



Pedestrian Safety Planning Group



Problem

Despite being one of the most walkable suburbs in New York State's Capital District with over 25 miles of sidewalk, the town had 44 pedestrian crashes over a seven year period, three of which resulting in fatalities.

Background

Community interest in addressing key pedestrian safety issues increased, especially following a local presentation of the USDOT "Pedestrian Safety Road Show." The Bethlehem Citizens for Pedestrian Safety formed a planning group that met regularly to address the issues. Participants consisted of a broad spectrum of actors, including the Town Supervisor, Town Board members, Planner, Highway Superintendent and Highway Department staff, the Police Department Traffic Safety unit supervisor, the NYSDOT Pedestrian/Bicycle Coordinator, and the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC). The group was also supported by the local school district and several neighborhood associations. Expert members of the group took field explorations to review various locations for improvement that the Town Planner used to develop a document to guide decisions and prioritize improvements.

Solution

The group's efforts resulted in several projects, including structural improvements, education initiatives, data gathering, and more. Over two miles of new sidewalks were installed to bridge gaps and extend to common destinations (such as the school). New pavement markings — including at crosswalks — were installed by taking advantage of the routine maintenance cycle to request additional work.

"WALK LEFT/RIDE RIGHT" signs were installed around the town, and additional refrigerator magnet versions of the sign were distributed to promote the effort. Other educational efforts included the distribution of general pedestrian safety flyers at major community events, and an evaluation of compliance in various locations to the "Yield to Pedestrians in Crosswalks" law.

Cost to the planning group itself was minimal, consisting only of mailing expenses. The town absorbed the expense of having town employees participate in the meetings. Capital improvement costs were covered by either the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) or NYSDOT, and ranged from \$1,300,000 to \$7,000,000 for bypass reconstruction and the addition of sidewalks, shoulders and more.

Results

The group met with and gave recommendations to NYSDOT's Regional Design Engineer regarding things that could be included in the Capital District Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). The relationship between the two is ongoing. The Pedestrian Safety Planning Group was successful in realizing its goals and serves as a model of effective government-citizen partnerships.

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