



New Jersey Governor's Pedestrian Safety Initiative



Problem

New Jersey's pedestrian fatality rate consistently exceeds the national average. Although the number of fatalities fluctuates, in a typical year about 150 pedestrians are killed statewide. The persistence of the problem led the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to designate New Jersey as a Pedestrian Safety Focus State.

Background

The pedestrian safety problem had concerned state officials for some time; a variety of programs were put in place over the years in an attempt to address it. In the summer of 2006, the issue moved front and center as the new transportation commissioner and the governor of New Jersey embraced a major action agenda for pedestrian safety. Drawing on a recently completed NJ Department of Transportation (NJDOT) pedestrian safety policy study, a comprehensive interagency initiative was devised to attack the issue on multiple fronts. Along with NJDOT, the governor's office engaged the Department of Law and Public Safety and the Motor Vehicle Commission as partners in this effort, which was announced to the public in September 2006.

The new initiative reflects the finding that New Jersey's most severe pedestrian crashes are not usually concentrated at individual "hot spots," but are spread out along corridors. Although NJDOT has made good progress in applying countermeasures to the state's highest pedestrian crash intersections, analysis showed that most of the fatal pedestrian crashes were occurring between intersections. For this reason, NJDOT applied a corridor-level approach and designed a new Pedestrian Safety Corridor program as a central part of the initiative. The initiative also recognizes the importance of strengthening education and enforcement concerning pedestrian safety. The role of automobile-oriented land use patterns as a pedestrian risk factor was also recognized, along with the particular pedestrian risks faced by New Jersey's schoolchildren and transit users.

Solution

In September 2006 Governor Jon Corzine announced an unprecedented five-year, \$74 million program to reduce pedestrian risks throughout the state by combining infrastructure improvements with enforcement and educational strategies. Resources are being targeted to areas of greatest need, based on improved data management systems that allow the state to monitor and map statewide pedestrian safety patterns. The following sections provide an overview of each element of the program.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY CORRIDOR PROGRAM

A key element of the initiative is the Pedestrian Safety Corridor program, which targets selected corridors with a history of pedestrian safety problems for investigation and improvement. This program was modeled in part on an existing Safe Corridors program enacted in New Jersey in 2003, which couples intensive enforcement with engineering countermeasures for highway segments with high motor vehicle crash rates. The program design also drew on the experience of other states with corridor-based pedestrian safety programs, as well as federal guidance on zone-based approaches to pedestrian safety (Zone Guide for Pedestrian Safety, NHTSA/FHWA, 1998).

For each designated corridor, safety impact teams made up of engineering professionals and local stakeholders work together to develop improvement concepts, including facility improvements and educational and

New Jersey Governor's Pedestrian Safety Initiative — State of New Jersey

enforcement strategies targeted to area pedestrians and motorists. The safety impact teams work in a concentrated fashion during a day-long session that combines an overview of corridor safety issues, a field visit to walk the most critical areas of the corridor, and a group brainstorming session to identify potential improvement measures. Improvement concepts are then organized in a matrix and reviewed by the appropriate technical staff at NJDOT and in follow-up discussions with local officials. After identifying local priorities, a determination is made on which measures NJDOT will fund, study further, or implement directly with in-house forces.

Initial corridors include Ferry Street in Newark, Route 70 in Cherry Hill, and Route 27 in Roselle, Linden and Elizabeth. Facility improvement measures that have been funded or are under consideration include sidewalk installation, crosswalk and pedestrian signal improvements including countdown timers, traffic calming measures, lighting improvements, and bus stop relocation. Local educational efforts include school-based outreach in Newark and targeted outreach to area residents along the Route 27 corridor.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

NJDOT has also created a \$50 million fund specifically designated for pedestrian safety improvement projects over a five-year period. Safety projects at eight locations are under development, including sidewalk construction, curb ramps, crosswalks, traffic calming, signage, and pedestrian countdown signals.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

Another key element of the initiative is the state's Safe Routes to School program. This program allots \$15 million to local governments, enabling them to create safer walking (and bicycling) environments near schools and to increase pedestrian safety awareness among schoolchildren and motorists. NJDOT has held information workshops on the program throughout the state and is selecting locations for the first round of program funds. The program has attracted a high level of interest: over half of New Jersey's municipalities have submitted applications.

SAFE STREETS TO TRANSIT PROGRAM

New Jersey's high rate of transit commuting (double the national average) is thought to be a factor in pedestrian exposure to motor vehicle crashes. For this reason, the governor's initiative includes a \$5 million effort to reduce pedestrian risks around transit stations by developing and funding facility improvements in priority locations.

PEDESTRIAN LAW ENFORCEMENT

Enforcement strategies are an integral part of the Pedestrian Safety Initiative. The New Jersey attorney general is working with local law enforcement agencies to more vigorously enforce and prosecute the laws currently in place to protect pedestrian safety. The attorney general will collaborate with local and county prosecutors to ensure prosecution of failure-to-yield violations and to reduce the plea bargaining and downgrading of such offenses that has frequently occurred in the past. The attorney general, through the Division of Highway and Traffic Safety, will also issue \$1.5 million in grants to state and local law enforcement agencies for targeted enforcement and educational efforts. New, stronger legislation is also being considered to protect pedestrians.

For more information, please visit the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center Web site at www.walkinginfo.org.



New Jersey Governor's Pedestrian Safety Initiative — State of New Jersey

IMPROVED DRIVER EDUCATION

The initiative also includes an emphasis on improved driver education. The New Jersey drivers' manual is being completely rewritten to incorporate clear, forceful information on the responsibilities of both motorists and pedestrians. New test questions on the responsibilities of motorists and pedestrians are being added to the drivers' exam. A driver education curriculum is also under development.

RISK PREVENTION THROUGH PEDESTRIAN PLANNING

New Jersey's predominantly automobile-oriented suburban land use patterns create a challenge for many pedestrians, especially for non-drivers who live or work along major highways. For this reason, the governor's initiative includes a pedestrian risk prevention strategy tied to the state highway access permit process. The need for pedestrian safety improvements will be considered as developers apply for access permits along state highways. NJDOT will also continue to implement its longstanding pedestrian policy, which calls for consideration of pedestrian needs in all highway improvement projects.

Results

Since the governor's initiative is in the early stages, numerical results are not yet available. Each element of the program is being monitored to determine its effectiveness over time. Each pedestrian safety corridor will be studied once implementation is complete; crash results will be compared with those before the intervention. The Safe Routes to School program also includes a monitoring process. Records will also be kept on the number of new drivers educated under the improved driver training and licensing program and on pedestrian enforcement activities.

One early success is a significant increase in interagency coordination to address pedestrian safety as a shared problem. For example, NJDOT and NJ Transit are working together to expedite priority pedestrian improvements in the vicinity of bus stops on the pedestrian safety corridors. Collaboration between NJDOT and local governments has been extremely productive; in several cases, local governments have implemented safety impact team recommendations on their own initiative before receiving any state funding. The Division of Highway Traffic Safety under the attorney general's office will conduct a statewide pedestrian safety marketing and education program. The state's ability to adapt existing programs and funding sources on an expedited basis to meet a critical need is another indication of early success.

As the nation's most densely populated state, New Jersey will likely face continued challenges in safely accommodating pedestrians. The governor's initiative shows what can be done with program champions at the top levels of government, effective interagency collaboration, and active local partnerships.

Costs

The \$74 million Governor's Pedestrian Safety Initiative is funded with a combination of State Transportation Trust fund dollars and federal SAFETEA-LU money. All programs other than Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program were funded with NJ State Transportation Trust Fund dollars. SRTS is funded with federal transportation dollars.

For more information, please visit the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center Web site at www.walkinginfo.org.



Web sites and resources

NJDOT: <http://www.state.nj.us/transportation>

NJ Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center: <http://www.njbikeped.org>

Guidance on zone-based approach to pedestrian safety:

U.S. Department of Transportation. (1998). *Zone Guide for Pedestrian Safety* (DOT HS 808 842). http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/PED_BIKE/docs/zoneguide.pdf

See also “How to Develop a Pedestrian Safety Action Plan, 2006”: <http://www.walkinginfo.org/library/details.cfm?id=229>

On developing a pedestrian safety action plan workshop:

“Designing Streets for Pedestrian Safety” <http://www.walkinginfo.org/training/pdps/>

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