

BMTS Article Digest
September – October 2023

BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee Members:

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[Press and Sun-Bulletin](#) | [Page A02](#)
Saturday, 16 September 2023

Broome Sheriff: Endwell Man, 33, Struck and Killed by Train

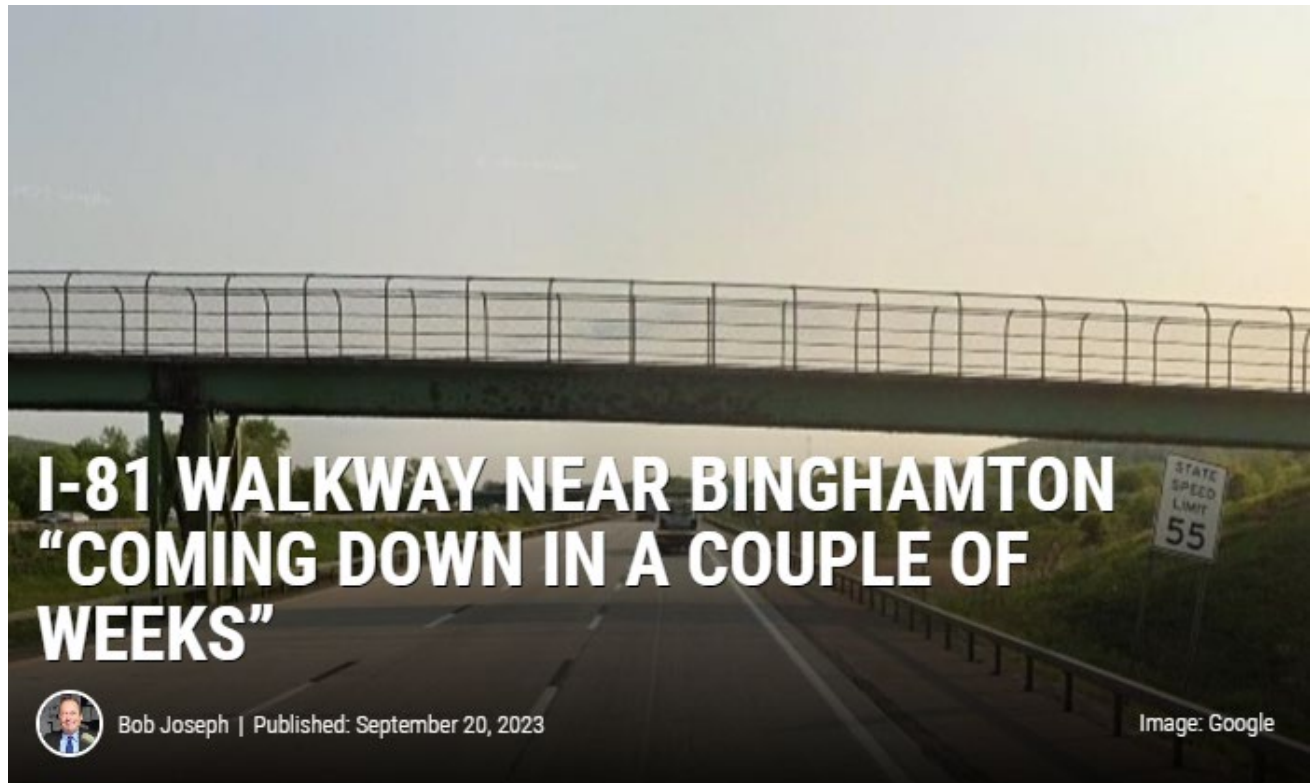
The Broome County Sheriff's Office has identified the pedestrian who was struck and killed by a train Monday night in the Town of Union as a 33-year-old Endwell resident.

The sheriff's office said Joey J. Rosa was pronounced dead at the scene after he was struck by a train in the Pearl Street area, between South Kelly Avenue and South Avenue B, at around 9:30 p.m.

According to sheriff's office detectives, Rosa was known to frequent the area and was on the tracks as the train approached.

Investigators said the conductor made multiple attempts to get Rosa's attention but was unsuccessful. Officials said the conductor was unable to stop the train before it hit Rosa, killing him.

The sheriff's office has ruled the death accidental.



An old pedestrian bridge over Interstate 81 in the town of Dickinson is expected to be removed next month.

The state Department of Transportation ordered the walkway closed last January. It connects Old Front Street with Bevier Street near Otsiningo Park.

A sign advised pedestrians that the bridge over Interstate 81 is no longer in use on February 3, 2023. (Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News)

Town supervisor Michael Marinaccio said "it's going to be coming down in a couple of weeks." He told WNBF News much of the demolition work will be done at night.

A western New York firm - Cold Spring Construction Company - last month submitted a low bid of \$534,000 to remove the bridge. The span, which opened in 1968, cost \$312,000 to build.

The town of Dickinson pedestrian bridge on September 25, 2013. (Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News)

Marinaccio said the DOT's Andrew Stiles advised him of the work schedule for the project.

The town supervisor said "it's going to be noisy in Sunrise Terrace for about a week or so" while the demolition work is underway.



The pedestrian bridge in the town of Dickinson on February 3, 2023. (Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News)



Stiles previously had said winter maintenance of the structure had become "increasingly hazardous" so the decision was made to close the bridge.

A new pathway for pedestrians opened last year as part of the Front Street reconstruction project.

How Finland Put Traffic Crashes on Ice

The Nordic nation's rate of vehicle fatalities is a fraction of the toll in the US, despite a harsh climate and ice-covered streets. Here's how the Finns do traffic safety.



A little snow doesn't stop cyclists in Helsinki.

Photographer: Vesa Moilanen/AFP via Getty Images

By [David Zipper](#)

October 7, 2022 at 12:00 AM EDT

The 1960s were a boom time for Helsinki, Finland's capital and largest city. Rising postwar incomes enabled a growing number of residents to purchase a car; the number of vehicles registered in the city tripled in just seven years. Gridlock inevitably followed.

To manage traffic and plot its future, the city of Helsinki commissioned a transportation master plan, co-authored by the US company Wilbur Smith & Associates and the Finnish firm Pentti Polvinen ky. In 1968, the consultants delivered their eye-watering proposal: nearly 200 miles of new highways in the Helsinki region, with much of downtown leveled to create space for high-speed motorways. The city's existent streetcar system would be scrapped.

The Finnish response to that vision was an emphatic ei (“no”). According to the newspaper [Helsingin Sanomat](#), the rejected 1968 plan “has become a kind of dystopia, an extreme example of what car-driven planning can lead to.”

Instead of committing its future to the automobile, as so many US cities did in that era, Helsinki kept its streetcars and embarked on a massive transit expansion. The city constructed the world’s [northernmost subway](#), which opened in 1982. [As of 2016](#), roughly a quarter of urban trips in Finland occur on foot, over 9% by transit, and 7.5% by bike. (In the Helsinki metropolitan area, which has a population about 1.3 million, those numbers are even higher.) [One in seven Finns](#) live in rural areas, roughly equivalent to the [US share](#).

The Finnish transportation system is as impressive for its safety as it is for its multimodality. Only [219 people](#) died on Finnish roads in 2021, or four per 100,000 residents — just one-third the US rate. And Finland’s roadways are growing steadily safer. Fatalities [plunged 50%](#) between 2001 and 2019, when Helsinki made international news for going [an entire year](#) without a single pedestrian or cyclist fatality. ([Last year](#) there were two, down from 22 in 1990.) Like its neighbors Norway and Sweden, [birthplace of the Vision Zero traffic safety movement](#), Finland’s roads today are safer than they have been in decades — unlike so many of the US cities that have [tried to adopt Vision Zero principles](#).

As I’ve written previously in CityLab, the US is an outlier in global road safety: Americans are now at least twice as likely to die in a vehicle crash as residents of [Canada](#), [France](#) and [Japan](#) (among many other countries).

But the safety record of Finland, a country associated with empty, rural roads and cold, dark weather, is particularly impressive. Here are a few reasons why so few people die in crashes in this Nordic nation.

Set Stricter Limits

Soon after dumping Helsinki’s car-centric 1968 plan, Finnish authorities embarked on a decades-long campaign to slow motor vehicles. “In urban environments, there has been a steady decrease in maximum road speed,” said Heikki Liimatainen, a professor of transport and logistics at Tampere University. “In the 1970s, it was normally 50 kilometers per hour in cities; then in 2000, it went down to 40 km/h. Now, more than half of our urban streets have a 30 km/h limit.”

In Helsinki, city officials leverage street design to reinforce lower speed limits. “We deliberately have narrow lanes, so the driver doesn’t feel comfortable,” said Reetta Putkonen, the director of Helsinki’s transportation planning division. “Three and a half meters is a normal lane width, even 3.2. We also use trees and bushes to push people to go slower.” For comparison, [in the US](#) many lanes are 12 feet (3.7 meters) wide.

Helsinki officials have focused on slowing down cars, rather than sharply limiting their use in the city center (as [Oslo](#) has accomplished by removing street parking and instituting road tolls) or building a comprehensive network of separated cycle tracks (as [Amsterdam](#) has done). But the approach seems to be working; Liimatainen credits it for the steady reduction in pedestrian and cyclist crashes across the city and beyond. Deaths among those

walking and biking [fell 75%](#) nationwide between 2005 and 2020, and serious injuries are [down too](#).



Cyclists and pedestrians commute in Helsinki in 2015. *Photo by Roni Rekomaa / LEHTIKUVA / AFP via Getty Images*

During a bike tour led by local officials on a recent trip to Finland, I got some first-hand experience navigating Helsinki's streets, most of which lacked cycle lanes. Not everything during our hour-long ride went perfectly: At one point I had to brake to avoid colliding with an e-scooter rider heading the wrong way, and a few minutes later a car passed closer to me than it should have.

Still, the gentle city traffic never left me feeling like I was in imminent danger — as I so regularly experience while biking in my hometown of Washington, DC (which is one of the [better US cities for biking](#), by the way).

Make Speeders Pay — a Lot

Low speed limits and safer street design can reduce speeding, but they won't eliminate it. Enforcement plays a role too.

Helsinki has installed around 35 automatic cameras to catch speeders, with those clocked up to 20 km/h over the limit receiving a 200-euro fine in the mail. Not all of the city's cameras are turned on at once, but, importantly, drivers don't know which are off.

Such speed cameras are widespread in many developed countries (though less so in the US, where they are [banned](#) in states like Maine and South Carolina). And they have proved to be a popular safety measure among Helsinki residents. “People want these cameras, especially next to schools,” said Heikki Palomaki, the manager of the city’s transport system unit.

But Finland’s approach to truly reckless speeding is unique. If a Finn is caught going more than 20 km/h over the posted limit, the resulting fine scales with the speeder’s income. Such tickets can reach eye-popping levels; in 2002 a Nokia executive was slapped with a [116,000-euro fine](#), equivalent to two weeks’ income, for driving his motorcycle 75 km/h in a 50 km/h zone.

That’s a pricey citation, for sure. But Finland’s policy ensures that all residents, not just those of limited means, have a financial reason to avoid driving dangerously.

Question Every Crash

Finland invests significant resources into understanding why collisions happen, and unlike in the US, these investigations aren’t predicated on an assumption that [blame lies with a person behind the wheel](#). Indeed, Finnish authorities go to great lengths to uncover the root causes of serious crashes and prevent recurrences.

For the last 50 years, all fatal crashes (and some non-fatal ones) have triggered the formation of a multidisciplinary [accident assessment panel](#). Panels are funded through revenue collected from auto insurance premiums, and their membership includes experts in traffic planning, human behavior, law enforcement and health care. Following its investigation, each panel releases a public report with recommendations. Helsinki officials say that findings regularly lead to policy changes, such as adjusting road geometry and changing traffic lights.

If this process sounds familiar, it might be because it resembles the comprehensive investigations initiated by the US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) following a plane or boat crash. But the NTSB rarely conducts such probes into roadway collisions. Instead, such incidents are typically left to local law enforcement, which don’t dig nearly as deeply. They often focus on the individuals involved in the crash, paying scant attention to contributing factors like road and vehicle design.

Understand the Ice

As the Soviet army [learned the hard way](#) in 1940, Finnish winters are nothing to scoff at.

In Oulu, a city of 200,000 located about 100 miles south of the Arctic Circle, the [average daily high](#) stays below freezing from November through March. Despite roughly 100 days of snowfall, Oulu is Finland’s cycling capital, with a [dense network](#) of bike lanes that enable around [one in five trips](#) to be taken on two wheels, almost double the national average.

A remarkable number of Oulu residents keep cycling during the dark, frigid winters. Even children keep it up; [viral online photos](#) show scores of kids’ bikes parked outside snowy schools.

To keep cyclists rolling through the long Nordic winter, Oulu's workers pound snow and mix it with gravel instead of making a Sisyphean effort to keep bike paths clear. The gravel/snow composite helps residents keep cycling— especially if they've outfitted their bike with studded winter tires. The city has even started using lights to [project traffic signs](#) atop the white stuff covering its streets.

Winter biking can be trickier in warmer Finnish cities to the south, like Helsinki. "We often get snow that sticks on the pavement, but then temperatures rise, and it melts," says Oskari Kaupinmaki, Helsinki's cycling coordinator. "Then the temperature dips again, and you get ice."

To manage such fluctuations, Tampere University's Liimatainen says that some Finnish cities like Turku have started salting and brushing bike lanes at the same time in order to prevent ice formation. That's a more resource-intensive approach than applying the two treatments separately, but it helps keep the lanes clear longer.

Still, cycling does drop in southern Finnish cities during the winter; Helsinki officials say that the share of trips taken by bike falls by about 80% from autumn to mid-winter. But thanks to strong transit service, they say that most cyclists shift to public transportation rather than driving.

Keep it Simple

In the US, transportation officials alike often laud the potential for emergent technology to reduce crashes. So-called "V2X" (or "vehicle-to-everything") capabilities, for instance, will allow cars to communicate with one another — along with infrastructure and other road users — with the goal of avoiding collisions. (The US Department of Transportation is now [investigating](#) how these technologies might be used to improve pedestrian safety at intersections.) Boosters claim that autonomous vehicles will eventually be [safer](#) than human drivers, and that [advanced driver-assistance systems](#) like automatic braking and lane-keep assistance are already [making roads safer](#).

Modern Finland has been bullish about technology: It's home to Nokia as well as scores of startups, and Helsinki has [hosted autonomous vehicle pilots](#) for several years. So I asked a group of Helsinki officials what role information technology has played in their success reducing crashes in recent years. "Zero," replied Palomaki. "We simply slowed down the cars."

He and his colleagues said that they were indeed curious about how V2X and autonomous driving might evolve, and they've followed the handful of local [pilots](#) with interest. But these technologies have had little to do with the city's traffic safety goals, and they didn't see them as being ready for widespread deployment.

They might have added: With a traffic death rate this low, it's not clear that Finns need them.

LOCAL

New York State Police: Woman critically injured in car, pedestrian crash in Town of Union

Jeff Murray

Binghamton Press & Sun Bulletin

One person was seriously injured Tuesday morning when she was struck by a vehicle in the Town of Union.

The crash took place around 7:49 a.m. at the intersection of Country Club Road and Hooper Road, according to New York State Police at Endwell.

At that time, a 70-year-old woman was crossing the road when she was struck by a Jeep Grand Cherokee operated by a 76-year-old woman, troopers said. State police did not provide the names of either the pedestrian or the driver.

The victim was taken by ambulance to Wilson Medical Center in Johnson City, where she is in critical condition, state police said.

Troopers didn't indicate if the operator of the Jeep was injured, and no other information is available at this time.

The investigation into the incident is continuing, and the state police Troop C collision reconstruction unit was called to the scene to assist.

70-year-old pedestrian dies days after SUV hits her

By WBNG Staff

Published: Sep. 29, 2023 at 3:18 PM EDT | Updated: seconds ago

ENDWELL (WBNG) -- New York State Police said a pedestrian has died following the injuries she sustained after an SUV hit her on Sept. 26.

The deceased woman was identified as Linette A. Beers, 70. She was walking at the intersection of Country Club Road and Hooper Road in Endwell when she was struck around 7:50 a.m. by an SUV driven by a 76-year-old woman.

Police initially reported that Beers was in critical condition after she struck. She died at Wilson Hospital.

Authorities did not mention any charges for the driver of the SUV.

NEWS



Car Vs. Pedestrian Crash in Binghamton

Updated:

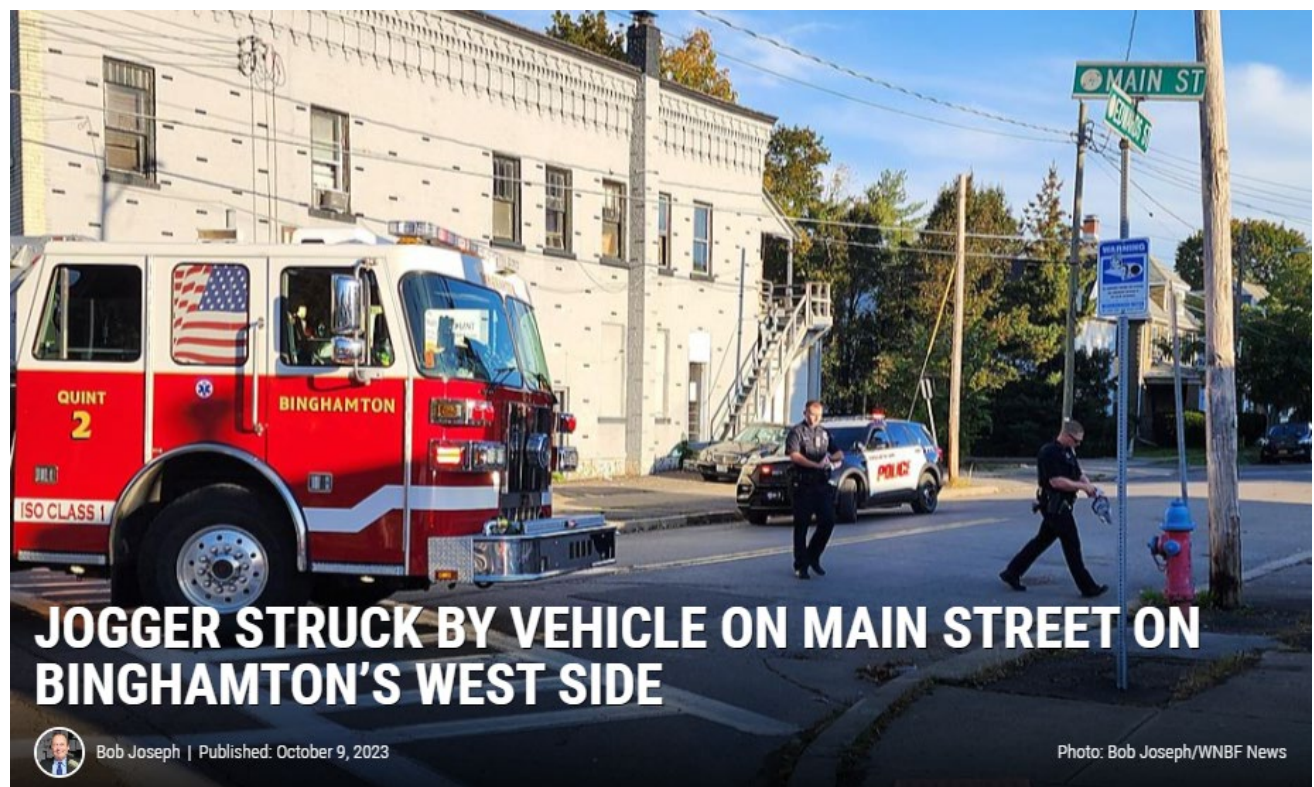
Friday, September 29th 2023, 12:13 PM EDT

By **David Barr**

One person was struck by a vehicle Friday afternoon in the City of Binghamton.

The call came in around 12:07 p.m. for a report of a car vs. pedestrian crash at Henry and Chenango Streets.

Fox40 has a crew at the scene and will provide more information as it becomes available.



A man out for a morning run through Binghamton's West Side was hit by a sport utility vehicle on Main Street.

The jogger was struck at the intersection with Edwards Street just before 8 a.m. Monday.



An injured pedestrian was evaluated in an ambulance on Main Street before he was taken to Wilson Medical Center. (Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News)

The man, believed to be in his mid-70s, was running west on Main Street. He apparently was in the crosswalk when he was hit by an eastbound Buick Encore which was making a left turn onto Edwards Street.

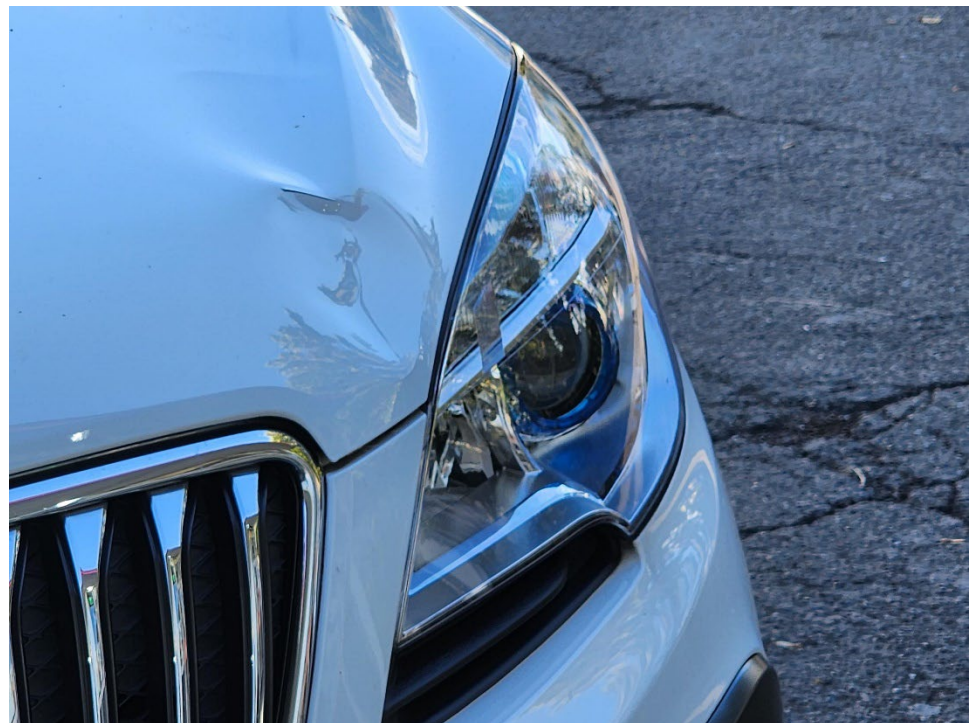
The jogger sustained facial injuries and a

possible broken ankle. He was treated by Binghamton fire medics at the scene before he was taken by ambulance to Wilson Medical Center in Johnson City.

An SUV sustained minor damage after striking a jogger in Binghamton on October 9, 2023. (Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News)

The man, whose name was not released by police, said he had previously been struck by a vehicle near the same intersection decades ago.

The woman who was driving the SUV was not injured. She said she did not see the man as she turned from Main Street onto Edwards. She said the bright sun may have been a factor.



A crossing guard normally on duty in the morning at the intersection was not working because schools were closed for Columbus Day.
