



Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board

Volunteer board members advising agencies of the state on policies, programs, and facilities for bicycles and pedestrians.

2800 Berlin Turnpike • Newington, CT 06111-4113



January 28, 2022

Honorable Governor Ned Lamont

Legislative Transportation Committee Chairs, Honorable Roland Lemar, and Honorable Will Haskell

Legislative Transportation Committee Members

Commissioner Joseph Giulietti

Dear Governor Lamont, Transportation Committee Chairs and Members, and Commissioner Giulietti,

Established under the Complete Streets Law (CGS Section 13b-13a), the Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board is required to submit an annual report to all of you that outlines a) the progress made by state agencies in improving the environment for bicycling and walking in the state; b) recommendations for improvements to state policies and procedures related to bicycling and walking; and c) specific actions taken by the Department of Transportation (DOT) in the preceding year that affect the pedestrian and cyclist environment. This letter serves as our report on progress in 2021.

Since the Complete Streets legislation was enacted in 2009, the state has made continual progress in improving conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians. With disheartening fatality data for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motor vehicle drivers over the past two years, however, we know that much more needs to be done. **At this point, residents of the State of Connecticut have essential questions to be answered: Will Connecticut redouble its efforts to address safety of vulnerable road users with complete streets improvements? Will Connecticut utilize the incoming Federal funds from the Infrastructure bill to fund these improvements? Are we willing to make investments that will enable individuals to choose modes of transport other than an automobile and that support those individuals who already rely upon bicycling and walking as their affordable means of travel? Will encouraging more bicycling and walking be part of Connecticut's solution to climate change?**

The Governor has issued an executive order (21-3, issued December 16, 2021) that requires the DOT to set goals for vehicle miles of travel (VMT) reductions by 2030 and to develop a plan of investments to contribute to and encourage the achievement of such targeted reductions. Achieving reductions in VMT will require that transit, bicycling and walking all become more viable for more people in the state. In order to increase the number of people walking and bicycling, walking and bicycling need to be safe options. Making walking and bicycling safe options requires an approach with three focus areas:

- **Facilities:** In order to make bicycling and walking possible transportation choices for more people, the state needs walking and bicycling networks that provide for some separation



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from motor vehicle traffic. This includes sidewalks, bicycle lanes, separated bicycle lanes, pathways, and crossings. Research has shown that a large number of people (as many as 60%) would consider bicycling if bicycle facilities provided for positive separation from traffic, whether using parked cars, barriers, curbs, medians, or planters. Separation is particularly needed in urban areas where roads are narrow and traffic is heavy.

- **Education** of both drivers and those who walk and bike. Drivers need to understand their responsibilities when operating around bicyclists and pedestrians. Bicyclists and pedestrians need to know how to safely operate on the roads.
- **Enforcement:** Driver behavior is one of the largest deterrents to biking and walking, and since the pandemic, driver behavior has become more of a problem, with speeding on urban, suburban, and rural roads very prevalent. Additionally, during the pandemic traffic enforcement has dropped by 60%, based upon infractions issued.

With the above in mind, the following sections outline progress made in the past year with complete streets, and specific actions to accomplish the above listed focus areas.

PROGRESS

During 2021 the following progress has been made:

Legislation

- **Public Act 21-28** addressing a variety of traffic safety issues was enacted. Amongst its provisions, this statute clarifies when a motorist is to yield to pedestrians crossing a roadway; establishes a Vision Zero Council with a goal of reducing traffic fatalities to zero; requires that the Office of State Traffic Administration consider bicycle and pedestrian safety when reviewing major traffic generators; requires that motor vehicle operators exercise a degree of care when opening doors into traffic; increases to \$25 the amount of moving violation fines that are returned by the state to municipalities; allows municipalities rather than the Office of State Traffic Administration, to set speeds upon local roadways; and allows municipalities to establish pedestrian safety zones, where speeds may be set as low as 20 mph.
- A pilot for the **use of cameras to enforce speeding in work zones** was included in the budget implementer bill. Enforcement of speeds using cameras has been shown to have a very positive effect upon speeds in other states, particularly in school zones. This first pilot may pave the way for broader implementation in the future.
- **Public Act 21-29** which addresses land use was enacted. This statute establishes a Commission on Connecticut's Development and Future, which, among other things, is charged with the development of a design manual for context-appropriate streets and procedures to expedite the approval of such streets, by 2023. Contingent on the outcome, such a manual may address the longtime need for engineering guidance appropriate for neighborhood streets beyond that contained in the state's current Highway Design Manual.
- At the federal level, a comprehensive transportation reauthorization bill was passed into law as the **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act**. The statute substantially increases overall federal investment in surface transportation by 37.8% in fiscal year 2022 (vs. 2021), with



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additional growth in future years. Beneficiaries of this law of interest to pedestrians and cyclists include the existing Transportation Alternatives Program (+62.8% in the first year) and the Highway Safety Improvement Program (+23.8%), as well as several new programs (Reconnecting Communities Pilot, Healthy Streets Program). While most of these programs are distributed by formula, over \$100 billion in transportation funding during the 5-year life of the law will be distributed on a discretionary basis; the extent to which these funds flow to Connecticut depends on the degree to which Connecticut and its regions are able to submit successful grant applications under the respective programs.

Department of Transportation efforts

- The DOT continued its **Community Connectivity Grant Program**, issuing grant awards of up to \$600,000 to 10 communities for a total granted in 2021 of \$4,899,315. In 2021 previously awarded Community Connectivity projects were completed in 12 communities, for a total spent in 2021 of \$3.8 million. To date, 19 projects have been completed, and 23 are under construction. 87 projects have received grant awards to date. The Community Connectivity program provides funds for projects that will improve bike and pedestrian safety. With a limit on total grant award of \$600,000, these are generally smaller intersection focused projects or roadway striping (for bike lanes) projects. A notable project funded under this program is the downtown roundabout constructed in Norwich. Based upon CTDOT's summary of these projects, there is a need to expedite projects and better assist communities to utilize these funds, perhaps at the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO or Council of Governments) level.
- **DOT repaving projects** appear to have had mixed impacts upon bicycling safety.
 - As in previous years, as part of repaving projects, the DOT considers narrowing travel lanes to 11 feet to maximize shoulder width. Of 220 miles repaved in 2021, 198 miles were provided with narrower travel lanes than had existed previously. Another note of interest with regard to the repaving program: when a state roadway is repaved, the state will provide all restriping required but will NOT mark bike lanes, additional crosswalks, or sharrows. These are 100% the responsibility of the municipality, for installation and maintenance. ***This seems to be in opposition to a complete streets policy which provides for all users of the roadway.***
 - The DOT also undertook a new program for repaving some rural highways, utilizing chip and seal. This new program was implemented without consideration of its impact upon cycling routes. The chip seal results in a very rough surface in the shoulder area which is very difficult to bicycle, causing cyclists to choose alternate routes that have more traffic. After lengthy discussions between the Board and the DOT maintenance department, maintenance has agreed to test a procedure used in Massachusetts, which applies an overlay to the shoulders of chip sealed roads to keep them bikeable.
- The state's Active Transportation Plan, adopted in 2019, identified the **12 locations statewide that were most unsafe for pedestrians and bicyclists**. In 2021, DOT updated scoping documents related to these locations and 5 are under further study or in design.



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- DOT is evaluating **options for improved bicycle and pedestrian access on the Gold Star Bridge**. The Board has urged the DOT to make this process more open to public input and to move it along more quickly.
- DOT has continued to make progress with **pedestrian improvements to Route 1**.
- The DOT, with local governments and federal funds, spent \$7.5 million in 2021 for **multi-use trail construction** and the following sections of trail opened:
 - Riverwalk segments 3 and 4 (Ansonia)
 - Airline Trail crossings (Putnam and Pomfret)
- DOT continued its annual investment of \$5 million for **updates of curb ramps** in compliance with its FHWA approved ADA Transition Plan.
- DOT **constructed 3.5 miles of sidewalk**.
- DOT conducted 3 **Road Safety Audits** on a total of 7 miles of state roads.
- **Watch for Me CT**: DOT has continued to fund the Watch for Me CT educational campaign that provides information for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists on how to share the road safely and responsibly. In 2021, there has been a particular focus upon the safety of senior citizens, who are disproportionately represented in pedestrian fatality counts. Watch for Me CT combined their expertise with that of partners to help launch related campaigns such as *Words to Live By*, *The Pedestrian Rules*, Healthcare Heroes' *Not One More* campaign, and a Safe States driver impairment campaign. Watch for Me CT also created unique scooter share safety messaging for the City of Hartford, ahead of and during the launch of Hartford's new scooter share program.
- **Connecticut Trails Program**: CTDEEP has funded the Connecticut Trail Census program at UConn Extension for the past five years which provides data on trail usage on multi-use paths in 23 locations across the state. In 2021 with funding from CTDOT and CTDEEP, the Connecticut Trails program at UConn launched the Connecticut Trail Finder website which provides an online portal to over 100 trail systems (and counting) providing greater access to outdoor recreational opportunities across the state. UConn is working with over 75 trail management organizations including, CTDEEP, CTDOT, CFPA, Last Green Valley, municipalities, land trusts, and trail advocacy groups as well as CORA and Departments of Health in using the tool for community health and development focus.
- **Complete Streets Spotlight Program**: DOT provided funding to the UConn technology transfer program for this effort. The program includes webinars and web material on innovative complete streets projects from around the state, enabling planners and engineers to learn from their peers.

Other

- The Capitol Region Council of Governments was awarded a multi-year Center for Disease Control grant to **encourage active transportation throughout the state**. In 2021 CRCOG used some of these funds to encourage implementation of a 4th grade bicycle education program. They made the curriculum for this program available and offered training for teachers.



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- The pandemic continues to encourage more outdoor activity with **more people walking and biking regularly**. While there are few data collection programs that capture this usage, the Connecticut Trail Census shows month over month trail use increases of 70% pre pandemic to during the pandemic.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Facilities:

- **Funding for Planning and Design:** Very few municipalities have in place bicycle and pedestrian plans that provide guidance for where improvements are needed, and types of improvements recommended. Further, communities are often prevented from applying for construction grants because they do not have design plans in place. *State funding directed to municipal planning and design is needed.*
- **Funding for Construction of Separated Bicycle Facilities:** The initial focus should be upon urban areas, where such facilities can serve commuters and those who rely upon bicycling as the most cost-effective travel choice. Providing this type of facility can be expensive, with curbs needing to be moved, utilities possibly relocated, and/or right of way purchased. *The state must dedicate significant federal covid relief and infrastructure funds to this purpose. This should include a vast expansion of the Community Connectivity program which program's impact is limited by the size of the grants.*
- **Funding for facilities that improve pedestrian safety.** Providing safe pedestrian facilities is supportive of not just walking, but also of transit use. Making roadways like Route 1 safe for pedestrians to travel along and across will require substantial investments. *The state must dedicate significant federal covid relief and infrastructure funds to this purpose. This would be a vast expansion of the Community Connectivity program which program's impact is limited by the size of the grants.*
- **Commitment of DOT to pay for bicycle facilities on state highways as part of repaving.** The current practice of requiring municipalities to install and maintain bicycle lane markings, sharrows, and crosswalks on state highways is not consistent with the complete streets law. Complete streets considerations are to be applied at all phases of transportation projects: planning, design, construction, and *maintenance*. *DOT should include a reserve in its repaving budget to cover the cost of additional roadway markings.*
- **Payment in lieu of sidewalk (PILOS).** This allows a municipality to waive construction of a sidewalk in a location where it will not get much use in exchange for a fee; that fee can then be used to build sidewalks where they are most needed. PILOS is similar to existing provisions under CT law for payment in lieu of parking and payment in lieu of open space. *Modify state legislation to allow Payment in Lieu of Sidewalks (PILOS) with such funds dedicated to bike/ped improvements where they are needed most.*
- **Comprehensive roundabout study:** Roundabouts can decrease traffic speeds without deteriorating throughput. They are less costly to maintain than traffic signals and are often considered aesthetic improvements in neighborhoods. By slowing traffic and providing well defined crossing locations, they improve safety for both pedestrians and bicyclists. Bicyclists can choose to ride in the roadway in the roundabout or on the sidewalk. *The*



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Board recommends a statewide implementation study of single lane modern roundabouts to provide the safest intersection control at critical intersections through CTDOT and/or in conjunction with the regional Councils of Governments (COGs).

Education

- **Expand the Watch for Me CT campaign:** The Watch for Me CT campaign has provided a terrific program for education of drivers and pedestrians and bicyclists, but to date the messaging is not widespread enough. Additionally, the new provisions of the 2021 legislation, particularly regarding crosswalk law and opening doors into traffic, need to be widely publicized. ***The program needs more funding so that the messages go out in all media and all parts of the state.***
- **Bicycle Safety Education:** Additionally, bicycle safety education is important. A very successful program developed by Bike Walk CT and the South Windsor schools in 2010 provides bicycle safety education on bicycles for every fourth grader in South Windsor. Middletown Schools implemented a similar program in the fall of 2021. Utilizing a CDC grant the Capitol Region Council of Governments has offered training in this program to school districts throughout the state. If starting in the 22-23 school year all 4th graders experience this program, within 10 years all young adults in the state would be comfortable bicycling for transportation purposes. This will require strong support from the Department of Education and financial support. ***The Board recommends that in 2022 the Department of Education examine the program that is in place in South Windsor and other schools in the state, and make recommendations for broader implementation.***
- **Update CTDOT Signing Guidelines:** Currently the DOT sign guidelines do not permit Bicycle Friendly Community signs or Bike Route signs to be posted on state roadways. This type of signage is permitted by the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) and allowing this type of signage is consistent with the state's Active Transportation Plan. ***Revise the CTDOT sign guidelines to allow and encourage bike route and Bicycle Friendly Community signs.***
- **Sustaining the Connecticut Trails Program at UConn Extension.** The Connecticut Trail Census and Connecticut Trail Finder programs provide vital data collection, evaluation, and communication of trail use and trail mapping resource in Connecticut. Trail use data provide parameters for planning and design, metrics for evaluation of trail expansion projects, and essential public outreach educating and engaging state residents and tourists supporting community development, public health, and sustainable transport. ***The Connecticut Trails Program needs sustaining support beyond grant-based funds.***

Enforcement

- **Funding for focused enforcement:** At locations with high pedestrian volumes, grants should be provided to local police departments to allow them to focus upon motor vehicle violations at crosswalks. ***DOT to provide grants to local police departments.***
- **Speed enforcement using cameras:** During 2022 the state will pilot the use of camera



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enforcement of speeds in work zones. This technique has been shown to lower speeds when used in school zones. This is a logical next step in testing the effectiveness of this type of enforcement and the Board recommends that **legislation allowing a pilot in school zones be adopted.**

Other

- **Expand Connecticut's electric vehicle rebate program to include e-bikes.** Now you may wonder, why give a rebate for a bicycle which consumes energy when a non-e-bike does not consume any electric power? The answer is that the e-bike is likely to replace automobile trips, and may enable more people to live car free. The e-bike is an ideal means of transportation for those who shy away from a bicycle because they don't want to arrive at their destination sweaty and disheveled, or because they do not have the physical stamina to accomplish a ride. It also helps those with diminished physical capacity, either because of age or disability. Additionally, e-bikes designed to carry cargo or children allow more people to consider substituting motor vehicle travel with bicycle travel. Finally, and most importantly, an e-bike rebate will make e-bikes more affordable for low- and moderate-income individuals, who already rely on bicycles to travel, and often to travel long distances to get to work. ***Adopt legislation that directs that e-bikes be eligible for electric vehicle rebates.***

Of these recommendations, the Board's highest priority is for funding for planning, design, and construction of high value bicycle and pedestrian facilities, with an initial focus upon urban areas. The Board would be happy to discuss any of these recommendations with you. My contact information is listed below.

Sincerely,

Sandra M. Fry, P.E.

Chair

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