

## TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



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Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony concerning the Connecticut Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan update. My name is Ryan Lynch, and I am the Senior Planner and Connecticut Coordinator for Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a non-profit organization working toward a more balanced, transit-friendly and equitable transportation system in Connecticut, New York and New Jersey.

According to a Tri-State Transportation Campaign analysis, since 2005, pedestrian and cyclist fatalities, on average, have accounted for 13.3% of total traffic fatalities on Connecticut's roads. Our analysis of the 2007-2010 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), the blueprint for transportation spending in the state, shows that ConnDOT spends \$0.94 per person on pedestrian and bike projects, less than 1% of the total STIP. These are powerful indicators that highlight how little cycling and walking are perceived as viable transportation options at ConnDOT.

However, there are indications that this mentality is changing. The Connecticut General Assembly recently passed a 'Complete Streets' law which dedicates at least 1% of transportation funding to bicycle and pedestrian amenities any time a road is constructed, reconstructed and/or maintained. The bill is currently awaiting Governor Rell's signature.

ConnDOT's update of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan is an ideal opportunity to build upon growing momentum for safer cycling and walking environments. The current draft of the Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan is a good first step towards continuing this progress, but it should go further and include bolder recommendations that will ensure momentum is not lost. In order to achieve the goals set forth in the plan, we urge you to consider the following recommendations:

### **Policies and Practices**

#### *Safe Routes for Seniors and Safe Routes to Transit*

While the plan discusses the importance of Safe Routes to School, the plan misses an opportunity to call for expanding the 'Safe Routes' concept to 'Safe Routes for Seniors' and 'Safe Routes to Transit' programs. Connecticut's older pedestrians are disproportionately killed

on Connecticut's roads. Between 2005 and 2007, 31 pedestrians aged 65 years and older were killed on Connecticut roads. Though comprising just over 12 percent of the state's population, people aged 65 and older accounted for more than 25 percent of the total pedestrian fatalities during the three-year period. Those aged 75 years and older represent just 6.5 percent of the Connecticut's population, but nearly 19 percent of pedestrian deaths. A **'Safe Routes for Seniors'** program will provide for safer walking infrastructure not only for Connecticut's aging population, but for the general public. The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) recently began a pilot 'SafeSeniors' program after a Tri-State report identified, much like Connecticut, that New York's seniors were disproportionately impacted by unsafe walking environments.

Correctly, the plan identifies that many, if not all, trips in Connecticut begin or end with the trip-taker as a pedestrian. Often that trip is the final leg to a transit stop. A **'Safe Routes to Transit'** program would encourage transit use by creating safe transit access and egress points for transit riders. The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) runs a successful program, 'Safe Streets to Transit', which provides the nearly 30% of residents that live within a half-mile of a transit stop a safer trip. The Connecticut Bike and Pedestrian Plan should include a similar program in its final recommendations.

### *Metrics*

In order to accurately measure Connecticut's commitment to bicycle and pedestrian improvements, specific, measurable metrics should be developed. For example, the State should commit to building 70 new miles a year of bicycle infrastructure over the next five years. New York City followed a similar implementation schedule over the past three years, creating 200 new miles of bicycle lanes. As a result, New York City, over the past year, has recently seen an increase in cycling by 35%.

A measurement, or clear definition, that would identify exactly what a bicycle and/or pedestrian project is would also be a useful metric and should be called for in the plan. For example, Tri-State Transportation's analysis of STIP funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects and assertions in the Connecticut Bike and Pedestrian Plan do not line up, perhaps because of varying definitions what constitutes a bicycle or pedestrian project. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan indicates that 3% of all dollars are spent on these types of projects, while our analysis indicates the number is much less, accounting for only .9% of all transportation funding.

To show that ConnDOT is promoting cycling and intermodalism, the plan should also call for bike racks at **all** Connecticut Metro-North stations.

### *Bikes on Trains/Bike Share*

Allowing bicycles on trains at all times should be the policy of Metro-North in Connecticut and the plan should reflect this goal. The soon to arrive M-8 train cars should include amenities that allows bicycle storage at all times. If this is not possible, the plan should recommend that ConnDOT implement a bicycle sharing program at train stations along the Metro-North Connecticut lines. A similar program, **SmartBike DC**, has been implemented in Washington, DC.

Connecticut could be a leader in this regard by recommending the first state-wide (to our knowledge) bike share program.

#### *Transportation-Land Use Connection*

The plan fails to recommend that ConnDOT begin to link its transportation system investments to smart land use development patterns, like transit-oriented development, new urbanism and smart growth. Responsible growth measures promote walk-ability and environments that are conducive to safe cycling.

The plan should also place a greater emphasis upon urban cycling as a means of transportation and not just as a form of recreation. There is much discussion of greenways and recreational trails but limited discussion concerning incorporating bicycle or pedestrian infrastructure into existing roadways. The plan should recognize the recent passage of 'Complete Streets' legislation and urge ConnDOT to utilize the listed exemptions in the legislation rarely, if at all.

#### *Technical Support*

The current staffing structure at ConnDOT for bicycling and pedestrian related initiatives is inadequate. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator position should be elevated to a more appropriate level within ConnDOT and should be staffed accordingly. This move would show that ConnDOT takes bicycling and walking seriously as viable transportation options, as well as serve to build institutional capacity within ConnDOT which would allow for broader implementation of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects.

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian Funding**

#### *Funding Targets*

While the plan urges funding targets for future investment in pedestrian and cyclist improvements, it fails to tie specific numbers to its recommendations. Incorporating specific funding numbers into the final draft of the plan would be a strong statement and would formally acknowledge that bicycle and pedestrian improvements are woefully underfunded. For example, the plan should urge ConnDOT to **designate at least 10% of Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) and 10% of Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds** to bicycle and pedestrian programs. The goal of HSIP funds is to improve safety on our roadways. Given that deaths involving pedestrians and bicyclists in Connecticut have accounted for 13.3% of all traffic fatalities since 2005, it makes sense to have HSIP funds distributed in a corresponding manner. CMAQ funds are intended to reduce congestion and improve air quality, and are appropriate funding streams for pollution free modes of travel like biking and walking.

Based on Connecticut's FY2009 transportation dollar apportionment, we estimate that this would produce \$4.5 million for biking and walking programs. This is a modest investment given the size of ConnDOT's entire capital program, and would go a long way towards creating a safer environment for our children, baby-boomers, transit riders, and the public in general.

Pre-designation of HSIP funds is not unprecedented. The Virginia Department of Transportation pre-designates 10% of its HSIP funds to bicycling and pedestrian projects, perhaps one of the reasons it is ranked 21 spots higher than Connecticut on the League of American Bicyclists 2009 Bike Friendly State rankings. The National Association of City Transportation Officials is also requesting that 10% of CMAQ funds be dedicated towards biking and walking programs in the next federal transportation bill.

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety**

#### *Enforcement*

The plan, while referencing the *Connecticut's Drivers Manual* responsibilities when encountering cyclists on roads, fails to urge greater enforcement of motorists who disregard these rules. The Bike and Pedestrian Plan should recommend that State and Municipal police **fully enforce** existing rules and laws. Doing so will create safer environments all users of Connecticut's roads; pedestrians, cyclists and motorists alike.

The plan should also urge elected officials to support red-light cameras, a technology that has been proven to create a safer cycling and pedestrian atmosphere by slowing and catching speeding automobiles that create dangerous environments for these uses.

These are but a few of the many recommendations that can be included in the Connecticut Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan. We hope that they are taken into consideration and adopted into the final draft of the plan.