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New Report Finds Older Connecticut Pedestrians at Risk

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

Connecticut pedestrians 60 years and older are disproportionately at risk of being killed in collisions with vehicles while walking, according to a new study by Tri-State Transportation Campaign.

From 2009 through 2011, 30 pedestrians aged 60 years and older were killed on Connecticut roads, Tri-State's annual report, "Older Pedestrians at Risk And How States Can Make it Safer and Easier for Older Residents to Walk," found. Though comprising nearly 20 percent of the State's population, this age group accounted for 30 percent of the total pedestrian fatalities during the three-year period. Those aged 75 years and older represent seven percent of Connecticut's population, but 12 percent of pedestrian deaths. The pedestrian fatality rate for Connecticut residents 60 and older is 1.72 times higher than that of residents under 60. For residents 75 and older, the pedestrian fatality rate is nearly two times that of those under 60.

Since Tri-State Transportation Campaign's previous Older Pedestrians at Risk report, the pedestrian fatality rates decreased for pedestrians aged 60 years and older as well as for pedestrians 75 years and older.

"As our population ages, it is critical that we continue to invest in making our roadways safer for older residents and all users. AARP strongly supports roadway safety improvements which will save lives and enhance the livability of our local communities," Jennifer Millea, associate state director of communications for AARP Connecticut, stated.

Tri-State's research showed that Litchfield County had the highest average older pedestrian fatality rate of any county in Connecticut and the 12th highest of the 41 counties in the tri-state region (Connecticut, New Jersey and downstate New York counties). All of Litchfield County's four pedestrian fatalities were pedestrians 60 or older. The chart below ranks all Connecticut counties by older pedestrian fatality rates.

Rank	County	Older (60+ yrs) Pedestrian Fatalities (2009-2011)	Avg. Older Pedestrian Fatality Rate per 100,000 * (2009-2011)	Avg. <60 yrs Pedestrian Fatality Rate per 100,000 * (2009-2011)
1	Litchfield County, CT	4	3.08	0.00
2	Fairfield County, CT	10	1.92	0.58
3	Windham County, CT	1	1.48	1.04
4	Hartford County, CT	7	1.28	0.85
5	Tolland County, CT	1	1.25	1.06
6	New London County, CT	2	1.21	1.08
7	Middlesex County, CT	1	0.89	0.77
8	New Haven County, CT	4	0.78	1.07
n/a	Connecticut	30	1.41	.82

**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 applauded the Connecticut Department of Transportation's (ConnDOT) work making the Westport section of Post Road East (Route 1) safer for pedestrians. ConnDOT is adding crosswalks and filling in gaps in the sidewalk network. Four pedestrians have been killed on that section of Route 1 since 2008.

"Route 1 has consistently topped the list of Connecticut's most deadly roads for pedestrians," said Steven Higashide, the Campaign's senior planner and Connecticut coordinator.

"Relatively low-cost and quick improvements like these will improve road safety. ConnDOT should continue to identify places along Route 1 that would benefit from similar treatments."

The Campaign recommended that:

- ConnDOT create and fund Safe Routes for Seniors and Safe Routes to Transit programs that implement pedestrian safety improvements in areas with high concentrations of seniors and in areas around transit stops;
- ConnDOT redesign the Highway Design Manual, Connecticut's standard road design reference book, to address the goals and policies set forth in the State's Complete Streets Law; and
- The State Legislature pass a Vulnerable Users bill that would stiffen penalties for drivers

who kill or injure pedestrians, bicyclists, highway workers, or other non-motorists using the roadway.

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 Connecticut, downstate New York and New Jersey.

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

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.