



# BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY FOR ALL AGES

## BREAKING DOWN POLICY BARRIERS ACROSS JURISDICTIONS

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## Objective:

Understand the causes of safe (or unsafe) walking and cycling in different areas and suggest innovative, affordable ideas that go beyond usual policy methods.

## Methodology:

- Expert and stakeholder interviews
- Cyclist and pedestrian crash mapping
- Cross-jurisdictional policy review
- Case study review
- Traffic safety recommendations

## Findings:

According to the team's preliminary studies, the City of Ithaca presents the highest concentration of pedestrian and cyclist crashes. However, much smaller communities in the region also present numerous incidents and, in proportion, their traffic safety conditions might be equally severe.

A large number of pedestrian and cyclist crashes took place along state roads, including Route 13, Route 96, Route 34, and Route 79. Many of these incidents occurred near age-sensitive locations such as schools, cafés, and places of worship.

## The Problem: Separate Management

Interviews with stakeholders and existing conditions analysis revealed that recurring obstacles to pedestrian and cyclist safety are often caused by roads being managed by different jurisdictions. In the case of Tompkins County, many unsafe, high-speed state routes cut through small municipalities, oftentimes becoming the “main street” in the community. Since the state maintains these roads, only the state department of transportation can approve traffic calming measures.

## Speak Up for Safety

The process of approving traffic calming measures on state roads can be complex and lengthy. However, the state is more likely to consider traffic calming solutions when there is significant support and input from the community. Some of the conditions that the state takes into account before approving traffic calming measures include the following:

- Stakeholders have previously and continuously requested traffic calming.
- Locals aspire to have a more livable community through controlled traffic and diverse modes of transportation.
- Both the community and the local government support the implementation of traffic calming.
- Traffic crashes involving pedestrians and cyclists have taken place along the road in question.
- The state road functions as the main street of the community.
- Inappropriate driver behavior has become a consistent problem.



# Recommendations:

The state suggests considering the installation of “temporary, more forgiving traffic calming measures” as a transition into permanent infrastructures. Below are some low-cost traffic safety measures that are quick to install and easily reversible. These solutions have been implemented in suburban and rural areas similar to communities in Tompkins County. Some communities use small grants to encourage local residents to implement these low cost programs.

## Physical infrastructure interventions:

- **Community-painted crosswalks:** The main purpose of community-painted crosswalks is to improve pedestrian safety at crossings. They are also opportunities for public art, town beautification, and public engagement with safety issues.
- **Temporary curb extensions:** These allow city planners and engineers to experiment with curb extension locations that allow pedestrians more space to walk. They can even be used semi-permanently.



Community-painted crosswalks



Temporary curb extensions

## Behavior modification interventions:

- **Annual age-friendly pedestrian and cyclist audits:** In these audits, children and older adults, alongside planners and engineers, walk and/or cycle through their communities and highlight areas that make them feel safe or unsafe. These audits are very helpful in informing future transportation projects.
- **Reflective garment/clip-on light distribution:** Community centers in some municipalities distribute free reflective garments and/or clip-on lights to pedestrians and cyclists with the goal of being more visible to drivers, especially after dark. Potential distributors include schools, libraries, senior centers, fire and police departments, universities, and hospitals.



Age-friendly pedestrian and cyclist audits



Reflective garment distribution

## SUCCESS STORY: THE DRYDEN RAIL TRAIL

The Dryden Rail Trail is a multiuse trail that has gained great state government support. Over the past few years, this project was allowed to cut through state-owned land, managed to get speed limit reductions approved by the state, and obtained a \$1.5 million state grant to build a pedestrian bridge over New York State Route 13. The success of this rail trail can be largely attributed to the following characteristics:

- **Alignment with state government objectives:** State administrations have increasingly prioritized projects that provide alternative modes of transportation that are more sustainable. The rail trail specifically connects cyclists and pedestrians to major employers in the region, which perfectly aligns with state goals.
- **Community support:** Parents usually seek communities that offer safe public spaces for their children, while older adults often prefer peaceful places to retire. Projects like the Dryden Rail Trail, which are aimed at achieving safe mobility and public spaces, are likely to receive community support.