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## **Advocates Applaud Signing of Legislation Protecting Pedestrians and Cyclists in Westchester County**

Legislation was signed into law late last week by County Executive Rob Astorino giving all pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation users, motorists, school bus riders, movers of commercial goods, the disabled, senior citizens and emergency responders using roads under the jurisdiction of Westchester County a safety boost.

The Complete Streets Act requires Westchester County to consider these users of the road when constructing or renovating a County road. The Act will ensure that those roads not covered under New York State's Complete Streets law, such as many County roads, address the mobility needs of all County residents.

From January 2009 through May 2012, there were 2,442 vehicle crashes involving pedestrians and bicyclists in Westchester County. At particular risk are children and seniors. According to analysis conducted by the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, residents over 60 make up 17 percent of Westchester's population but account for nearly 25 percent of pedestrian fatalities.

Legislator Catherine Borgia, Chairwoman of the Government Operations committee, shepherded this legislation through the committee and the full Board of Legislators urging its transition from a policy to an Act. The Board unanimously approved the Act on October 8, 2013 and it was signed into law by County Executive Rob Astorino on October 17, 2013.

"Our newly-approved Complete Streets legislation is right for Westchester because it welcomes smart, health-conscious and environmentally-friendly solutions to lessen the traffic on our roadways," said Westchester County Legislator Catherine Borgia. "Working together to ready our infrastructure—for today and tomorrow—and incorporating the best visionary ideas around to meet the changing needs also means creating jobs, which gives Main Street a boost as well. I am proud to be a lead sponsor of this legislation and glad that my colleagues on the Board of Legislators unanimously supported it."

Advocates applauded the swift passage and signing of the Act by the Board and County Executive Astorino.

“Each day we delay making our streets safer for pedestrians and cyclists of all ages and abilities is a missed opportunity to prevent another collision or fatality on our roads. The County Legislature and Executive must be applauded for making Complete Streets a priority,” said Veronica Vanterpool, executive director of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign.

Other advocates and elected officials advancing Complete Streets policies have also expressed their support.

“AARP is pleased that Westchester County passed a Complete Streets law,” said William Stoner, AARP New York Associate State Director for Livable Communities. “Accessible roadways and sidewalks are not only a critical link in our transportation system, they are vitally important in helping Westchester County residents access essential community services, stay active, and give back to their communities. We know that improving our roadways to accommodate users of all ages and abilities will save lives and is a great step in becoming a more age-friendly community.”

“Westchester County's passage of a Complete Streets act brings the County closer to having a uniform focus on accessibility of our roadways for all - on State, County and local roads,” said Nina Orville, Executive Director of SWEAC. “We applaud the County and encourage all Westchester municipalities to join those who have already done so in passing Complete Streets policies.”

“The real work lies in implementing these policies, especially at the local level, as towns, villages and cities control the majority of our roads,” said Duff Bailey, Executive Director, Bike Walk Alliance of Westchester & Putnam. “Citizens who support active transportation need to work with their municipal officials to pass similar acts and then work to find creative ways to open our streets to all users.”

“Unanimous approval of a policy that improves safety, health and economic vibrancy for residents is especially inspiring in today's polarized political climate,” said Victoria Gearity, Ossining Village Trustee. “Brava to Catherine Borgia, Chair of the Government Operations Committee, and all of the wise officials who lead the way for a Westchester Complete Streets policy.”

The Act notes that the County should seek cooperation with its municipal partners on joint projects adding that the County “shall provide technical and other assistance in the implementation process wherever feasible.” This is welcome news for municipalities interested in Complete Streets but which may be deterred because of shared road ownership with the County and lack of technical assistance.

“This enlightened action by the Board of Legislators sends a message of support and encouragement to the municipalities and activists working in the trenches to create a safe and welcoming environment for all users of our road infrastructure,” said Dan Welsh, Councilman for the Town of Lewisboro. “It also gives a timely favorable nod to the livable community element of the recently-published regional sustainability plan.

“Congratulations to the WBOL and all those who worked so hard to move the Complete Streets initiative to the front burner,” said Herb Oringel, Chair for NWEAC. “The difficult tasks lie ahead but the Town of Somers and many of the Municipalities in Northern Westchester applaud this milestone achievement and stand ready to help in the execution stage.”

*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.*