Safe Routes for Seniors: Improving Walkability for Seniors in New York City

Active Living Research Annual Conference, February 9-11, 2010
Our mission is to reclaim New York City's streets from the automobile, and to advocate for bicycling, walking and public transit as the best transportation alternatives.
• Non-profit
• Established in 1973
• 8,000 members
• 25,000 street activists
• Thousands of volunteers
• 16 full-time staff
New York City:
6,000 miles of streets
Over 12,000 miles of sidewalks
= 80% of NYC’s public space

Source: New York City Department of Transportation 2008
New York City Seniors:
12% of all population
yet 39% of all pedestrian fatalities

Source: United States 2000 Census; NYC Department for the Aging; NYC Department of Transportation
Safer streets positively impact the entire population.

Pedestrian injury severity vs. vehicle impact speed

Obesity falls sharply with increased walking, cycling, and transit use!

Why focus on Seniors and Transportation

- **Why**: Although seniors are 12% of the population in NYC, they represent 39% of pedestrian injuries and fatalities.

- **Why**: Because by 2030 there will be 44% more seniors (1.35 million seniors).

- **Why**: Because if we design streets for seniors it improves public health and encourages active aging.

- **Why**: Because if we design streets for seniors it improves safety for all pedestrians.
T.A.’s Safe Routes for Seniors

- T.A. worked with local seniors on identifying walking obstacles in eight Manhattan neighborhoods.
- Target elected officials by committing resources to politically defined districts.
Goals

• Learn from local seniors about local walking obstacles and remove those obstacles
• Infrastructure designed specifically for seniors (Traffic Calming)
• ADA compliant recommendations
• Encouragement of active aging
The process

- Identify and select senior local partners
- Senior center outreach
- Seniors map routes and hazards
- Survey seniors for obstacles and destinations
- Map all crashes
- Collate crashes/hazards and input from seniors
- Site tours with seniors and elected officials
- Design recommendations
- Implementation
- Build community support / advocate!
Crash analysis help identify potential study areas

From Crashstat.org
Pedestrian barriers lower senior activity

Manhattan Senior Survey Results (N=241)

Do these problems make it difficult for you to get to where you need to go? NR=37, N=204

Yes 46% (95)

Have the identified problems discouraged you from walking?

Yes 31.6% (63)

Would you walk more if these problems were fixed? NR=49, N=192

Yes 72.3% (139)
Where do seniors walk in their neighborhood?

Manhattan Senior Survey Results (N=241)

Do you walk regularly to the following places?

- Grocery Store/Supermarket, N=215: 96.2% (207)
- Senior Centers, N=224: 94.2% (211)
- Other Shopping, N=170: 81.7% (139)
- Train Stops/Stations, N=196: 80.6% (150)
- Church/Religious Activity, N=177: 76.2% (135)
- Park, N=169: 73.9% (125)
- School, N=125: 32% (40)

How do you prefer to do your daily travels? NR=19, N=222

- Bus: 65.3% (145)
- Walking: 48.1% (107)
- Subway: 22.9% (51)
- Private Vehicle: 7.2% (16)
- Access-A-Ride: 5% (12)
Threat

Turning cars during intimidating crossing pedestrians
Solution

Slow Down Turning Cars.
Give people lead time to cross before cars.
Threat

Unsafe Curb Ramps
Solution

Better Curb Ramps
Threat

Long crossing distances with short crossing times
Solution

Shorten the crossing distance with refuge islands and curb extensions.

Lengthen the pedestrian crossing time.
Threat

Wide Streets Promote Speeding
Solution

Narrower Streets Slow Down Traffic. Excess Street Width can become Wider Sidewalks or Public Spaces.
Reports are an advocacy tool

Street Design Recommendations
Washington Heights, 2004

Street Design Recommendations
Nagle Avenue, Inwood, 2005

Discriminatory by Design
A senior citizen focused study of streets and intersections on New York City’s Upper East Side.
Prepared by Rachel Krug for Transportation Alternatives
December, 2005

Upper East Side, 2006

Transportation Alternatives
Safe Routes for Seniors
February 2005

Upper West Side, 2007

City-wide policy, 2008
Case study

20th Street and 1st Avenue
BEFORE
Improvements Implemented

20th Street and 1st Avenue
AFTER
Improvements

20th St and 1st Ave

• Realignment of Crosswalk

• Leading Pedestrian Intervals

• Service Road Closure

• ADA-Compliant Curb-cut Ramps

• New Gardens

• New Public Space
On the ground change

- 65 pedestrian safety improvements, such as Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPIs) and ADA curbs
- Safer streets for over 26,000 seniors (Census 2000)
- Expanded DOT Safe Streets for Seniors coverage areas (Lincoln Center NORC successfully advocated to the DOT to expand the UWS area)
City-Wide Safe Streets for Seniors Study Areas

- **2008 Pilot Areas:**
  - Fordham/University Heights
  - Brighton Beach
  - Lower East Side
  - Flushing/Murray Hill
  - New Dorp/Hylan Boulevard

- **2009 Study Areas:**
  - Mott Haven
  - Pelham Gardens
  - East Concourse
  - Borough Park
  - Bensonhurst
  - Sheepshead Bay
  - Midwood
  - Greenpoint
  - East Flatbush
  - Clinton
  - Washington Heights
  - Hamilton Heights
  - Upper West Side
  - Upper East Side
  - Stuyvesant Park
  - Chelsea
  - Jackson Heights
  - Jamaica Hills
  - Rego Park
  - Sunnyside

Sources: NYCDOT
Almost…

• 25 senior pedestrian improvement areas identified
• Program offers basic, minimum level of pedestrian safety – curb cuts and signal timing
• Program can go much further in improving street safety for seniors

Sources: Campaign for New York’s Future, NYMTC, NYCDOT Sustainable Streets Index, 2008
THANK YOU!

Transportation Alternatives

www.transalt.org

Shin-pei Tsay
Deputy Director

shinpei@transalt.org

646-873-6023

127 W 26th Street Suite 1002
New York, NY 10001