

# POLICY AGENDA

## For Elder Pedestrian Safety

Older adults and people with disabilities often have mobility, cognitive, and sensory limitations that affect their behavior as pedestrians and place them at risk for injury or death simply by walking around in their community.

This agenda arises out of the experience of one area agency for aging's experience creating and implementing an elder pedestrian safety program and engaging local stakeholders in conversations about plans, policies, and strategies to reduce elder pedestrian crashes. Along the way, we began to develop an understanding of the local setting in which decisions about pedestrian safety are made. This agenda reflects the lessons we learned from our educational workshops with elders, meetings with our Elder Pedestrian Advisory Group, and an Elder Pedestrian Policy Forum held in January 2013 as part of the City Leaders Institute on Aging in Place funded by Met Life Foundation and Partners for Livable Communities.

The purpose of this agenda is to provide:

- An overview of the context within which elder pedestrian safety is addressed, using our own learning experience as an example
- A pathway for those interested in the safety of elders and those with limited mobility to engage and advocate for policy changes that support enhanced pedestrian safety

We identified **5 Policy Goals**:

Elder Pedestrian Safety is

1. Addressed in all **transportation planning**
2. Addressed in all **community planning**
3. Supported by **legislation** and **enforcement**
4. Supported by ongoing **education**
5. Supported by proven **countermeasures**

The following Policy Agenda addresses each of these goals, and suggests strategies and examples at the city, county, regional, state, and federal level, as appropriate.



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## GOAL 1 Elder Pedestrian Safety is addressed in all transportation planning

There are currently a number of models that incorporate elder pedestrian safety into transportation planning: Complete Streets, Safe Streets for Seniors, Safe Routes for Seniors, and Safe Routes to Aging in Place. Strategic efforts are data-driven and target vulnerable populations and locations based on local demographics, pedestrian traffic patterns, and pedestrian crash data. This approach, which has worked well to improve child pedestrian safety (e.g., school crossing guards, Safe Routes to School), can be adapted for use with other populations.

<b>City</b>	Local elected officials must be aware of the problem and know what they can do to support integration of solutions into local planning efforts
	Individual municipalities should be aligned with neighboring efforts to ensure collaboration between communities
	Local policy or legislation should support data-driven priority setting for pedestrian safety <i>Example:</i> New York City's Pedestrian Safety Act establishes priorities for allocation of funds for countermeasures based on pedestrian crash data
<b>County</b>	Elder pedestrian safety strategies should be incorporated into local transportation planning efforts for elders and others with mobility limitations <i>Examples:</i> Metropolitan Planning Organization, Local Coordinating Board for the Transportation Disadvantaged, Transit Planning 4All
<b>Regional</b>	Because elder pedestrian safety should be seamless from one community to the next, collaboration between entities and organizations at various levels—city, county, region, state—is of strategic importance <i>Example:</i> Florida Department of Transportation supports multi-jurisdictional Community Traffic Safety Teams made up of local transportation advocates, supported by a regional Coordinator
<b>State</b>	Statewide transportation plans should include the needs of elder pedestrians in strategies and solutions Examples: Strategic Highway Safety Plan, Mobility for Life Strategic Plan
<b>Federal</b>	Federal Highway Administration's Pedestrian Safety Strategic Plans must address the needs of elder pedestrians
	Continue providing policy and funding support for initiatives to coordinate transportation for elders and people with disabilities <i>Examples:</i> Federal Highway Administration funds a Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator in every state

## GOAL 2 Elder Pedestrian Safety is addressed in all community planning

Aging in place has been defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as “the ability to live in one's own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level.” The model has moved beyond health and human services to include housing, employment, transportation, and quality of life. Public health efforts to encourage elders to walk for exercise (it improves mental and physical health, and reduces isolation) are somewhat dependent on having safe and walkable communities. Creating a pedestrian environment that is safe for elders and people with disabilities creates a safer environment for all pedestrians.

<b>City County</b>	Local planning and development should include strategies to improve safety and walkability for all pedestrians in newly created areas, as well as strategies to retrofit existing neighborhoods to new standards <i>Examples:</i> Pedestrian malls and corridors, elder pedestrian zones
<b>City County Regional</b>	Elder pedestrian safety should be integrated with efforts to develop coordinated transit systems and provide a smooth transition from walking to other forms of transportation for those with mobility limitations (e.g., mass transit, paratransit, taxis, buses) Example: Seven50 regional plan
<b>State</b>	State funding and policies should support the implementation of strategies that integrate pedestrian traffic with other forms of transportation for elders and those with mobility limitations Examples: The Florida Department of Elder Affairs’ Communities for a Lifetime initiative supports local community efforts to implement improvements that benefit elders, but utilizing existing local resources has not been sufficient to support substantial, ongoing initiatives
<b>Federal</b>	The Administration on Community Living should enhance policy and funding initiatives that support community-based innovations that support aging in place for elders and people with disabilities
	Support legislation (such as the unsuccessful Livable Communities Act of 2011) that funds and encourages the development of livable communities through coordinated public investment strategies using local, state, and federal funds

## GOAL 3 Elder Pedestrian Safety is supported by legislation and enforcement

In the words of one law enforcement officer, “legislation and education must be reinforced by legal consequences.” Twenty years ago, less than 60% of drivers wore a seat belt. Thanks to education and enforcement efforts like the “Click it or Ticket” campaign, today over 85% of drivers use their seat belt (National Occupant Protection Use Survey, 2012). Efforts to improve pedestrian safety might benefit from a similar coordinated approach.

<b>City County Regional</b>	Law enforcement agencies should enforce existing pedestrian right of way and jaywalking laws—giving particular attention to “hot spots” of pedestrian injury and fatality—by issuing tickets or warnings and other awareness raising efforts
<b>State</b>	Support legislation to prohibit distracted driving, and then subsequent efforts focusing on education and enforcement
	Support legislation to limit conflicts between vehicular and pedestrian traffic <i>Examples:</i> Right turn on red signals often overlap with pedestrian walk signals
	The Motor Vehicle Administration should incorporate a description of the needs of elder pedestrians into the state’s driver handbook, driver training efforts, and driver’s license testing
<b>Federal</b>	Federal policies and funding should support local efforts to improve pedestrian safety, including specific initiatives that target elder pedestrian safety

## GOAL 4 Elder Pedestrian Safety is supported by ongoing education

Reducing elder pedestrian crashes will require ongoing education among pedestrians, drivers, decision-makers, and elected officials. The best models are peer-led; use adult learning principles; describe how aging affects mobility and perception; engage elders in conversations about pedestrian safety and the walkability of their local community; and encourage participation in planning, implementation, and evaluation. Elected officials and decision-makers must understand the needs of elder pedestrians and those with mobility limitations, particularly when setting priorities and allocating funds.

<b>City County</b>	Local municipalities should support ongoing driver and pedestrian education programs addressing elder pedestrians and those with mobility limitations
	Both targeted (workshops specifically aimed at elder pedestrians or elected officials) and generalized approaches (incorporating these issues into all pedestrian safety education efforts) are needed Examples: Local law enforcement agencies often have a pedestrian safety coordinator who offers workshops in the community; elder-serving organizations could offer pedestrian safety workshops as well
	Local law enforcement should incorporate information on elders and others with mobility limitations into current pedestrian education efforts
	Local public health education efforts targeting elders should incorporate elder pedestrian safety, which can be affected by the physical and cognitive effects of aging, chronic health conditions, and medications
	Public service announcements should be used to raise awareness among the general population; they should contain messages that resonate with the audience and be repeated with great regularity on local media outlets
<b>Regional State Federal</b>	Support policies and funding strategies that support ongoing and collaborative education efforts that include law enforcement, public health, and elder serving organizations Examples: Florida State Department of Transportation grants address impaired driving, police traffic services, speed and aggressive driving, roadway safety, occupant protection, child passenger safety, pedestrian and bicycle safety, motorcycle safety, traffic records, teen drivers, aging drivers and community traffic safety. A Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety grant supports the Safe Steps-Pasos Seguros program

## GOAL 5 Elder Pedestrian Safety is supported by proven countermeasures

Because intersections lacking safety features contribute to pedestrian crashes, a variety of countermeasures have been devised to improve pedestrian safety. Funding upgrades to existing roadways has been challenging amid competing priorities in the recent state and federal fiscal climate. Many upgrades are designed to improve traffic flow rather than pedestrian safety, and some modifications that increase traffic flow also increase pedestrian danger. This tension between traffic flow and pedestrian safety must be resolved through appropriate countermeasure selection and implementation.

<b>City County</b>	Local transportation planning should prioritize funding allocations to target improvements to intersections with high pedestrian injury and mortality rates
	Plans to implement countermeasures should have measurable outcomes within specific timeframes. Examples: New York City's Pedestrian Safety Act establishes priorities for allocation of funds for countermeasures based on pedestrian crash data (e.g., retrofit 1,500 crosswalk signals, redesign 20 intersections)
<b>County Regional</b>	Public Works and/or Transportation Department should conduct needed assessments to determine the impact of changing timing on crosswalk signals and consider implementing policies or countermeasures that reduce conflicts between pedestrian and vehicular traffic <i>Examples:</i> Right turn on red signals often overlap with pedestrian walk signals, crosswalks located before traffic signals but bus stops after; timing of crosswalk signals, pedestrian islands
	Public Works and/or Transportation Department consider designating "Senior Pedestrian Focus Areas" based on local data, and conduct needed assessments to determine the impact of establishing elder pedestrian zones with lowered speed limits in areas where the pedestrian crash rate is high Example: New York City's Safe Streets for Seniors program
<b>State</b>	State funding should be provided to municipalities to upgrade all crosswalk signals to include a countdown style, prioritizing upgrades to those intersections with high pedestrian crash rates
<b>Federal</b>	The Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, and the U.S. Department of Transportation should continue providing policy and funding support for pedestrian safety improvements to states and metropolitan planning organizations

# CONCLUSIONS

## What can other communities learn from our experience?

- Local data that can identify groups most at risk (e.g., elders age 75+) and “hot spots” (intersections or areas with multiple injuries and fatalities) will help communities strategically target populations and areas for enhanced education and enforcement efforts, effective countermeasures, and environmental enhancements. Your local transportation agency, public works department, or even the local health department may be able to provide this information.
- Determine who plays what role in your community. In our metro area there are numerous entities involved, e.g., city versus county planning agencies, state roads versus county roads, and local versus regional initiatives. We are still learning which agencies are responsible for which activities under which conditions.
- Connect with your local traffic safety coordinator or bicycle/pedestrian coordinator. There is often someone with a similar title within law enforcement, transportation, and/or planning agencies. If you have no local coordinator, there is a coordinator in every state. They are extremely knowledgeable about local stakeholders and can help you navigate the complex system.
- Identify other local experts and advocates in local universities (e.g., public health, occupational therapy, transportation, urban/community planning) and healthcare institutions (hospitals, trauma centers, and emergency response/fire and rescue departments).

## What can AAAs and elder pedestrian safety advocates do?

- Participate in local transportation and transit planning processes to ensure that the transportation and mobility needs of elder pedestrians are included; monitor implementation; and evaluate outcomes.
- Educate local elected officials and policymakers about the needs of elder pedestrians and how making communities safer for elders and people with mobility limitations makes them safer for everyone.
- Serve as a focal point to encourage local, regional, and state inter-agency collaboration and coordination on elder pedestrian issues.
- Implement elder pedestrian safety education programs at local senior centers and elder-serving provider organizations.

## APPENDIX A: Crosswalk Signals

One of the most salient issues to arise from our Safe Steps workshops and meetings of the Elder Pedestrian Advisory Group concerned crosswalk signals. Stakeholders were concerned that many signals do not allow sufficient time for pedestrians to cross safely.

### Little Known Facts

- Crosswalk signal timing is based on:
  - Number of lanes to cross
  - Stride length of 6 foot tall male: 4 feet per second
- The average crosswalk signal for a four-lane intersection is 20 seconds. This is insufficient time for:
  - Elders - 3 feet per second
  - People with mobility impairments - 2.5 feet per second
- Crosswalk signals that use a countdown clock have been shown to be most effective for elder pedestrians  
Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, *Evaluation of the Miami-Dade Pedestrian Safety Demonstration Project* (2008)
- Many people are confused about how the countdown signal works, so signs are being posted to explain and brochures are provided by the State's Safe Mobility for Life campaign.



### Local Infrastructure

- Crosswalk signals are provided to the County by the State and installed by Public Works on all local streets.
- All *new* signals installed in the County will be countdown style, but there are no plans to upgrade existing signals unless they are broken.
- In Miami-Dade County, all crosswalk and traffic signals are controlled and maintained by the Traffic Signals and Signs Division of the County's Public Works and Waste Management Department. The county has a centralized traffic signal control system coordinating over 2,800 traffic signals. Signal Operations Engineers adjust signals based on vehicle and pedestrian patterns, and Traffic Signal Technicians attend to routine or emergency problems. Keep in mind that your request may not be possible because changing one signal may affect traffic patterns for miles because of this computerized grid.

# HOW TO REPORT PROBLEMS WITH CROSSWALK SIGNALS

