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New York State Plans to Spend Fewer Dollars on Pedestrian and Bicycling Infrastructure in the Future

Advocates Call on the Governor to Allocate more Resources

Despite widespread support for Complete Streets on Long Island and across the state, the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) will be spending less on infrastructure and amenities that make streets safer for all users of the road.

According to Tri-State Transportation Campaign's analysis of NYSDOT's "2013 Draft Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)", the blueprint for transportation funding in the state, New York will be spending 40 percent less of its overall transportation dollars in the next four years on projects like sidewalks, new crosswalks, bicycle lanes or pedestrian islands, measures that make it safer and more inviting for people to walk and bike.

Despite pedestrian and bicycle fatalities making up 27 percent of all traffic deaths in New York State in 2012, the draft STIP reveals that from FFY 2014-2017, New York plans to spend only 0.98% on projects that make it safer to walk and bicycle.¹ This level of funding represents a reduction of more than \$100 million across the state as compared to funding in the previous FFY 2011-2014 STIP. In Region 10 on Long Island, the state plans to spend even less: only 0.57% on pedestrian and bicycle projects alone, and 1.31% on larger road and bridge projects that include some pedestrian and bicycling component (of that 1.31%, a small fraction goes to pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure).

"New York State has the highest percentage of traffic fatalities for pedestrians and bicyclists in the nation, and Long Island has some of the most dangerous roads in our region," said Veronica Vanterpool, executive director of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign. "New York should be topping the charts on investments to make its streets safe to walk and bike, not working to zero it out."

Many of these safety measures are low-cost, such as restriping vehicle lanes to accommodate bicycles or repainting crosswalks so they are more visible, so the reduction in funding amounts to significantly fewer projects that make roadways safer for all users of the road.

"These troubling findings are unfortunate and need to be addressed," said Beth Finkel, AARP New York State Director. "Spending around a penny on the dollar to address street safety should be unacceptable to all New Yorkers. New York needs safe streets for our children and older persons alike, and Governor Cuomo needs to reverse this policy and invest more in safe passageways for pedestrians."

In 2012, a Complete Streets bill was signed into law by Governor Cuomo sending a strong signal that streets should include safer road infrastructure for everyone that uses New York's roads—including drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users of all ages and abilities. Yet, the paltry investment levels run counter to that message.

Sandi Vega, the mother of Brittany Vega who was killed on Sunrise Highway three years ago, was disheartened to hear the news. "No family should ever have to go through what my family went through. I fought hard for the Complete Streets Law, because I wanted to make the roads safer for ALL of our children," said Vega. "Unfortunately, without adequate funding from the state, the law is nothing but a worthless piece of paper sitting on a shelf collecting dust. The safety of our children is again being compromised. Funding is the backbone of this law."

"Pass a Complete Streets Law and then spend fewer dollars on improving the safety of our roads? This is a bait and switch that shouldn't be tolerated," said Ryan Lynch, associate director and the Long Island coordinator for Tri-State Transportation Campaign. "Governor Cuomo must dedicate a fair share of state transportation dollars to Complete Streets to help make our communities safer."

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.

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1. Multi vehicle collisions involving pedestrians or bicyclists are not always recorded as collisions with pedestrians or bicyclists as it depends on the reporting officer's interpretation of the crash event and the sequence of the crash event. This may result in an underreporting of vehicle collisions with pedestrians and bicyclists.