion of it, and making sure that at any point when you're in the Zoo, the sidewalks are accessible. You can walk from the Zoo to the Discovery Center to the pavilion to the trail, all within ADA compliance and the right type of sidewalks."

The project will also examine potential improvements to pedestrian and vehicular access off Park Avenue, where a historic stone-pillared gateway marks the original entrance to the park. "How people are coming in and out of the park right now is not conducive to pedestrian traffic," said Kraham. "Driving in there is very awkward. It's difficult for school buses to traverse."

What is the timeline for the project?

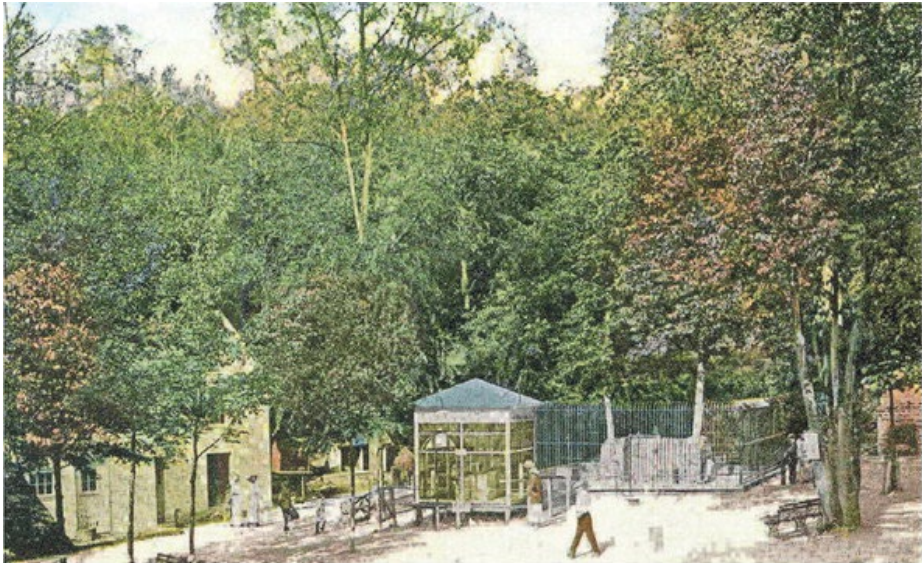
Kraham said some work may be possible later this year depending on the speed of the design firm, but most of the construction will take place in 2024 and beyond. The first phase will likely focus on the upper woodland trail, where the overhaul is less complicated than other sections of the park.

Ross Park, which opened in 1875, covers 66 acres.

“Residents are only experiencing a small slice of that acreage. They will be able to better access the entirety of that woodland trail,” said Kraham. “It’ll be more accessible for the South Side, the actual neighborhood where the park is, but it will also be a new trail amenity. People can drive in, park, and experience a historic park in a lot of ways.”

How did the project get started?

Improving Ross Park has been a city goal for years. The roots of the project date back to 2018, when the city asked Cornell University’s Design Connect program to redevelop the historic entrance and pathway into Ross Park. “They



did extensive outreach and developed a really neat plan for what this could look like,” said Kraham. “The city used that and some other engineering work to go after state money and it got approved. This is going to be the fruits of that project several years later.”

News Release – June 20, 2023

American Academy of Pediatrics Lays Out Steps for Improving Child Pedestrian Safety

In the United States, 16% of children killed in traffic crashes are pedestrians; Communities can create safe and walkable environments for pedestrians and reduce injuries and fatalities.

Walking is good for the health of children, families and the environment, and yet it can be challenging to safely travel on foot where roads, intersections or vehicles aren't designed with pedestrian safety in mind.

The American Academy of Pediatrics, in its first policy statement on child pedestrian safety since 2009, calls for communities to adopt and promote policies, programs and legislation that result in a safer environment for pedestrians. The policy statement, "Child Pedestrian Safety," and an accompanying technical report, "Epidemiology and Prevention of Child Pedestrian Injury," will be published in the July 2023 Pediatrics (published online June 20).

[Policy statements](#) created by AAP are written by medical experts, reflect the latest evidence in the field, and go through several rounds of peer review before being approved by the AAP Board of Directors and published in Pediatrics.

"The reminder to 'Look both ways before you cross the street,' is good advice, but just part of the equation," said Sadiqa A. I. Kendi, MD, MPH, FAAP, CPST, co-author of the policy statement, written by the AAP Council on Injury, Violence, and Poison Prevention.

"Research tells us that an even more effective way to consistently improve safety is when communities take intentional steps to create pedestrian-safe environments. We live in a busy, distracted world, and when local leaders create walkable spaces, they also enhance the appeal and vibrance of their communities."

Despite an overall decline in pedestrian deaths over the past 30 years, child pedestrian deaths have risen 11% since 2013, affecting more children ages 10-14 and teens ages 15-19. Black and American Indian youth ages 19 and younger are 1.8 times more likely to die in pedestrian incidents than white children. The risk of death to Hispanic children is 1.2 times the risk to non-Hispanic children. Studies indicate that these inequities are due to the pervasive impacts of poverty, economic disparities in access to public transportation, individual and systemic racism, and disparities in the investment of transportation safety measures, such as sidewalks, to separate pedestrians from vehicles.

The AAP also notes that the hours of 6:00–9:00 p.m. are the riskiest times of day for child pedestrians, as 64% percent of deaths occur in daylight hours or at dusk. The risk of child pedestrian death is greater in rural areas, and boys are at higher risk of injury, as are children with disabilities.

While encouraging children to walk and bike outdoors, the AAP also notes that it is unsafe for children to play in driveways and adjacent unfenced yards.

"Drivers may not see small children when backing up their vehicles in a driveway or lot," Dr. Kendi said. "Newer and self-driving vehicles are increasingly equipped with safety features and technology to detect pedestrians and avoid crashes, but they're often more likely to detect adults and may not be able to account for the less predictable movements of a small child."

The AAP advocates for a "Vision Zero" approach focused on the reduction of traffic fatalities and severe injuries. Vision Zero, which is being implemented in more than 45 U.S. cities, is built on the premise that traffic injuries are a public health problem in which human error is assumed and accepted, according to the policy statement. The effort shifts the focus away

from individual behavior and toward system-wide change that, in Sweden, resulted in a 50% reduction in pedestrian fatalities.

AAP recommends that pediatricians:

- Advocate for legislation that addresses environmental and urban design factors that impact pedestrian safety. Work with local, state and federal officials on adopting policies and programs to educate pedestrians and drivers.
- Support legislation to reduce speed limits in urban areas, including area-wide 20 mph zones, and to permit photo speed limit enforcement in critical areas, including school zones.
- Develop laws that encourage or require adoption of safety technology in new vehicles, including self-driving cars. Examples are pedestrian detection systems and automatic braking in new vehicles.
- Support developing safe routes to school.
- Promote walking as an alternative to motorized transportation.
- Advocate for pedestrian infrastructure when communities consider how to repurpose urban space and roadway lanes.
- Support research to further understand and test interventions for pedestrian education. For instance, drivers and pedestrians can be distracted while using cell phones, and changing individual behaviors is one factor in reducing injuries and death.
- Develop robust surveillance systems to collect data to identify high-risk locations for child pedestrian injury.
- Provide individual guidance to families that includes:
 - Remind parents of the complexity of the traffic environment. Children at various stages of development may not have the cognitive, perceptual or behavior capability to navigate challenging walking routes.
 - Advise parents of young children that driveways and adjacent, unfenced yards are unsafe play areas.
 - Recommend that adults accompany most children under 10 and provide ongoing, active instruction on pedestrian safety.
 - Counsel patients of all ages about the risk of distracted walking, including text messaging, talking on or looking at the mobile phone, and listening to music.

“We know that active transportation, like walking or biking, is good for kids and it’s good for the environment,” said Brian D. Johnston, MD, MPH, FAAP, co-author of the report. “As children grow older, they will be able to be more independent. Each of us can help keep children safe by paying attention to the people around us and by promoting safer environments that benefit all of us.”



Greenway Trails Progress Report

PTNY has published a Greenway Trails Progress Report that summarizes accomplishments and progress made on the goals and recommendations of the state’s Greenway Trails Plan through the

end of 2022. The report includes an update on continued improvements and enhancements to the Empire State Trail, funding achievements for Greenway Trails, updates on trail-related projects from around the state, highlights on other accomplishments that advance the goals and recommendations of the Greenway Trails Plan, and a summary of the other components of this partnership.

[READ THE PROGRESS REPORT](#)

Drive-thrus are creating problems for cities and towns

By [Nathaniel Meyersohn](#), CNN

Updated 4:29 PM EDT, Sun June 25, 2023



Customers wait in the drive-thru at a McDonald's restaurant in Peru, Illinois, in April 2020.

Daniel Acker/Bloomberg/Getty Images

New YorkCNN —

America is a land of drive-thrus.

An estimated [200,000](#) drive-thrus are spread across this country. Americans visit drive-thru lanes approximately 6 billion times a year. At leading chains like McDonald's, drive-thrus account for [70% of sales](#) or more.

Drive-thrus promise hungry drivers ease, convenience and a juicy burger. But long lines of cars waiting for orders spill out into US roads in every state from chains like Chick-fil-A, McDonald's, Starbucks and Dunkin'. And city officials, urban planners and critics say the model is failing modern cities.

Magnets of traffic and congestion, drive-thrus discourage walking, public transit use and visits to neighboring businesses. They also lead to accidents with pedestrians, cyclists and other cars, and contradict the environmental and livability goals of many communities.

A host of cities and regions want the sprawl to stop: Atlanta lawmakers will vote this summer on whether to ban new drive-thrus in the popular Beltline area. Minneapolis; Fair Haven, New Jersey; Creve Coeur, Missouri; Orchard Park, New York, and other cities have [banned new drive-thrus in recent years](#). Some cities in Southern California, such as Long Beach in 2019, have passed temporary moratoriums blocking new developments. Restrictions have also been considered in Pittsburgh and Mesa, Arizona.

Drive-thrus don't "support any of the life and vitality and amenities that suggest people might want to come live, work or play in a neighborhood," said David Dixon, an urban places fellow at design and planning firm Stantec. "Drive-thrus belonged to a much more auto-centric world."

Land of the drive-thru

Drive-thrus first appeared in California in the 1950s, according to the Smithsonian. An early Jack in the Box was a hit with kids, who could order their meal through the head of a clown.

The eat-in-your-car model expanded on American roads during the following decades as highways were built, suburbs spread, and new fast-food chains like McDonald's and Wendy's popped up.

Drive-thrus became a [lifeline for chains](#) during the Covid-19 pandemic, as restaurants shut down indoor seating areas. Drive-thru sales hit \$133 billion in 2022, an increase of 30% from 2019 pre-pandemic levels, according to Technomic, a restaurant industry consulting firm.

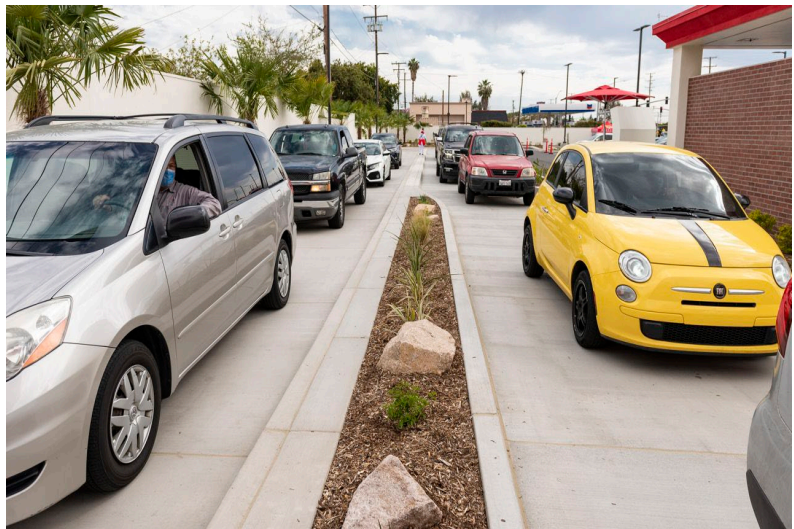
Shake Shack and Sweetgreen opened their first drive-thru locations during the pandemic, while Taco Bell, Chipotle and other chains opened stores that serve drive-thru customers exclusively.

Companies switched to drive-thru models because they are more profitable: smaller than sit-down restaurants, requiring less staff and maintenance.

A backed up In-N-Out Burger in Santa Ana, California. The original structure was rebuilt to add double drive-thru lines to try to alleviate congestion.

Leonard Ortiz/MediaNews Group/Orange County Register/Getty Images

They make the most sense in car-centric areas, and there are many drive-thrus positioned far from pedestrian or bicycle traffic. But drive-thrus are often located in the "exact worse place for them to be" for road safety, said Eric Dumbaugh, a professor in the department of urban and regional planning at Florida Atlantic University who studies traffic safety.



They are often intentionally placed along higher-speed arterial roads — busy roads that carry cars from around a region at high speeds — to grab drivers' attention.

This means that if there's a pedestrian or biker in an intersection or sidewalk, drivers have less time to brake, increasing the chances of an accident. Drivers moving along arterial roads also typically focus on the road and the cars around them, and less likely to be on the lookout for pedestrians.

Drive-thrus can also be hot spots for rear-end collisions and t-bone accidents from cars turning left out of driveways.

Companies “aren’t paying any attention to the safety considerations of their design decisions,” said Dumbaugh. And local governments pay lip service to pedestrian safety but still permit these uses in arterial roads, he said.

More lanes, more congestion

Companies say they are changing their drive-thrus by adding more car lanes and [technology such as AI](#) to speed up orders and reduce potential problems.

Starbucks told CNN that it is conscious of the communities its stores are in and “introducing the right type of store for the needs of that community.” Starbucks is testing different store models in different areas such as pickup-only stores, curbside pickup from cars and drive-thrus.



Around 40% of Starbucks' locations are drive-thrus.

David Paul Morris/Bloomberg/Getty Images

But chains trying to address congestion by adding more lanes just encourage more cars to come. Accidents are so common that personal injury [lawyers around the](#)

[country](#) specifically [advertise](#) to people [injured at drive-thrus](#). Experts say pedestrian safety can be improved by tightly managing access along arterial roads and locating drive-thrus away from them.

Drive-thrus also do not support neighboring businesses, Dixon of Stantec said, as people typically just grab their food and drive off.

A better, safer fast-food model in these areas are restaurants and bars with sit-down options that contribute to walkable neighborhoods, he said, or on the first floor of multi-floor buildings.

Cities push back

Atlanta City Councilman Jason Dozier proposed a bill this year to [block new drive-thrus](#) around the Atlanta Beltline, a pedestrian trail along a 22-mile railroad corridor. Atlanta’s City Council is expected to vote on the bill in August.

Dozier’s bill was in response to pedestrian fatalities in the area.

Since 2015, 14 pedestrians have died and 47 have been seriously injured in car accidents around the Beltline area, he said. More than half those deaths occurred in last two years.

“It’s a very scary time for pedestrians in the city,” Dozier said. “We need to make sure we can design communities around pedestrian safety.”

The Atlanta Beltline. Atlanta City Councilman Jason Dozier has proposed legislation restricting new drive-thru development in the area.

Marilyn Nieves/iStockphoto/Getty Images

In Sugar House, a neighborhood in Salt Lake City, the planning commission proposed a ban on [new drive-thru development](#) in business districts after residents complained drive-thrus were blocking sidewalks, bike paths and driving lanes on streets.



“It puts the vehicle front and center. It goes against the master plan of Sugar House to promote a walkable, mixed-use town center,” said Levi Thatcher, chair of the Sugar House Transportation Committee.

Charlotte has [struggled with clogged roads](#) from cars spilling out into the streets from Chick-fil-A and other fast-food drive-thru lanes during peak hours in recent years.

“Our love of waffle fries is leading to even bigger traffic woes on busy Charlotte roads,” said one [TV report](#) from WCNC in 2019.

Charlotte has a long-term plan to become a less car-oriented city through investments in rail and other public transit. Building drive-thru restaurants in densifying areas clash with these goals, said Keba Samuel, chair of the Charlotte Planning Commission.

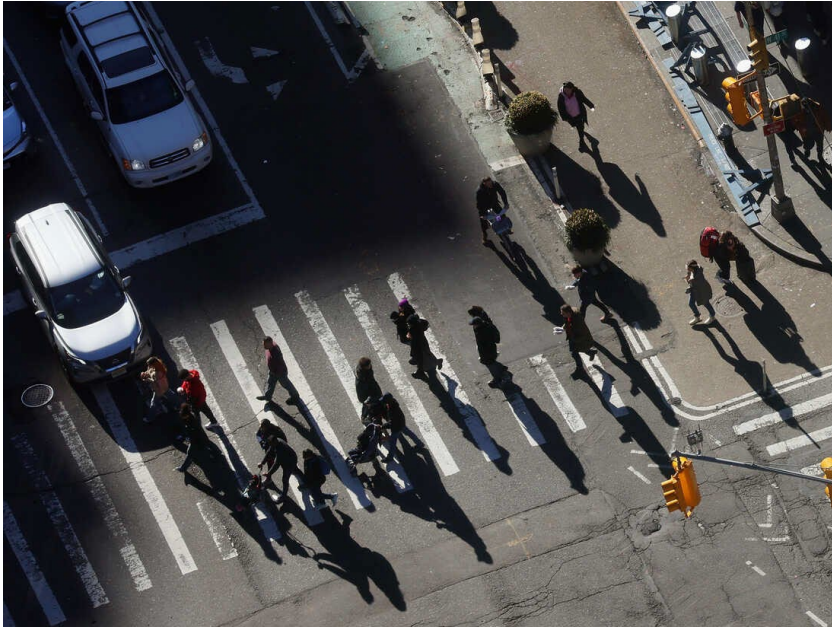
“The more drive-thrus you build, the more car-centric you become —as opposed to something that has more mobility options,” she said. “It doesn’t make sense to have this multi-billion investment in light rail and still encourage an auto-centric environment. It’s contradictory.”

However, the Charlotte City Council recently [approved](#) new Chick-fil-A and Bojangles drive-thrus near public transit stations.



NATIONAL
U.S. pedestrian deaths reach a 40-year high

June 26, 2023 5:00 AM ET



[Juliana Kim](#)

In 2022, drivers struck and killed the highest number of pedestrians since 1981.

Bruce Bennett/Getty Images

A new study paints a grim picture of American roads: every day, 20 people walk outside and end up killed by a moving vehicle.

"There are more pedestrians being killed today than in decades," Russ Martin, the senior director of policy and government relations at the Governors Highway Safety Association, told NPR.

The organization, which tracks pedestrian deaths in the U.S., [estimates that more than 7,500 pedestrians were killed by drivers last year](#) — the highest number since 1981. The final tally may be even greater given that Oklahoma was unable to provide data due to a technical issue. Pedestrian deaths have been climbing since 2010 because of unsafe infrastructure and the [prevalence of SUVs](#), which tend to be more deadly for pedestrians than smaller cars, according to Martin. When the pandemic arrived, there was an even greater surge as empty roads gave way to speeding and distracted driving.

The pandemic has waned, but cases of reckless driving — and subsequently the number of Americans killed while walking — has not. The new data, released on Friday, shows the U.S. continues to lag in its effort to improve road safety, even as experts say some solutions are within reach.

States below the Sun Belt ranked as having the highest rate of pedestrian deaths in 2022

For the seventh year in a row, New Mexico was ranked as the most dangerous state for pedestrians.

Arizona and Florida were also placed in the top spots for having high rates of pedestrian deaths in GHSA's estimates.

There are multiple theories: in bigger states, communities are more spread out and as a result, people need to drive more to get around, he said. Another possibility is that Southern states have better weather and people spend more time outside.

"This is all just conjecture, but I think it's certainly worthwhile to take a closer look into what's going on in those states," he added.

Local lawmakers can implement traffic calming measures today

Traffic safety has been an uphill battle in the U.S. for years but there are strategies at lawmakers' disposal to address the crisis today, according to Peter Norton, a professor at the University of Virginia who has studied the history of driving in America.

"The best things we can do will take years, but there are some things we can do now, they don't cost much money and they make a big difference," he said.

For instance, implementing sharp corners instead of round curves at the end of roads forces drivers to slow down to turn and therefore prevents speeding. That technique, along with adding pedestrian islands and [large sidewalk bulb-outs](#), is known as "traffic calming."

Norton said installing speeding and red light cameras can also be effective if they work properly. Adding bike lanes can also keep drivers more alert on the road.

Lowering speed limits is also an important step but only if it is enforced and used alongside other safety measures. Norton warned that roads with a mix of different vehicle speeds tend to be more dangerous.

There are also some local and regional measures the GHSA pointed to that could help prevent deaths.

In Hawaii, police officers are stationed in areas that have seen a higher volume of crashes or foot traffic to look out for reckless driving.

And in Idaho, the state's highway safety office gave out [walk audits](#) for community members to identify safety concerns on the street. Local officials then use the results to improve the walkability of neighborhoods.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 22, 2023

CONTACT: [Adam Snider](#), 202-580-7930

202-365-8971 (after hours)

Drivers Hit and Killed More Than 7,500 Pedestrians Last Year, Most Since 1981, New Projection Shows

Dangerous driving, inadequate infrastructure, larger and heavier vehicles contribute to record death toll, with 20 people walking killed every day

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Drivers struck and killed at least 7,508 people walking in the United States in 2022 – the most pedestrian deaths since 1981 – according to a new report released today by the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA). The report also includes an analysis of 2021 data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) that reveals a troubling safety disparity for people on foot: Pedestrian fatalities have skyrocketed 77% since 2010, compared to 25% for all other traffic-related deaths.

Earlier this year, GHSA released a preview of state and national pedestrian traffic deaths for the first six months of 2022, based on preliminary data reported by the State Highway Safety Offices (SHSOs) in 49 states and the District of Columbia (D.C.). The report warned that not only has the number of pedestrian deaths continued to rise over the past decade, but an uptick in dangerous driving behaviors that started in 2020 hasn't abated, further endangering people on foot. This new, comprehensive report, [Pedestrian Traffic Fatalities by State: 2022 Preliminary Data](#), provides a detailed look at projected pedestrian deaths for the full year using additional preliminary data provided by the SHSOs. The data analysis was conducted by Elizabeth Petraglia, Ph.D., with the research firm [Westat](#).

The new report found that the projected 7,508 pedestrian deaths in 2022 was a 1% increase from the year before. Forty-nine states and D.C. provided pedestrian fatality data for the report; due to a technical issue, Oklahoma did not provide data. Considering that the state averaged 92 pedestrian deaths in recent years, the actual total number of U.S. pedestrian fatalities last year could be as high as 7,600. Nationwide, there were 2.37 pedestrian deaths per billion vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in 2022, continuing a troubling trend of elevated rates that coincided with the start of the pandemic.

“Every day, 20 people go for a walk and do not return home. These are people living their daily lives – commuting to and from school and work, picking up groceries, walking the dog, getting some exercise – who died suddenly and violently,” said GHSA Chief Executive Officer Jonathan Adkins. “The saddest part is that these crashes are preventable. We know what works – better-designed infrastructure, lower speeds, addressing risky driving behaviors that pose a danger to people walking. We must do

these things and more to reverse this awful trend and protect people on foot. Enough is enough.”

The GHSA report also explains how the comprehensive Safe System approach can improve pedestrian safety and gives numerous examples of how SHSOs and their partners are incorporating Safe System principles into their pedestrian safety work. Some of the proven and promising approaches include designing and building safer roadways, engaging with people experiencing homelessness, focusing traffic enforcement on dangerous driving behaviors such as speeding and driving impaired or distracted, and educating novice drivers about their responsibility to look out for and yield to pedestrians and other road users.

Pedestrian Safety Trends, 2010-2021

The GHSA report also examines 2021 data from NHTSA’s Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) to provide insights on trends regarding when, where and how drivers strike and kill people on foot. Findings include:

- Most pedestrian fatalities continue to occur at night, although nighttime deaths have accounted for an even larger share over the past few years. In 2021, 77% of fatal pedestrian crashes occurred in the dark, with approximately 20% happening in daylight and 3% during dawn or dusk. Since 2010, nighttime fatal crashes have increased by 86%, compared with a 31% rise in daytime pedestrian deaths.
- Drivers of passenger cars have consistently accounted for the greatest number of fatal pedestrian crashes. However, over the past decade the number of pedestrian deaths in crashes involving sport utility vehicles (SUVs) increased at a far faster rate (120%) than deaths in crashes involving passenger cars (26%). Because of their greater body weight and larger profile, SUVs and other light trucks can cause more harm to a person on foot when a crash occurs.
- In 2021, 69% of pedestrian fatalities occurred in locations where no sidewalk was noted on the crash report, up from 59% in 2017 and continuing a steady upward trajectory in recent years. The presence of sidewalks can help protect people walking by separating them from motor vehicle traffic, but additional infrastructure design considerations, such as raised crosswalks and traffic calming that slows vehicle speeds, can provide even more protection.
- It is well documented that people of color are overrepresented in pedestrian fatalities. Although race and ethnicity data for 2021 pedestrian deaths were not available in FARS due to delays in processing death certificates, researchers looked at changes between 2018 and 2020. They found that the proportion of pedestrians whose race and ethnicity was reported as White non-Hispanic on their death certificate fell from 47% in 2018 to 41% in 2020, while the proportions rose

for Black non-Hispanic (from 19% to 20%) and Hispanic (from 20% to 21%) pedestrians.

- The percentage of pedestrian deaths involving speeding was 8.1% in 2021, a slight decrease from the year before but higher than before the pandemic, when approximately 6-7% of pedestrian fatalities involved a speeding driver. The average risk of death for pedestrians increases exponentially the faster a vehicle is traveling, from 10% at 23 mph to 90% at 58 mph.
- Non-freeway arterial roads, which typically carry large volumes of traffic at high speeds, are the most dangerous for people on foot, accounting for 60% of all fatalities in 2021. Approximately 18% of pedestrian deaths were on freeways. Stranded motorists exiting their vehicles, first responders and tow truck drivers are all examples of pedestrians who have been killed on freeways. While all states have Move Over laws that require drivers to slow down and change lanes when approaching a stopped vehicle, the fact that more than 1,300 pedestrians died on freeways indicates these laws need to be strengthened, better publicized and more heavily enforced.

This August, traffic safety, public health, law enforcement, government and business leaders will come together in New York City for the [GHSA 2023 Annual Meeting](#). They will discuss, among other things, the increase in pedestrian deaths and how to leverage the Safe System approach to help protect people on foot.

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About GHSA

The Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) is a nonprofit association representing the highway safety offices of states, territories, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. GHSA provides leadership and representation for the states and territories to improve traffic safety, influence national policy, enhance program management and promote best practices. Its members are appointed by their Governors to administer federal and state highway safety funds and implement state highway safety plans. Visit ghsa.org for more information or follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).



INFRASTRUCTURE

Sacramento's Poor Street Design Is Perfect for Hit-and-Runs

More than 140 people have been killed by drivers who fled the scene in Sacramento County since 2018 and experts blame aging roadways that were designed without pedestrians or cyclists in mind.

June 15, 2023 • Ryan Lillis, *The Sacramento Bee*, [TNS](#)



Kathleen Smith and Andrea Perea show a photo on a cell phone on March 16 of Christine Wilbur who was killed by a hit-and-run driver in 2019 while walking across the Florin Road freeway off-ramp of northbound Highway 99.

Hector Amezcua/TNS

Drivers who flee the scene after killing a pedestrian or cyclist often do so in an act of self-preservation. They are drunk, driving recklessly or don't have a license – and the consequences they face for causing a fatal crash would be severe.

That said, Sacramento's epidemic of fatal hit-and-run crashes is not exclusively the result of reckless behavior. In some ways, the tragedies have become a crime of opportunity, an opportunity made possible by decades of poor planning decisions on some of the county's most traveled roads.

Of the more than 140 people killed by drivers who fled the scene in Sacramento County since 2018, dozens died on aging, busy corridors designed years ago with

pedestrians and bicyclists as an afterthought, according to a *Sacramento Bee* analysis of law enforcement and Sacramento coroner records.

Some of those thoroughfares once served as intercity commuter and shipping routes in the days before the region's freeway system was developed. Decades later, buses, delivery trucks and drivers heading to and from work still rely heavily on the county's network of four- and five-lane traffic arteries. The problem is that densely-populated neighborhoods and commercial districts have also sprung up along the corridors — creating an increased opportunity for hit-and-run crashes.

Such planning decisions — even if well-intentioned — place pedestrians and cyclists into an environment where their lives are in danger every time they walk to the store or ride a bike to school, traffic and pedestrian experts said.

The danger faced by pedestrians and cyclists in Sacramento has been exacerbated by conflicting forces. Local and statewide politicians have increasingly urged residents to trade in their automobiles for bicycles and to walk to work. Yet many of those same policymakers have not invested enough in redesigning the region's most dangerous thoroughfares to keep walkers and cyclists safe, experts said.

That disconnect is particularly striking in the region's low-income neighborhoods. The deadliest streets in Sacramento County run through communities where household incomes are far below the region's median and where a greater share of residents walk to work or rely on public transportation, according to *The Bee's* analysis.

Some of those corridors, particularly Stockton Boulevard in south Sacramento, where eight people have been killed in hit-and-runs since 2018, are seeing unprecedented growth in new housing and businesses, but require tens of millions of dollars in traffic safety upgrades to protect new residents and business patrons. Major thoroughfares are also often the site of large homeless populations, and nearly three dozen hit-and-run victims in Sacramento County since 2018 remain unidentified by the coroner, suggesting many were homeless men and women.

“It's a priority issue; it's a political will issue,” said Kiara Reed, the executive director of the pedestrian advocacy organization [Civic Thread](#), formerly known as WALK Sacramento. “We don't prioritize the people in these communities. We don't prioritize their lives. We know the people in this community are being disproportionately killed, but we don't prioritize addressing that issue.”

The concept that residents should be able to easily walk or ride a bike to work, the store and to a school has a name: [the 15-minute city](#). In most Sacramento neighborhoods, especially low-income areas carved up by wide, dangerous roads, the idea that residents can safely find everything they need within a 15-minute walk of their home is a dream.

“We haven’t designed roads for the most vulnerable users,” said Brian Chandler, the director for transportation safety at DKS Associates, a national transportation planning and engineering firm. “We have been successful at getting people out of their cars. Yet the facilities that they’re on are not up to date.”

Regional transportation planners realize they are trying to undo decades of poor planning, a costly and time-consuming effort that may never be completed.

“In the mid-20th century, the thought process was to move as many vehicles as possible through communities,” said Jennifer Donlon Wyant, the city of Sacramento’s transportation planning manager. “We have to go back and rethink decisions that were made.”

Dangerous Sacramento Streets

Kathleen Smith tries to avoid Florin Road where it crosses Highway 99 in south Sacramento. But the bank is in that direction. So are the grocery store and her son’s home.

And so Smith reluctantly makes the drive almost daily. Six lanes of traffic, three in each direction, plus a freeway off-ramp merging onto Florin Road at the end of a gentle hill where delivery trucks and cars full of commuters fight for space.

Smith is overwhelmed by questions at the bottom of that hill.

Where exactly on the freeway off-ramp was her daughter when she was struck and killed by a driver who kept going?

Where was her body found?

And, the one that hurts the most: how long was Christine Wilbur’s lifeless body laying there before someone finally stopped?

“I don’t understand,” Smith said, sitting just a few feet from the crash scene on a recent warm and sunny afternoon. “It never really goes away, the pain. There are times it gets better, but there are times when it comes back and haunts you.”

Wilbur, 34, was killed while walking across the Florin Road freeway off-ramp of northbound Highway 99 on Sept. 14, 2019. A crosswalk was painted at the intersection at least four years before the crash, but it’s unclear whether Wilbur was in it when she was struck.

If Sacramento’s hit-and-run epidemic is fueled by poorly-designed roads, Florin Road is patient zero. At least 10 people have been killed by hit-and-drivers on the major south Sacramento corridor since 2018, the highest death toll in the region, according to *The Bee’s* analysis.

A city of Sacramento study of the corridor found that drivers were traveling at unsafe speeds in nearly half the serious crashes on Florin Road between 2009 and 2017. Half the pedestrians struck on the road were in marked crosswalks.

City officials have received \$12 million in grants to begin safety improvements on Florin Road, including adding traffic signals and a pedestrian crossing near Luther Burbank High School.

“Florin Road is going to be getting a lot of attention from the city in the coming years,” Donlon Wyant said.

The funding will cover improvements between 24th Street and Munson Way, a stretch of less than one mile. Sacramento County is planning to add bike lanes, upgrade traffic signals and improve bus stops on a three-mile stretch of Florin Road, between Franklin Boulevard and Power Inn Road. The work has been in the planning stages since 2017, but construction has been delayed until next year “due to the need to complete right-of-way acquisitions,” county spokesman Matthew Robinson said.

A year before Wilbur was killed, David Edward Lee Jackson, 29, was struck by a vehicle as he crossed Florin Road near Bowling Drive. The impact was so severe his body was launched into the center median, where he hit a tree, police said. Witnesses told investigators the vehicle that hit Jackson was a green Chevrolet Silverado.

Isis Jones, 16, was killed by a hit-and-run driver while crossing Florin Road near Fawn Way on July 8, 2021. One driver swerved to miss Jones as she crossed the road, but another struck and killed her before fleeing.

And in February 2019, a man walking on Florin Road just 400 feet from the scene of Wilbur's death was killed by a driver who did not stop.

"Florin Road is crazy. Florin Road is not safe," Smith said. "You drive down the road and you get honked at, you get yelled at. It's not pleasant."

Making Sacramento's Streets Safer

Major "road diets" — in which traffic lanes are reduced on wide or perilous urban corridors — have been undertaken in Seattle, Los Angeles and Reno, among other cities. Five years ago, Sacramento city officials reduced J Street in midtown Sacramento by one lane and added a bike lane. Other busy streets have gone through similar improvements, but many are in higher income neighborhoods such as Land Park and East Sacramento.

"People want to look at this through an equity lens and say, 'Well, let's go to the low-income Black and brown communities and tell them to use active modes (of transportation, such as walking and biking)," said Reed, the pedestrian advocate. "They're using active modes and they don't even have an environment that's conducive to active modes."

Most experts agree that little can be done to prevent motorists from leaving the scene of a crash in which someone has been clearly injured or killed.

Psychologists say a traumatic event such as striking a pedestrian often triggers intense fear and a sense of self-preservation for drivers, causing them to act irrationally and flee. Traffic experts are skeptical that longer prison sentences will act as a deterrent, given that most drivers won't even know the penalty for committing a hit-and-run crash.

That said, road diets and other planning steps that slow traffic can save lives.

The American Automobile Association's Foundation for Traffic Safety conducted a 2011 analysis of hundreds of pedestrian crashes to determine the risk of severe injury or death for pedestrians struck by vehicles traveling at various speeds. The

study found that the average risk of death for a pedestrian hit by a car going 23 miles per hour was 10 percent. For those hit by a car traveling 42 miles per hour, that risk jumped to 50 percent.

Pedestrians hit by an automobile traveling 50 miles per hour — a common speed for cars on urban corridors in the Sacramento region — were 75 percent likely to die.

“In the places where we know drivers are driving at unsafe speeds, can we bring those speeds down?” Donlon Wyant said. “If we can make it a forgivable mistake and it doesn’t result in a fatality or serious injury, that’s a good thing.”

Sacramento is painted by vehicle corridors in severe need of overdue improvements.

Marysville Boulevard is the main street of Del Paso Heights in North Sacramento. The neighborhood’s only grocery store, its post office and busiest park are all within a one-mile stretch. Students walking or biking to Grant Union High School must cross the boulevard to get to neighborhoods to the east.

Most of the fatal crashes that occur on Marysville Boulevard involve a cyclist or pedestrian, data show, including a 56-year-old man killed by a hit-and-run driver in July 2018. Motorists often far exceed the 35 miles per hour speed limit and residents of nearby communities have told city officials they don’t feel safe walking on the boulevard.

City officials have once again applied for federal grants to redesign Marysville Boulevard after being denied in previous attempts.

At least six pedestrians have been killed by hit-and-run drivers along a two-mile stretch of El Camino Avenue in North Sacramento. The neighborhood has one of the highest rates of people who walk to work in the city, yet many crashes involve drivers exceeding the speed limit of 30 miles per hour.

“The city has been built over decades and decades,” Chandler, the national transportation expert, said, “and it’s not going to be fixed in five years. These streets were our way to get from place to place. Now you’ve got this exact same facility that has everything from semi trailers to delivery trucks to normal commuter vehicles, plus families walking to and from schools. And it’s all happening on the same roads.”

Stockton Boulevard: Where Progress Meets Danger

Four-story wooden frames rise from the ground on a formerly vacant lot on Stockton Boulevard and Lawrence Drive in south Sacramento. [The affordable housing community under construction](#) will soon be home to hundreds of residents who will walk to a Smart & Final grocery store and a fitness center across the street.

Just before 3 a.m. on May 24, 2018, a 43-year-old woman named Suzanne Russell was struck and killed by a hit-and-run driver at the intersection.

The New Happy Garden restaurant a few blocks south at Stockton and Jansen Drive has been a gathering spot for generations of Sacramentans, its vast dining halls playing host to Mother's Day celebrations, birthday parties and one of the most popular Sunday dim sum menus in town. Across the street, the former San Juan Motel grounds — for years the site of a large homeless camp — [is about to be turned into a \\$74 million housing community for low-income families.](#)

Samuel Treas, 54, a retired Sacramento Regional Transit operator, was struck and killed at the intersection by a hit-and-run driver five months after Russell died.

And in March of this year, 54-year-old Victor Guillen was riding a bicycle on Stockton Boulevard near 20th Avenue when he was hit and killed. Police officers found him in the roadway near a public library, where he was pronounced dead. The driver took off before emergency crews arrived.

For decades, long before Highway 99 opened, the fastest route between Sacramento's central city and the rural communities to the southeast was Stockton Boulevard. The road ran all the way to Stockton, serving as a de facto expressway in the days before high-speed commuter routes.

Years later, many sections of Stockton Boulevard still have the foreboding feel of an expressway. A 2021 city of Sacramento analysis noted a long stretch of the road "feels loud and uncomfortable for walking or biking, with high traffic volumes and high-speed drivers." A higher percentage of residents in the ZIP codes surrounding Stockton Boulevard walk to work than the Sacramento regional average, according to census data, but in most places, pedestrians need to walk at least five minutes up or down the boulevard just to find a crosswalk.

The bicycle lane on Stockton Boulevard is barely two feet wide in most places, leaving cyclists a few inches from speeding traffic. Cars, pick-ups and delivery trucks regularly speed along at nearly 50 miles per hour.

Since 2018, eight people have been killed on Stockton Boulevard by hit-and-run drivers, among the highest death tolls in the Sacramento region. They included a man crossing the road in a wheelchair and a 17-year-old boy killed in 2022 by a driver who allegedly struck another vehicle before careening onto a sidewalk, hitting three pedestrians.

City, county and regional public transit officials know Stockton Boulevard requires a major overhaul to make it safe for pedestrians and cyclists. Donlon Wyant estimates it would take \$100 million to pay for safety improvements that include adding pedestrian crossings and wider bike lanes, improving public transit stops and removing some vehicle traffic lanes.

After recently receiving a grant from the Sacramento Area Council of Governments, local transportation officials have raised just \$5.2 million for the work.

Competition for the kind of money it will take to fix Stockton Boulevard and other major thoroughfares is fierce between local governments trying to undo years of transportation planning mistakes. Donlon Wyant said the city applied to three different programs through the Biden administration's infrastructure package in 2021 for transportation upgrades. It was unsuccessful in all three attempts.

While they fight for a limited share of money, cities across the nation are attempting to play catch-up.

"The best way to address infrastructure (challenges) is to slow traffic down," Donlon Wyant said. "The problem is that the money to change the infrastructure is limited."

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People walking in the park, in the walkable community of Mueller. Photo by Veronica Castro de Barrera

[HEALTH](#)

Better neighborhoods make healthier lives

University of Miami Professor Joanna Lombard explains the elements of healthy communities—and how the built environment may lead to physical and mental wellness through social interaction, physical activity, and connection to nature.

[ROBERT STEUTEVILLE](#) JUN. 29, 2023

Three key aspects to cities and towns have a big impact on community and individual health, according to Joanna Lombard of the University of Miami School of Architecture. Lombard summarizes the research on healthy communities in a video interview with urban planner Victor Dover:

- The greatest predictor of our longevity and health is level of social interaction—and that goes beyond family to people we see on a daily basis, like the person serving you coffee in the local cafe. The design of the neighborhood you live in impacts the interactions. Research supporting this

finding has been conducted all over the world for a wide diversity of people and cultures since the 1980s, Lombard explains.

- Another important factor is physical activity—and as little as 10 minutes a day of walking can make a big difference. The less physical activity, the greater the levels of heart disease, obesity, and diabetes, researchers found. This research, linking sprawl to negative health outcomes, was first published 20 years ago, by Richard Jackson, Lawrence Frank, and others. Urban designers learned about it in [New Urban News](#), the trade publication of the New Urbanism. More research built on that foundation, [linking urban design characteristics like small blocks](#) and better street networks with better health outcomes.
- Exposure to “greenery,” like abundant street trees or a local park, also impacts chronic diseases, according to a study of 250,000 residents of Miami-Dade County, conducted by Lombard and her team.

Dover’s interview is part of a planning effort that Dover, Kohl & Partners is helping to lead for Lake Wales, Florida. The [Lake Wales Envisioned initiative](#) is working with the City, citizens, and other groups, to plan a healthier, economically stronger, and more sustainable future for the suburban municipality in Central Florida, a town that is at the heart of a current mass migration into the Sunshine State.

Walkable neighborhoods, where residents live on streets where people can step out their door and connect to the larger community, are the foundation of a healthy place, Lombard says. Ideally, houses should have a porch, stoop, or balcony serving as a connection to the neighborhood. The sidewalk is the next level of connection, ideally on a street that is safe and comfortable to walk, bicycle, use a wheelchair or walker, or push a stroller.

“Everyone should be within a five-minute walk of basic supplies,” Lombard continues. “If we have these five-minute networks integrated together through a green network, then we have this amazingly integrated townscape. And we would have opportunities for people of all income levels, and opportunities to meet people today that they didn’t know the day before. That’s the healthy life.”

This system broke down with single-use suburban environments, where, despite the greenery, everyone tends to get in their car and drive everywhere to a parking lot. People who don’t drive are often trapped in their house or cul-de-sac. In Lake Wales, most people drive, but most would also like opportunities to walk or bike to many of these destinations, Dover says. Lake Wales’s currently philosophy is helping to city to head in the right direction for a healthier future, Lombard says.

“The street network, the blocks, the buildings, the land uses—those should be the network of a healthy life. From there, we can make our own individual choices.”



See the whole video here:

<https://youtu.be/LoLfrU307Gk>



NEWS

One Injured by Car in Binghamton

Updated: Tuesday, July 11th 2023, 3:08 PM EDT

By David Barr

MGN Image



One person was taken to the hospital after being struck by a car Tuesday afternoon in Binghamton.

The call went out around 2:25 p.m. for a report of a car versus a pedestrian crash at the intersection of Main Street and Walnut Street.

An officer on the scene said the victim was taken to a hospital for treatment for non-life-threatening injuries.