

FHWA's Livable Communities Case Study Series

New York City Department of Transportation – Safe Streets for Seniors Program

Challenge—High rate of pedestrian traffic fatalities among older adults

Using maps to identify clusters of various types of crashes, the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) found that older adults represented a disproportionate share of pedestrian fatalities in the city. Although those over 65 years of age make up only 12 percent of the population in New York City, they account for 36 percent of pedestrian fatalities according to an NYCDOT analysis. According to New York City demographic projections, as the baby boomer generation ages, the city's older adult population is expected to grow to 16 percent of the population in 2030, compared to 11 percent in 2010. Without action, the number of pedestrian fatalities involving older adults could continue to grow among this vulnerable population.

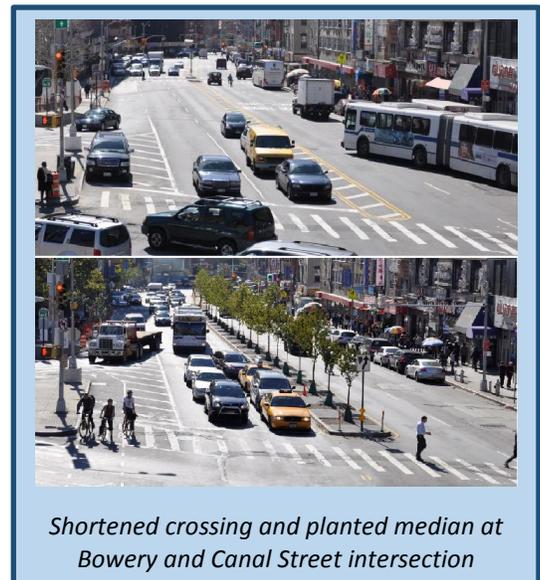
Solution—Focus on the conditions that contribute to pedestrian crashes involving older adults

In response to these troubling statistics, NYCDOT's safety group created the Safe Streets for Seniors program in 2008 and began reviewing crash data and police reports to identify potential infrastructure or operational problems at the crash sites. The program is part of a larger suite of NYCDOT pedestrian and bicycle safety programs focusing on Safe Routes to School, high crash corridors, and automobile speeding in neighborhoods. Safety analysts in NYCDOT's Office of Research, Implementation, and Safety used historical data and site observations to identify the following prime factors that contribute to pedestrian crashes involving older adults:

- Insufficient pedestrian signal time to cross wide streets
- Unclear or faded street markings
- Turning vehicles not yielding to pedestrians
- Pedestrian ramps missing or in disrepair
- Poor storm drainage in crosswalks

NYCDOT then conducted statistical analyses to help map and better understand traffic fatalities and serious injuries involving older adults, leading to the identification of 25 geographic focus areas for special attention. Through a detailed safety audit, NYCDOT identified and developed a set of infrastructure and operational strategies tailored to older adults:

- Adjust signal timing and install countdown signals to accommodate slower walking speeds and give pedestrians more information at crosswalks
- Implement road diets to reduce speeding and create more predictable vehicular movements
- Install pedestrian safety islands and build curb extensions to shorten crossing distance and slow turning cars



Creating more livable communities through transportation choices



Currently, NYCDOT has completed improvements in 17 of the 25 focus areas, with the remaining eight being finalized. Infrastructure improvements include:

- 608 intersections with extended crossing times
- 203 pedestrian safety islands
- 13 Leading Pedestrian Intervals to reduce car/pedestrian conflicts in crosswalks.
- 23 traffic signals added to improve pedestrian safety
- 15 curb extensions to shorten crossing distance
- 11 turn restrictions to reduce pedestrian-vehicle conflicts

Funding—Supporting the Initiative

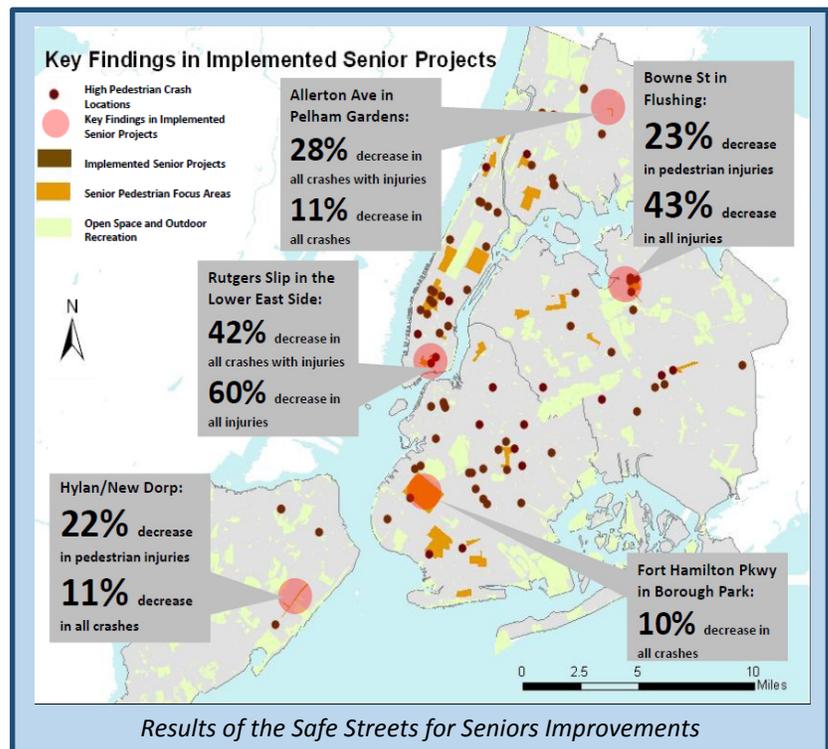
NYCDOT supports the Safe Streets for Seniors program through a variety of funding programs from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), including the New Freedom Program, the Highway Safety Improvement Program, and the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program. Through a partnership with FTA and FHWA, NYCDOT constructs safety projects in-house through an expedited construction process under a public interest finding. This enables a quick response to safety needs soon after they are identified using Federal funding, and also lowers the cost of implementation as compared to hiring a contractor.

Results—Improved Safety for Older Adults and All Users

The initial results are very positive. Older adult pedestrian fatalities decreased 17 percent citywide between 2008 and 2012. At individual project locations, as seen in the graphic to the right, injuries and crashes for all age groups declined considerably in the focus areas. At some locations, NYCDOT observed an over 10 percent decrease in crashes, 20-60 percent reduction in injuries.

The next phase of the program involves 12 new senior pedestrian focus areas identified based on trip generation data from senior transit pass swipes on Metro buses and proximity to senior centers and senior housing. NYCDOT is currently performing outreach in the 12 new areas, soliciting community feedback and analyzing data for safety improvements.

NYCDOT credits continual communication with and feedback from the city's older adult community, in addition to sound technical analysis, for the success of the Safe Streets for Seniors program. The city's Department for Aging is an important partner in these outreach efforts, working with those most impacted by this serious issue to identify hazardous areas and consult on intersection improvement design ideas. Other important partners include: AARP, New York Academy of Medicine, and NYDOT's CityBench program and Safety Education team.



Federal Highway Administration: www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability
Partnership for Sustainable Communities: www.sustainablecommunities.gov/

