



Written Testimony by Tri-State Transportation Campaign for NYS Assembly Standing Committee on Transportation Monday, October 3, 2022

Re: NYS must assess, reexamine, and expand upon 2011 Complete Streets Act

Good morning. My name is Liam Blank, I am the Policy & Communications Manager for Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a non-profit organization fighting for sustainable mobility in the New York City Metro Area. Today, I'm testifying to support enhancing and optimizing New York's 2011 Complete Streets Act to provide stronger and more robust roadway design guidelines that will protect vulnerable roadway users, improve public safety, and increase community value throughout the State.

The first thing I'd like to discuss is New York's bicyclist and pedestrian fatality problem – *crisis*, I would actually call it. Pedestrian fatalities in particular are on the rise in New York State – according to the Governors Highway Safety Association, crashes killing pedestrians increased 46% from 2010 to 2020. Even more alarming, New York State had a 30% increase in pedestrian fatalities in the first six months of 2021, compared to 2020. That's a rise of 30 more people — from 101 killed in the first six months of 2020 to 131 in the same period in 2021. This year, pedestrian fatalities hit a 40-year-high. The State needs to leverage everything that works — infrastructure improvements, changes to road design, equitable enforcement of traffic safety laws and community outreach — to reverse this deadly trend and make our roadways safe for people walking, biking and rolling.

Complete Streets is an approach to planning, designing and building streets that enables safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. This approach also emphasizes the needs of those who have experienced systemic underinvestment, or those whose needs have not been met through a traditional transportation approach, such as older adults, people living with disabilities, people who don't have access to vehicles, and Black, Native, and Hispanic or Latino communities. *Incomplete* streets, which lack some or all of the aforementioned design features, are the result of a process that fails to consider the needs of all people, and outdated measures of what makes a street successful.



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The end product is a street that spans a spectrum from uncomfortable to downright deadly for those not using a car.

As defined by New York's [2011 Complete Streets Act](#), there are 13 Complete Street design features: sidewalks, paved shoulders suitable for use by bicyclists, lane striping, bicycle lanes, signage, crosswalks, road diets, pedestrian control signalization, signals and delineation, bus pull-outs, curb cuts, ramps, traffic-calming measures, and raised crosswalks.

Engineering safe streets is the most important element to reducing the number of people injured and killed on New York's (and the nation's) roads. Complete streets have shown to reduce serious injuries and fatalities by 15% to 30%, depending on the treatments deployed. For example, a commonly practiced "road diet" – reducing lanes from 4 to 3 – leads to a 25.2% reduction in crash frequency per mile. A 2016 NYS Department of Transportation study examining the impact of Complete Streets in Buffalo found that pedestrian injuries were reduced at every intersection in the City that implemented Complete Streets features.

New York's 2011 Complete Streets Act was a great step forward at the time it was signed, but it is now over a decade old. The current law has no doubt made some roads across the State safer, but over 1,000 New Yorkers still die in crashes each year. New York needs faster statewide and local implementation of Complete Streets to blunt and reverse this worsening trajectory. Currently, there are three bills that, if signed in to law, will strengthen the existing Complete Street law. Each of these bills are key to giving communities the necessary resources and guidance to make their streets safer, and saving lives.

Presently, the 2011 Complete Street Act applies only to state roads that are being "constructed, reconstructed, or rehabilitated," which means it can be applied only to a relatively small number of major projects. The Complete Street Maintenance bill (S5130/A7782) would lower the project size threshold for applicable projects going forward. With the passage of this bill, road projects that are designated "maintenance, repaving, or recycling" in nature would also trigger the provisions of the 2011 Complete Streets Act. This bill will not add onerous or restrictive requirements for localities. Instead, it will provide ease and support for localities looking to implement more street design projects that make sense for that community.

The Complete Streets Application bill (S3897/A8936) will expand the provisions of the 2011 Complete Streets Act to also cover applications for local and county road projects. Contrary to



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popular belief, this will not require every rural road to build new features, such as sidewalks, which, if it were true, would be a burdensome and expensive undertaking for many communities. Complete Streets guidelines are context-sensitive, and therefore, do not require all Complete Streets features to be included in every road project regardless of type of road and volume of traffic.

Lastly, the Complete Streets Funding bill (S3897/A8936) will empower municipalities to undertake complete streets projects by reducing their cost-share of federally funded transportation projects if the municipality agrees to build complete streets features. This legislation empowers municipalities to make their communities safer and allows them to build these features without risking federal transportation aid.

Complete Streets is the strongest and most effective tool that we have in our toolbox to make New York communities safer and reduce the number of bicyclist and pedestrian fatalities. We are calling on the State to assess, reexamine, and expand upon the 2011 Complete Streets Act so that all the benefits can be derived, and instill a statewide adoption of Complete Streets principles so that these life-saving roadway design features are included in all road and bridge projects. Every single project should be vetted through the Complete Streets process, and every single project should have some component of Complete Streets – obviously, context-sensitive. But that should be where we start when we're looking at road projects throughout the State.

And just one final thought. Transportation is a system. It consists of a network of roads, bridges, public transportation networks, sidewalks, and bike lanes. In order for that system to work, all modes require attention and priority. Not one mode of transportation in New York can absorb and take on the burden of the other; thus it will take all modes working together, and working efficiently, to keep people moving in all corners of the State. So, I thank you very much for the opportunity to provide testimony today. And I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

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Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a 501(c)(3) non-profit policy and advocacy organization fighting for sustainable mobility in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. [Learn more.](#)



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