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## **New Report Finds Older Downstate New York Pedestrians at Risk**

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

Downstate New York 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, 246 pedestrians aged 60 years and older were killed on downstate New York 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 18.2 percent of the downstate population, this age group accounted for 35 percent of the downstate pedestrian fatalities during the three-year period. Those aged 75 years and older represent 6.1 percent of downstate New York's population, but 16.5 percent of pedestrian deaths. The pedestrian fatality rate for downstate New York residents 60 and older is 2.51 times higher than that of residents under 60. For residents 75 and older, the pedestrian fatality rate is 3.53 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.

Tri-State's research showed that Putnam County had the highest average older pedestrian fatality rate of any county in downstate New York as well as the highest of the 41 counties in the tri-state region (Connecticut, New Jersey and downstate New

York counties). Almost 38 percent of Putnam County’s eight pedestrian fatalities were pedestrians 60 or older. The chart below ranks all downstate New York 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	Putnam County, NY	3	5.44	2.05
2	Bronx County, NY	30	4.78	1.35
3	Nassau County, NY	39	4.56	1.38
4	Queens County, NY	51	4.13	1.29
5	Brooklyn, NY	51	4.05	1.18
6	Manhattan, NY	35	3.87	1.40
7	Suffolk County, NY	17	1.96	2.56
8	Staten Island, NY	5	1.89	1.38
9	Rockland County, NY	3	1.68	0.80
10	Orange County, NY	3	1.66	1.15
11	Westchester County, NY	8	1.40	0.57
12	Dutchess County, NY	1	0.58	0.56
n/a	Downstate New York	246	3.43	1.37

*\*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 New York City Department of Transportation’s (NYCDOT) Safe Streets for Seniors program and New York State Department of Transportation’s (NYSDOT) work on Long Island’s Hempstead Turnpike both of which address safety for seniors and non-seniors alike, but called for more investments in pedestrian safety.

“Relatively low-cost and quick to implement roadway improvements such as curb ramps, well-marked crosswalks and wider pedestrian crossing islands can protect the lives of all pedestrians – from the very young to the very old,” said Renata Silberblatt, the Campaign’s staff analyst and report author.

"The findings of this report must be a call to action for downstate policymakers. To ignore the disproportionate threat seniors face from dangerous drivers on our roads is unfair not only to them but to all of us. We’re all getting older, so the street that’s made safe for your grandparents today will be safe for you tomorrow. Luckily, there are reasonable, commonsense solutions available--as this report points out. We join the Tri-State Transportation Campaign in urging government officials at all levels to take these

prudent steps to save lives in the region," said Paul Steely White, executive director of Transportation Alternatives.

"Older New Yorkers are increasingly taking public transit and walking to get around – they shouldn't be taking their lives in their own hands when they do, however, the fatality rate for older pedestrians is higher than the rate for all other ages," said Beth Finkel, state director for AARP in New York State. "With advanced age, bone density declines, making serious injury or death more likely if one is hit by a car. Inadequate sidewalk maintenance increases older adults' risk. This report outlines the problems and the needed solutions and AARP is glad to be working with Tri-State Transportation Campaign to change this and keep our streets and sidewalks safe for all generations."

The Campaign praised the State Legislature's recent passage of a speed camera pilot program that will install cameras in 20 school zones across New York City. The cameras will catch the license plates of speeding drivers and send the vehicle owners tickets for breaking the law.

"A pedestrian hit by a driver going over the speed limit has less of a chance of surviving the collision than a pedestrian hit by a driver going the speed limit. This program is an important step in protecting New York City pedestrians and particularly our seniors," said Nadine Lemmon, the Campaign's Albany legislative advocate.

The Campaign recommended that:

- NYSDOT include new pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in its "Preservation First" policy, the Agency's policy that prioritizes the maintenance of existing infrastructure;
- NYSDOT launch training workshops for engineers, public works employees and advocates to better understand the needs of all road users;
- NYSDOT expand a statewide SafeSeniors program, modeled on NYSDOT's successful pilot program on Long Island, and create a Safe Routes to Transit program that implements pedestrian safety improvements in areas around transit stops; and
- The State Legislature create a State fund dedicated to pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure.

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 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 [tstc.org](http://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.*