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Contact:

Janna Chernetz

(212) 268-7474, (609) 271-0778

Matthew Norris

(732) 672-6296

Tri-State Transportation Campaign

New Report Finds Older New Jersey 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.

From 2008 through 2010, 130 pedestrians aged 60 years and older were killed on New Jersey roads. Though comprising almost 19 percent of the state's population, people aged 60 and older accounted for nearly 30 percent of the total pedestrian fatalities during the three-year period. Those aged 75 years and older represent just 6.5 percent of New Jersey's population, but slightly over 12 percent of pedestrian deaths.

Overall, pedestrian fatality rates in New Jersey decreased across all age groups from last year's report. This is an encouraging decrease that can be improved with continued investment in pedestrian safety legislation and infrastructure.

"While fatality rates dropped for all pedestrians, those walking and biking still remain vulnerable," said Janna Chernetz, New Jersey advocate for the Campaign. "From 2008 through 2010, 436 pedestrians lost their lives on New Jersey streets."

In New Jersey, the pedestrian fatality rate for people 60 years and older is over 1.8 times the rate for those younger than 60. People 75 years and older suffer a fatality rate that is 2.16 times that of their younger neighbors. The Garden State's older pedestrian fatality rates are higher than the national rates. Nationwide, the pedestrian fatality rate for older Americans is 1.52 times higher than the fatality rate for those under 60 years. The fatality rate for people aged 75 and older is 1.9 times that of younger Americans.

“New Jersey’s streets are more dangerous for older pedestrians – but it doesn’t have to be that way,” said Matthew Norris, the Campaign’s South Jersey advocate. “Low cost pedestrian improvements can make the streets safer for everyone,” he added.

The Campaign’s analysis found that Hudson County was the most dangerous place in New Jersey for older people to walk. The table below provides the full ranking of all New Jersey counties based on 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	Hudson County	12	4.37	1.28
2	Essex County	16	4.21	1.86
3	Camden County	11	4.01	1.81
4	Passaic County	10	3.93	1.15
5	Bergen County	17	3.03	0.80
6	Ocean County	14	2.99	1.44
7	Union County	8	2.91	2.45
8	Gloucester County	4	2.67	1.40
9	Atlantic County	4	2.46	3.06
10	Middlesex County	10	2.44	1.37
11	Mercer County	4	2.08	1.21
12	Burlington County	5	1.93	1.75
13	Somerset County	3	1.81	0.75
14	Monmouth County	6	1.63	1.49
15	Warren County	1	1.60	1.13
16	Morris County	4	1.42	1.09
17	Cumberland County	1	1.23	1.03
18	Sussex County	0	0.00	0.00
18	Cape May County	0	0.00	0.49
18	Hunterdon County	0	0.00	2.20
18	Salem County	0	0.00	0.63

*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).

The Campaign praised the state for taking a proactive approach to pedestrian safety by adding sidewalks to a portion of Black Horse Pike, one of the state’s most dangerous roads for pedestrians, according to the Campaign. In addition, the Campaign noted that over 26 New Jersey municipalities and 3 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.

The Campaign urged the state to continue to incentivize county-level adoption of Complete Streets policies. In addition, the Campaign urged the state to pass a vulnerable users bill that would stiffen penalties for drivers who recklessly kill or injure pedestrians, bicyclists, highway workers, or state troopers, and, when funds become available, develop a Safe Streets for Seniors program. Such a program would make targeted improvements to roads that address the needs of older pedestrians, including improvements like longer crossing times and high visibility crosswalks. The Campaign also recommended that while developing this program, the state should identify and fix some of its most dangerous intersections for senior pedestrians. To pay for pedestrian and bicyclist safety projects, New Jersey should commit to using the full allotment of its federal Transportation Alternatives funds.

“The baby boomer population is aging and New Jersey must make sure its streets are safer for older pedestrians,” Chernetz said.

Douglas Johnston, governmental affairs manager at AARP NJ, urged the passage of H.R. 1780, the federal Complete Streets bill, in addition to municipal, county and state Complete Streets policies. “Safe mobility options are essential to the independence and well-being of mid-life and older Americans. AARP supports H.R. 1780, federal Complete Streets legislation, because it would ensure that federal transportation infrastructure investments provide safe travel for all – whether driving, bicycling, walking, or taking public transportation. This new Tri-State Transportation Campaign report should serve as a call to action for the New Jersey Congressional delegation as well as mayors and town councils throughout the Garden State,” he said.

Tri-State Transportation Campaign 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 New Jersey, New York and Connecticut.