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New Report Finds Older Downstate Pedestrians at Risk

Analysis shows people aged 60 years and older suffer disproportionately high pedestrian fatality rates

Older pedestrians are far more likely to be killed while walking than those under 60, according to a new study by the Tri-State Transportation Campaign. This is especially true in downstate New York where fatality rates for older pedestrians are far higher than in the rest of the country.

From 2008 through 2010, 261 pedestrians aged 60 years and older were killed on downstate New York roads. Though comprising just under 18 percent of the area's population, people aged 60 and older accounted for nearly 37 percent of the total pedestrian fatalities during the three-year period. Those aged 75 years and older represent about 6 percent of downstate New York's population, but almost 18 percent of pedestrian deaths.

The Tri-State Transportation Campaign urged the use of a portion of the New York State Department of Transportation's (NYSDOT) capital program funds to expand SafeSeniors and Safe Routes to School programs that would improve dangerous roads by specifically addressing the needs of older pedestrians and school children. In addition, the Campaign recommended creating a statewide Safe Routes to Transit program. To pay for pedestrian and bicyclist safety projects, the state should commit to using the full allotment of its federal Transportation Alternatives funds. The Campaign also urged the state legislature to pass traffic enforcement measures that make streets safer for all users. Such legislation includes extending the authorization of red light cameras for New York City (S.4496B/A7425-A) and extending the authorization of speed cameras in New York City (A.7737A/S.7481).

"Queens, Brooklyn, the Bronx and Manhattan are all in downstate's top five most dangerous counties for senior pedestrians," Nadine Lemmon, the Campaign's Albany legislative advocate pointed out. "In addition to the numerous changes implemented and

underway by New York City DOT to improve safety on New York City's streets, state authorization for red light cameras and speed cameras will help enhance safety for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers."

The Campaign praised two of NYCDOT's programs, its Neighborhood Slow Zone pilot program and its Safe Streets for Seniors program. The Neighborhood Slow Zone pilot program limits vehicle speeds to 20 mph (from the citywide 30 mph) in designated areas of New York City. The Safe Streets for Seniors program makes roads safer and easier to navigate for older pedestrians by adding infrastructure and making roadway design changes, such as extending pedestrian crossing times and modifying crosswalks, targeted to older pedestrians' needs.

The Campaign applauded NYSDOT's SafeSeniors pilot project on Main Street in Smithtown, Long Island but noted that more could be done. "The new road diet on Main Street will help make the street safer and more pleasant for all users, but there is widespread desire from locals and elected officials for a roundabout and raised medians on this road; NYSDOT should seriously consider implementing these measures" said Veronica Vanterpool, the Campaign's executive director. Furthermore, she added, "Downstate's baby boomer population is aging. Now is the time for the state to expand the SafeSenior program, an innovative program that addresses the unique needs of older pedestrians."

The Campaign noted that over 29 New York State municipalities and 4 counties have enacted Complete Streets policies. These policies strive to make sure that streets are designed or improved with the needs of all users – pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, and drivers – in mind. "Creating Complete Streets in communities will protect older pedestrians," said Lemmon.

Downstate New York's older pedestrian fatality rate decreased for pedestrians aged 60 years and older since the Tri-State Transportation Campaign's previous analysis (which looked at pedestrian fatalities from 2007 through 2009). However, the fatality rate for pedestrians aged 75 and older increased since the previous analysis.

The report finds that older New Yorkers are still more likely than younger residents to be fatally injured in a traffic collision. The downstate pedestrian fatality rate for people 60 years and older is nearly 2.8 times the rate for those younger than 60 years. People 75 years and older suffer a fatality rate that is almost 3.9 times that of their younger neighbors. This is considerably higher than the older pedestrian fatality rate in the rest of the United States. Nationwide, the pedestrian fatality rate for older Americans is more than 1.5 times higher than for those under 60 years.

The Tri-State Transportation Campaign's analysis found that Nassau County was the most dangerous place in downstate New York for older people to walk. In the Campaign's previous report, the county ranked 4th most dangerous for older pedestrians in the entire tri-state region and 3rd most dangerous in the downstate region. Four New York City boroughs— Queens, Brooklyn, the Bronx and Manhattan—

followed close behind. But clearly the issue is not only an urban one. The table below provides the full ranking of all downstate counties and boroughs based on average older pedestrian fatality rate.

Rank	County	Older (60+ yrs) Pedestrian Fatalities (2008-2010)	Avg. Older Pedestrian Fatality Rate per 100,000 (2008-2010)	Avg. Younger Pedestrian Fatality Rate per 100,000 (2008-2010)
1	Nassau County	40	4.72	1.56
2	Queens County	55	4.46	1.22
3	Kings County	55	4.39	1.27
4	Bronx County	27	4.35	1.27
5	New York County	37	4.21	1.48
6	Putnam County	2	3.71	1.22
7	Dutchess County	5	3.11	0.56
8	Orange County	4	2.32	1.03
9	Richmond County	6	2.28	1.37
10	Suffolk County	17	2.00	2.13
11	Westchester County	11	1.98	0.57
12	Rockland County	2	1.14	0.81

*Fatality rates are calculated according to the population of the relevant age group (i.e., population aged 60 years and older, population under 60 years).

Tri-State staff analyst Renata Silberblatt conducted the Campaign's analysis using data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) and the U.S. Bureau of the Census to examine fatality rates by age and gender for each county in New Jersey, downstate New York and Connecticut.

The full report, as well as county fact sheets and maps showing the locations of pedestrian fatalities throughout the region can be found at www.tstc.org.

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The Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a non-profit organization working toward a more balanced, transit-friendly and equitable transportation system in Connecticut, New York and New Jersey.