

New Yorkers for Active Transportation (NY4AT)

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New Yorkers Call on Governor Cuomo to Fund Pedestrian and Bicycling Projects

More than 50 organizations, 1,300 Postcards, one message: NYS needs dedicated bike/ped funding

Albany, N.Y. — New Yorkers for Active Transportation (NY4AT) delivered a united message to Governor Cuomo this afternoon: more than 1,300 postcards, from New Yorkers across the state, calling on the Governor to dedicate funding to improve New York's pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure. The postcard delivery is a follow-up to a letter, sent in December 2013, from more than 50 organizations representing environmental, health, aging, equity, and transportation groups.

The postcards and letter call for the Governor to allocate \$20 million in the 2014-15 state budget specifically dedicated to funding pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure projects, with a minimum additional commitment of \$20 million annually over the next five years. Advocates emphasized the impact better infrastructure can have on a community's quality of life: its ability to create safe walking and biking environments and a healthier population, increase local real estate values, provide more equitable and affordable transportation options, and reduce air pollution.

Senator Tim Kennedy, who introduced new legislation to expand the state's Complete Streets law, supports targeted funding for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure as a means to boost quality of life and community development in Buffalo and across the state.

"Safer roadways lead to stronger communities, and an expanded Complete Streets law, backed by targeted investment, will pave the way to an improved transportation network and a stronger state," said Senator Kennedy. "Investing in bicycle and pedestrian safety will ensure our children have safe routes to school and improve quality of life for local families by providing more opportunities to walk and bike safely. This new infrastructure investment will make a long-lasting impact on the safety of our roads and highways, and help strengthen neighborhoods in Buffalo, Cheektowaga and throughout all of New York State's towns, villages and cities."

"This initiative is about economic development. It's about creating a transportation system in which New Yorkers feel safe enough to get out of their cars, walk to local stores, and pull out their wallets," stated Robin Dropkin, Executive Director of Parks & Trails New York.

In 2012, New York State had the worst pedestrian and cycling safety record in the nation, with 27 percent of road fatalities involving a bicyclist or pedestrian. In 2011, a Complete Streets law was signed by Governor Cuomo, a law intended to improve the safety of roads for all users. Unfortunately, a recent Tri-State Transportation Campaign analysis showed New York State will be investing less money on pedestrian and bicycling safety over the next four years than before passage of the law.

"Governor Cuomo should put his money where the law is," said Beth Finkel, State Director for AARP in New York. "AARP commends the Governor for signing the Complete Streets bill, but it won't improve or maintain safety for pedestrians and bicyclists if New York doesn't initially invest in safe passageways. Walkability is critical to keeping New Yorkers—and their money—here as they age."

“New York is dedicating only a couple pennies on the dollar to help communities make long-overdue and much-needed investments that make it safer and more enjoyable for all New Yorkers to walk and bike. We can do better. And we should do better. We need Governor Cuomo to take the lead to assure our new Complete Streets law is fully implemented,” stated Josh Wilson, Executive Director of New York Bicycling Coalition.

While Governor Cuomo’s State of the State address tackled issues related to dangerous driving, including tougher new laws for DWI and driving while texting, stiffer penalties alone will not turn around the state’s troubling safety statistics.

“While tackling drunk and distracted driving is laudable, speeding cars pose a significant threat to lives throughout the state. Funding to help pay for simple and inexpensive improvements to the road network will reduce speeding and save lives statewide,” stated Veronica Vanterpool, Executive Director of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign.

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New Yorkers for Active Transportation (NY4AT) is a coalition of nonprofits and local governments dedicated to ensuring that all New Yorkers have access to safe opportunities for bicycling and walking in the state’s cities, villages, and towns through the development of sidewalks, bike lanes, Complete Streets and multi-use trails. The coalition is coordinated by the New York Bicycling Coalition, Parks & Trails New York, and Tri-State Transportation Campaign.