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# Ensuring Safe & Accessible Pedestrian Routes for Older Adults

July 2015  
Information Brief

*This information brief explores the subject of safe accessibility to pathways for seniors by exploring four programs or plans that emphasize the importance of safe pedestrian movement for older adults. The programs vary in scope and location, ranging from the densely populated urban environments of New York City and Miami to smaller town centers and the tourism and nature-focused communities of North Carolina's Outer Banks. In addition, this brief introduces design concepts and considerations for older adult movement in shared street environments, which have been commonly used in Europe and the United Kingdom and are under development in several U.S. cities.*



Figure 1 - Older Adult Pedestrians in Miami, Florida Photo credit: [www.pedbikeimages.org/](http://www.pedbikeimages.org/) Dan Burden

## Introduction

Whether older adult pedestrians are exercising for health and leisure or are walking to reach public transportation stops and destinations of choice, an older adult's pedestrian experience encompasses both physical and psychological dimensions.<sup>1</sup> Physical aspects entail street and pedestrian path design, crossings, lights, signals, and signs. Psychological aspects concern having a sense of safety when interacting with other pedestrians, drivers, and one's environment (e.g., perception of crime, comfort in walking in daylight or at night).

<sup>1</sup> National Center on Senior Transportation. (2013) *Elder Pedestrian Safety in Miami-Dade: An Overview*. <http://www.allianceforaging.org/afass/ElderPedSafetyinMiamiDadeOverview.pdf> Accessed 18 May 2015.

Conditions that create barriers for older adults or pedestrians of all ages who have varying ranges of mobility and reaction times include: impaired ability to judge distance; inability to cross a roadway quickly; unmarked crossings; dim lighting; lack of signage; construction zones without pedestrian detours created and marked; and lack of benches and shelters.

In 2012 over 4,700 pedestrian fatalities were recorded in the United States according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration—an increase of six percent from 2011 and the highest number of pedestrian fatalities in five years.<sup>2</sup> Adults age 65+ comprised nine percent of all pedestrian fatalities in 2012. The male pedestrian fatality and injury rate is nearly double the rate for females across age categories, and in 2012, the highest percent of fatalities and injuries occurred between 8:00 p.m. and midnight.

Pedestrian safety for older adults is valuable for the protections it offers pedestrians, motorists, and cyclists. Not only for the protections it provides human life but also how safety affects economic and social vitality, livability, and equitable access. A safe community is one that attracts residents and encourages residents to age in place for as long as possible.

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (2012) *Traffic Safety Facts: 2012 Data*. <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811888.pdf> Accessed 18 May 2015.

## Older Adult Pedestrian Safety: Overview of Local Programs

Non-profit organizations, state, city, and county governments, and local advocates are working in communities here in the U.S. and abroad to develop policy agendas and planning tools that promote and implement pedestrian projects, offer pedestrian safety education, and empower older adults to speak freely about their pedestrian safety concerns. Transportation Alternatives, a New York City advocacy organization founded in 1973, supplemented its **Safe Routes for Seniors** program in 2006 by designating **Elder Districts**, comparable to school zones or historic districts. The Elder District designation means that the streets in a district “will be modified specifically for the elderly and people with mobility and visual impairments.”<sup>3</sup>

The Alliance for Aging, the area agency on aging for Miami-Dade and Monroe counties in Florida, implemented a Florida Department of Transportation Pedestrian/Bicycle Safety grant in 2011 to develop the **Safe Steps-Pasos Seguros** program. What initially started as a one-hour workshop on pedestrian safety for older adults has expanded to incorporate a public awareness campaign, train-the-trainer education, development of a policy agenda, and formal outreach to planners, police, and public officials.

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<sup>3</sup> Transportation Alternatives (2015). <http://www.transalt.org/issues/pedestrian/safeseniors/elderdistricts> Accessed 18 May 2015.

Currituck County, specifically the Village of Corolla, on the northern end of North Carolina's Outer Banks serves a permanent population of over 24,000 and a much larger seasonal population staying at rental houses and resort communities. North Carolina Highway 12, predominantly a two-lane, undivided road with parallel bicycle/pedestrian paths (along some stretches), serves as a spine for the county's vehicular traffic. Pedestrians and cyclists regularly cross the roadway to reach residential, commercial, and protected land. A new **Corolla Village Circulation and Wayfinding Plan** has been adopted to improve safety by reducing pedestrian-vehicle conflicts.

In 2006, the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association based in Reading, England, prepared a report on **Shared Surface Street Design** that presented the key concerns of focus group participants who have visual impairments, who are deaf or hard of hearing, or who have physical mobility limitations. Of primary concern in shared space is removal of the curb edge separating pedestrians from car traffic and assumption that pedestrians can make eye contact with motorists. As a result, focus groups provided recommendations for keeping the spirit of the shared space concept while considering the practical navigation needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and children.

Each of these programs will be explored in further detail in the section below with specific emphasis on how these communities are taking into account the needs of older adults.

## **New York City's Safer Streets**

### ***Safe Routes for Seniors & Elder Districts***

Elder Districts are established in areas where senior centers and senior service providers are located, where a concentration of seniors is living, or locations where rates of pedestrian injuries are high. Street improvements in these districts follow Americans with Disabilities Act requirements and U.S. Access Board guidelines as well as specific recommendations of older adults who provide input on area needs.

According to New York City Department of Transportation statistics, approximately 80 percent of New York City's public space consists of streets and sidewalks, and seniors make up 38 percent of all pedestrian fatalities.<sup>4</sup> In 2010, seniors age 60 and older made up 17 percent of New York City's population.<sup>5</sup> This lopsided ratio of fatalities to persons is one of the reasons Transportation Alternatives initiated a Safe Routes program where both traffic data and firsthand experience are used to implement physical street improvements. As part of the program,

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<sup>4</sup> New York City Department of Transportation. (2010). The New York City Pedestrian Safety Study & Action Plan [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/nyc\\_ped\\_safety\\_study\\_action\\_plan.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/nyc_ped_safety_study_action_plan.pdf) Accessed 19 May 2015.

<sup>5</sup> New York City Department for the Aging. (2012). Changes in the Elderly Population of New York City, 2000 to 2010 [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dfta/downloads/pdf/demogr\\_aphic/elderly\\_population\\_070912.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dfta/downloads/pdf/demogr_aphic/elderly_population_070912.pdf) Accessed 19 May 2015

local seniors are invited to map their travel routes and identify hazards or obstacles to their destinations. The process also involves mapping crashes and discussing the data with seniors to determine their thoughts on the crash locations. Another element of the program that encourages participation is setting up site tours where seniors and public officials walk together to view locations.

The predominant conditions that older adult pedestrians have identified as common threats to their safety include turning cars at crosswalks or intersections; unsafe curb ramps; wide intersections with short crossing times; and wide streets that encourage high traffic speeds. Recommended ways to combat threats include longer crossing intervals, improved curb ramps with detectable warning surfaces, narrowing streets through landscaping, allowing perpendicular parking, and adding traffic calming elements to reduce speeds.

Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPIs) have been installed at a number of intersections in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Queens. According to the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), LPIs typically add a 3- to 7-second (or up to 10-second) head start for pedestrians when they are entering an intersection where vehicles have a corresponding green light in the same direction.<sup>6</sup> LPIs have been shown to reduce vehicle-

pedestrian collisions by as much as 60 percent.

New York's Chinatown is a specific example of an area selected for Elder District designation.<sup>7</sup> Chinatown was selected due to the percent of older adults living within the defined boundaries of Chinatown, high volumes of pedestrians crossing streets, and high rates of pedestrian injuries. In addition, truck traffic is frequent, and the street layout can be confusing. Recommendations for Chinatown were for the NYC DOT to adjust signals for a walking time of 2.5 feet per second, dedicating an exclusive crossing time of 5 to 7 seconds for people before vehicles are allowed to turn at intersections, and keeping streets clean, free of potholes, and clearly marked with painted crossings.

Channelization of traffic (e.g., using islands, barriers, or markings to channel traffic along a certain path) was considered the primary solution for addressing speeding near the intersection of Catherine Street and Madison Street. An example of channelization is shown in Figure 2, a bird's eye view of New York's Pike Street.

Channelization is one way to encourage drivers to lower their speeds, and it can provide the additional benefit of incorporating raised medians to serve as pedestrian refuges for walkers who need to cross wide roadways.

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<sup>6</sup> NACTO (2015) Urban Street Design Guide. <http://nacto.org/usdg/intersection-design-elements/traffic-signals/leading-pedestrian-interval/> Accessed 21 May 2015

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<sup>7</sup> Transportation Alternatives (date unknown) <http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livable-communities/plan/planning/safe-routes-for-seniors.pdf> Accessed 2 June 2015



**Figure 2 – View of Pike Street, New York City**  
Photo credit: [www.streetsblog.org](http://www.streetsblog.org)

Speeding is an issue that older adult pedestrians commonly cite as a danger. In addition to straightaway corridor speeding, it's an additional concern when cars turn quickly and do not yield to pedestrians at intersections. Again, LPI signals allow pedestrians a 5- to 7-second “grace period” to begin crossing before cars are allowed to turn across the path of pedestrian travel. Sidewalks blocked by cars partially parking on the curb or buses extending into intersections are two additional concerns that may be addressed through administrative changes such as physically moving a bus stop farther away from an intersection, enforcing traffic laws for illegally parked vehicles, or removing the parking spaces closest to the intersection.

Has the Elder District designation made a difference? It has definitely served as a model for public feedback and pedestrian-friendly recommendations, and New York City's own Safe Streets for Seniors

initiative. New York City experienced a 35 percent decrease in traffic fatalities between 2001 and 2009.<sup>8</sup> In January 2015, *The New York Times* reported that pedestrian fatalities in 2014 were the lowest on record since the city started collecting the statistics in the early 1900s.<sup>9</sup>

## **Pedestrian Education and Involvement**

### ***Miami's Safe Steps/Pasos Seguros***

It has been well-documented that the United States' population is growing older, and Florida is the state with the highest percentage of older adult residents. According to a report released by the National Center on Senior Transportation and the Alliance for Aging, Inc., adults age 60 and older made up approximately 20 percent of the Miami-Dade County area population in 2012.<sup>10</sup> Dade County is ethnically diverse—over 51 percent of the population is foreign born. Over 65 percent are Hispanic and 43 percent have limited English proficiency. It is estimated that one-quarter of elders in the Miami area use public transportation. While there has been

<sup>8</sup> New York City Department of Transportation (2015) . <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/pedestrians/pedsafetyreport.shtml> Accessed 3 June 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Fitzsimmons, E. (2015, January 1) New York City's Pedestrian Fatalities Lowest on Record in 2014. *New York Times*, p. A14.

<sup>10</sup> National Center on Senior Transportation and Alliance for Aging, Inc. (2013). *Elder Pedestrian Safety in Miami-Dade: An Overview*. <http://www.allianceforaging.org/afas/ElderPedSafetyinMiamiDadeOverview.pdf> Accessed 3 June 2015

a downward trend in pedestrian injuries in Miami-Dade in recent years, the pedestrian fatality rate has remained static, and both state and local transportation agencies in Florida have taken steps to address the issue.

In 2011, the Alliance for Aging, which serves Miami-Dade and Monroe counties, received a safety grant from the Florida Department of Transportation to develop the Safe Steps-Paso Seguros (Safe Steps in Spanish) workshop for adult learners. The workshops involve older adults in discussions about area walkability, pedestrian safety, and how to report problems with signs, streets, and lights. Two other elements of Safe Steps are a public awareness campaign that uses locally produced public service announcements to promote the healthy benefits of walking, pedestrian safety, driver awareness of older pedestrians, and the effects of drinking and walking. An elder pedestrian advisory group representing transportation, public works, public transit, police, eldercare providers, and healthcare guided development of the program, and a formal safety forum for local stakeholders was held in 2013. A 3-1-1 number was established so that citizens could report problems with sidewalks, crossings, and locations where traffic signals might be needed.

In 2014, the Alliance for Aging enhanced the safety education program by starting the Safe Steps-Pasos Seguros train-the-trainer model where trainers from Miami, other communities in Florida or other states can learn to host the pedestrian safety workshops at other locations. Safe

Steps also incorporates policy outreach to elected officials and decision-makers to promote the benefits of aging in place, educate policy makers on how aging affects the physical ability of pedestrians, and address environmental factors affecting older pedestrians.

*Elder Pedestrian Safety in Miami-Dade: An Overview*, a report prepared by the National Center on Senior Transportation and the Alliance for Aging, identifies some of the key challenges and potential solutions learned from the elder pedestrian advisory group.



 Alliance for Aging, Inc.  
Answers on Aging  
Funded by the Florida Department of Transportation

**Figure 3 - Logo of Safe Steps Program**

#### **Education challenges:**

- need for short-term funding for education programs
- educational programs must be ongoing to reach a growing population of older adults

#### **Potential education solutions:**

- provide annual county funding for ongoing pedestrian safety education
- implement multiple programs at one time to reach varied audiences

### **Enforcement challenges:**

- pedestrian law violations must be observed by law enforcement officials
- lack of distracted driving legislation

#### ***Potential enforcement solutions:***

- increase in enforcement in areas known for pedestrian crashes
- propose distracted driving legislation that *has teeth*

### **Engineering challenges:**

- may take up to 5 years for a pedestrian study to be completed
- members of public may have difficulty accessing implementation timeline
- members of public may have difficulty accessing implementation timeline

#### ***Potential engineering solutions:***

- initiate a comprehensive cross-county approach to enhancing pedestrian safety
- identify economical, immediate strategies for improvement such as signal timing & signage

### **Emergency response challenges:**

- aging affects visual, cognitive, and motor functions of older adults
- acquiring emergency-responder input to identify specific locations that are repeat problem locations for pedestrians

#### ***Potential emergency response solutions:***

- engage healthcare professionals in increasing awareness of elder pedestrian risks
- view elder pedestrian crash rates as a public health crisis

### **Evaluation challenges:**

- linking safety education efforts to behavior change and reduced crash rates
- determining effectiveness of changing countdown signal timing changes

#### ***Potential evaluation solutions***

- require education programs to evaluate outcomes, including behavior change
- prioritize proven countermeasures in areas of high pedestrian crash rates

## **Pedestrian Improvements for Rural & Resort Areas *Corolla Village Circulation and Wayfinding Plan, Currituck County, North Carolina***

Situated on the northern tip of North Carolina's Outer Banks, Corolla, and its southerly neighbors, Duck, and Kitty Hawk, are home to a mix of seasonal beachgoers, semi-permanent residents, and year-round home and condominium owners. Many seasonal visitors return year after year, typically for week-long rentals they share with multi-generational family members.

The area offers recreational opportunities centered on water sports, golf, fishing, wildlife refuges and historical sites, cycling, and walking. North Carolina 12 (NC 12), the north-south artery that serves Currituck County is predominantly a two-lane road with intersection turn lanes. In some sections, the right-of-way features a parallel multi-use path for cycling and walking. Due to services (e.g., stores, dining), parks, sites, and residences being



located on both east and west sides of the road, pedestrians and cyclists regularly cross the highway or pedestrians walk on the road shoulder where a pedestrian path is unavailable.

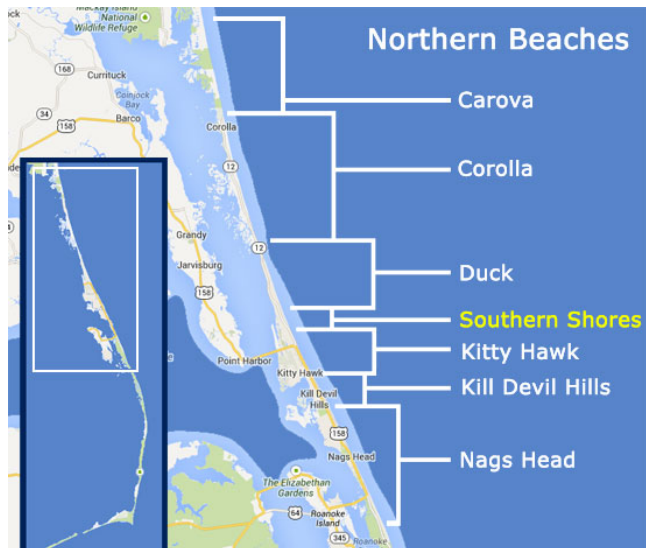


Figure 4 - Map of North Carolina's Northern Beaches  
Photo Credit: <http://www.outerbanks.com/corolla.html>

In the summer months, 30,000 vehicles travel on NC 12 each day, and the population increases from 500 year-round residents to 25,000 people. Nearly 1,000 cyclists and walkers are on the move each day during high season.<sup>11</sup>

From January 2006 to October 2009, 22 pedestrian and cyclist collisions were reported. In 2013, a couples' death spurred the Town of Duck to improve pedestrian safety through better signs and path improvements. Between 2013 and 2015, three people were killed while walking along the NC 12 shoulder in Currituck County and the crashes spurred residents to request an extension of the paved trail

<sup>11</sup> Hampton, J. (2013, August 5) N.C. Town Focuses on Safety After Pedestrians' Deaths. *The Virginian-Pilot*. <http://hamptonroads.com/2013/08/nc-town-focuses-safety-after-pedestrians-deaths> Accessed 11 June 2015.

system.<sup>12</sup> Currituck County eventually plans to build a paved path that extends 13 miles. A predominant concern among engineers, planners, and residents is the number of times the path will intersect with driveways and cross traffic. In addition, many motorists who travel NC 12 may be unfamiliar with North Carolina traffic laws that require yielding to pedestrians in a crosswalk, and the experience of mixing with bicyclists or pedestrians of such a wide variety of ages.

To help address both path and general circulation issues, Currituck County released a comprehensive circulation and wayfinding plan in 2014 to address needs for walkways, benches, signage (including wayfinding signage), and bicycle racks.

The plan's overarching goals are:

- improve bicycle and pedestrian connectivity,
- increase safety in motorist and pedestrian/bicyclist interactions,
- improve health and quality of life through programs and facilities that encourage cycling and walking,
- encourage day trips and longer visits to Corolla Village, and
- provide history and environment learning opportunities.

<sup>12</sup> Hampton, J. (2015, March 29) Corolla Residents Seek Action on Bike Paths After Deaths. *The Virginian-Pilot*. <http://hamptonroads.com/2015/03/corolla-residents-see-action-bike-path-after-deaths> Accessed 11 June 2015.

## *Public Involvement & Community Recommendations*

Two rounds of public involvement were held with residents, historic-area staff, and local businesses. During a summer art festival, a booth about the plan provided an opportunity for seasonal visitors to offer input. Meeting and focus group attendees stressed the importance of preserving the physical environment while addressing parking along roadways, unclear separation of pedestrians and bicyclists, and street crossings. In the second round, participants recommended a wayfinding signage package and village logo.

Final public recommendations have been categorized as (a) physical infrastructure; (b) pedestrian safety; (c) roadway improvements; (d) park amenities; and (e) parking and trolley. Specifically:

- increase width of existing sidepaths
- add additional sidepath mileage
- add boardwalks for pedestrian movement
- define pedestrian zones where appropriate
- install speed tables or patterned crosswalks near cross roads and driveways
- provide vegetation buffers and vegetated medians for pedestrians
- create one-way traffic pattern on certain road(s)
- provide benches, watering stations, and comfort stations as appropriate
- institute trolley service

- *Corolla Village's Circulation and Wayfinding Plan* details recommended engineering and signage projects, programming, and marketing to provide information and encourage awareness of safety, wayfinding, and walking and cycling programs (e.g., scheduled walkabouts or rides). Recommended projects could be implemented on a short-term to long-term schedule ranging from implementation by 2016/2017 to more complex infrastructure that could be erected by 2020 or 2024. In both cases, projects would be contingent upon funding and approval.

Even though the Corolla Village plan is aimed at multiple age groups, not just older adults, the planning process used illustrates how integral bicycle and pedestrian travel is to a town or county with limited physical space or right-of-way to address transportation needs and how ownership of local decisions is important to both permanent residents and annual visitors.



**Figure 5 - Public Involvement Process in Corolla included Outreach at Public Events /Photo credit: Corolla Village Circulation & Wayfinding Plan**

## Shared Streets in the U.K., U.S. & Europe

### *Aging and Disability Community Reaction to Shared Surface Streets*

The concept of a shared street is nothing new. Horse and carriage, motorized vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists have mixed in transportation environments at various points throughout history. According to the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), a commercial shared street maintains “access for vehicles operating at low speeds and are designed to permit easy loading and unloading for trucks at designated hours. They are designed to implicitly slow traffic speeds using pedestrian volumes, design, and other cues to slow or divert traffic.”<sup>13</sup> Shared streets typically remove the separation between vehicles, walkers, and cyclists by eliminating curb separation. Many incorporate bricks, cobblestones, or granite surfaces. Over the past two decades shared streets have been more common in Europe and the United Kingdom, but that trend is changing with new shared streets planned for Chicago (Argyle Street), Washington, D.C. (Wharf), and a shared street in place at Pittsburgh’s Market Square.

Effective use of shared space is contingent upon vehicles traveling at low speeds, and eye contact or some verbal or non-verbal acknowledgement between pedestrians and motorists. As a result of this change in

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<sup>13</sup> NACTO (2015). Urban Street Design Guide. <http://nacto.org/usdg/streets/commercial-shared-street/>

Accessed 12 June 2015.

typical street design, older adults, people with disabilities, and the organizations that represent these individuals in the U.K. have raised concern that “shared surfaces will dissuade or even prevent blind and partially sighted people, and other disabled people, from using town centres and high streets.”<sup>14</sup>

To garner feedback, the Guidedogs for the Blind Association supported qualitative research to document the experiences of people with shared surfaces. The results of this research are summarized in the 2006 report *Shared Surface Street Design Research Project – The Issues: Report of Focus Groups*.

Focus groups were held in various communities in England, Scotland, and Wales. General pedestrian issues in the street environment include obstructions (e.g., sandwich boards on pathways), vehicles parked on pathways, cyclists riding on pathways, lack of controlled crossings for pedestrians, lack of guardrails or barriers, lack of color contrast, and inadequate signage.

Among focus group members who are blind or partially-sighted, the lack of curb separation was particularly concerning. Because pedestrians who are blind or who have guide dogs use the separation to maintain a straight path of travel, without some form of surface differentiation between the road and the sidewalk, the dog or the pedestrian may veer into the path of vehicles.

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<sup>14</sup> The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. (2006). Shared Surface Street Design Research Project. [https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/media/2220671/Report\\_of\\_UK\\_Focus\\_Groups\\_01.pdf](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/media/2220671/Report_of_UK_Focus_Groups_01.pdf) Accessed 12 June 2015.

In the London focus group, a traveler who uses a wheelchair noted that people using wheelchairs view the pedestrian footway as a refuge or place to pause for a moment. When the pathway is removed, the person who uses a wheelchair may feel more vulnerable when traveling. Interaction with bicyclists can be as much of a concern as interacting with cars and delivery trucks. In one community in Yorkshire, changes in street furniture materials (e.g., using stainless steel that is shiny or reflective) and design elements such as replacing controlled signals with pavement markings and cross walks, caused concern for one focus group member. When controlled signals are removed, there is fear that drivers will not proceed with the same amount of caution as when signals are in place.



**Figure 6 - A pedestrian with a guide dog stands in a shared space street environment.**

Photo credit: <http://www.politics.co.uk/>

### *Focus Group Member Suggestions for Improving Shared Street Environments*

When asked about good or preferred practices in shared street environments, pedestrians suggested maintaining clear separation between pedestrians, vehicles, and cyclists. Participants who are blind or

partially-sighted and people who use wheelchairs suggested maintaining or reinstating a curb and appropriate tactile paving. Additional ideas included:

- placing signs or tactile reminders to let pedestrians and drivers know they are entering and leaving a shared surface area.
- separating cycle lanes from pedestrian pathways
- adding color contrast to designate vehicle areas from pedestrian areas
- maintaining consistency in design and layout of tactile surfaces
- keeping or adding controlled crossings
- using audible signals or information
- incorporating lamp posts that can be counted
- reinstating or keeping guardrails in areas that could be dangerous
- providing adequate opportunity for input and public involvement from the disability community before final planning and engineering decisions are made, including asking for input on *how* the consultation process with people with disabilities and older adults should work.

### *Key Findings & Steps for Moving Forward*

As a result of their discussions with the focus groups, the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association identified the following as key safety concerns for those traveling in shared space areas, whether they are pedestrians with disabilities, older adults, or are concerned about young children on shared surface streets:

- lack of demarcation between pedestrian areas and vehicle areas
- crossing points that are difficult to locate and use Road or sidewalk materials used that negatively affect orientation
- Pedestrians avoiding shared street areas or lose confidence in navigating the areas
- lack of consultation with the disability community prior to constructing shared surface street developments

Good practices for moving forward include educating local officials on how people with disabilities navigate in a street environment, recommendations for improving public involvement and consultation related to new projects or improvements to existing projects, and recommending designs that support all pedestrians in a shared street environment. As follow-up, the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association prepared a booklet on how to get involved in local planning for shared surfaces, what questions to ask, and who to contact with pedestrian concerns and questions.<sup>15</sup>

A copy of the booklet is available on the association website

[www.guidedogs.org/uk](http://www.guidedogs.org/uk).

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas, C. (Date unknown). Shared Surfaces in Town Centres: Advice on Getting Involved in the Development of Your Local Scheme. The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association.

[https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/media/1497754/Briefing\\_for\\_Local\\_Groups\\_01.pdf](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/media/1497754/Briefing_for_Local_Groups_01.pdf) Accessed 17 June 2015.

## Summary

Each of the four initiatives reviewed in this brief share similar issues and proposed solutions despite the fact that they are being implemented in diverse geographic locales. Lessons learned from each case community include:

- **Conducting public involvement early and conducting a planning or consultation process appropriate for older adults or people with disabilities is important.** In each community, residents have a sense of ownership for the roads and pathways they travel and want to have input into the design of facilities they use regularly. Both safety and aesthetics are integral to how a pedestrian views his environment and affect confidence in and enthusiasm for walking.
- **Education is a critical component of creating safe and accessible routes.** Workshops, public service announcements, information signs, and training programs are used to educate the public about safe pedestrian and motorist practices. Law enforcement personnel, bus and taxi operators, public officials, and designers also benefit from continuing education on how aging affects mobility, balance, and vision/hearing ability. Education specific to navigating a shared street environment should take place when such developments are

implemented for the first time in a community

- **Advocacy can make a difference.**

The declining rate of pedestrian fatalities and injuries in New York City indicate that change can happen. Improved conditions in that city are the result of the combined efforts of public and private agencies, as well as non-profit and business advocacy support. The increased occurrence of commuter and recreational cycling in American cities over the past five years has fueled an overall interest in safety for all who are using the roadway. Bicyclists and pedestrians still have individualized safety needs, but joint advocacy has created a stronger voice for both groups.

- **Older adults can influence their own safety.**

As this brief has noted, all actors (i.e., motorists, pedestrians, cyclists, public officials, planners, designers) have a role in creating a safe environment, and older adults have responsibilities to help make safe travel happen. Being aware of one's physical ability, looking in all directions before stepping into the street, noticing the countdown time on a pedestrian signal, paying attention to how weather conditions affect path of travel (e.g., grates that may become slippery when it is raining) and wearing visible colors or white and reflective materials at dusk or night can improve an older

adult's level of safety. Pedestrians should consider carrying a flashlight or attaching a runner/walker light to clothing. Also, alcohol or medication can affect pedestrian judgment, no matter your age.

Safe, accessible pedestrian routes affect perceptions, community attractiveness, health, and economic development. Older adults want to live in environments that are welcoming and easy to navigate. When they have a say and sense of ownership in how transportation operates in their hometown, retirement community, or vacation destination, they are more apt to participate in community events and support the local economic sector. For vacationers, they will be more inclined to return to a favored destination year after year.

For resources on how to conduct effective public involvement for older adults or how to incorporate design elements that take into consideration the needs of multiple generations, visit the websites of featured programs or the National Center on Senior Transportation.

## Resources

### Florida

Miami Alliance for Aging  
Miami, Florida

<http://www.allianceforaging.org/>

Miami Urban Health Solutions/Urban  
Health Partnerships

<http://urbanhs.com/>

Safe Steps/Pasos Seguros

<http://www.allianceforaging.org/consumers/pedestrian-safety/safe-steps-1>

### New York

Transportation Alternatives  
New York, New York

<http://www.transalt.org/>

Safe Routes for Seniors

<http://www.transalt.org/issues/pedestrian/safeseniors>

New York City Department of  
Transportation

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/pedestrians/pedestrians.shtml>

### National Center on Senior Transportation

[www.seniortransportation.net](http://www.seniortransportation.net)

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Email: [ncst@easterseals.com](mailto:ncst@easterseals.com)

### North Carolina

Currituck County North Carolina

<http://www.co.currituck.nc.us/>

Corolla Village Circulation & Wayfinding  
Plan

<http://www.co.currituck.nc.us/documents-and-plans.cfm>

### United Kingdom

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association

<http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/>

Shared Surface Street Design Reports &  
Information

<https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/supportus/campaigns/streets-ahead/information-for-street-designers-and-councils/reference-documents/#.VYLwc1LfCBo>

*The National Center on Senior Transportation is funded through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration with guidance from the U.S. Administration on Aging. NCST is administered by Easter Seals, Inc. in partnership with the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a). This information is disseminated in the interest of information exchange. Easter Seals, n4a, and the U.S. DOT, FTA do not assume liability for its content or use.*



July 2015