



# How to Create Complete Streets FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE

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Tuesday, September 17th @ 3:00PM ET

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Hosted by the League of American Bicyclists  
[bikeleague.org/webinars](http://bikeleague.org/webinars)



# HOUSEKEEPING

- » Webinar is being recorded, will be posted at:
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# ABOUT THE LEAGUE



**Since 1880... our mission is to lead the movement to create a Bicycle Friendly America for everyone.**



## Amelia Neptune

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## Dustin Robertson

Thriving Communities Program Manager  
Smart Growth America



**Smart Growth America**  
Improving lives by improving communities



## Mike Sule

Executive Director  
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*Asheville on Bikes*  
RIDE YOUR CITY



# Creating Complete Streets, From Policy to Practice

## Dustin Robertson

September 17, 2024



# Smart Growth America

Improving lives by improving communities

**FBCI** Form-Based  
Codes Institute

**LOCUS**  
Responsible Real Estate  
Developers & Investors



National Complete  
Streets Coalition



State  
**Smart Transportation**  
Initiative



**Transportation**  
for America

# Today's Agenda

- ❖ The case for Complete Streets
- ❖ Policies and SGA's Complete Streets Framework
- ❖ How to get there



# Houston, we have a problem



I-45 new Downtown Houston

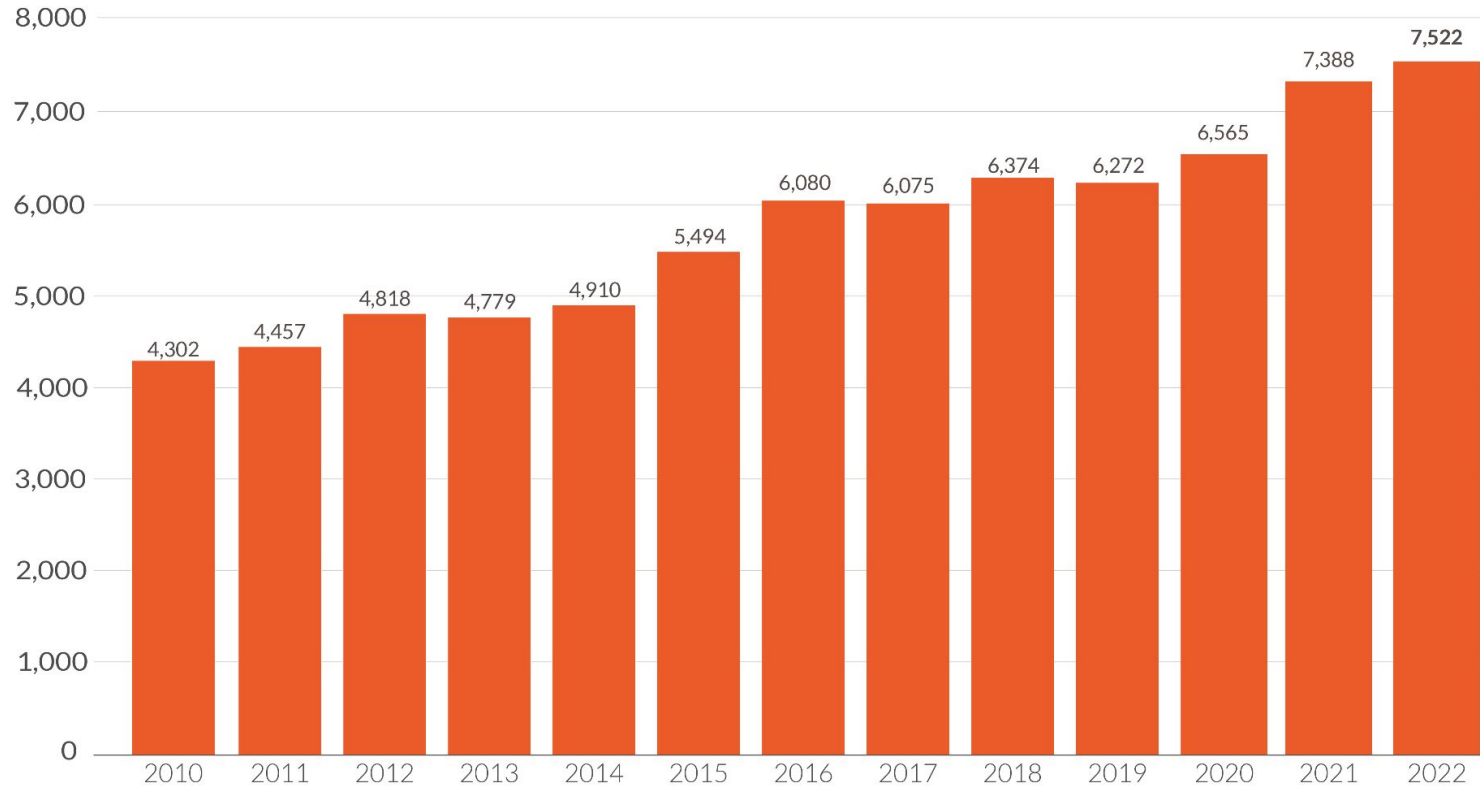
Source: [Miguel Gutierrez Jr./The Texas Tribune](#)



Smart Growth America  
Improving lives by improving communities

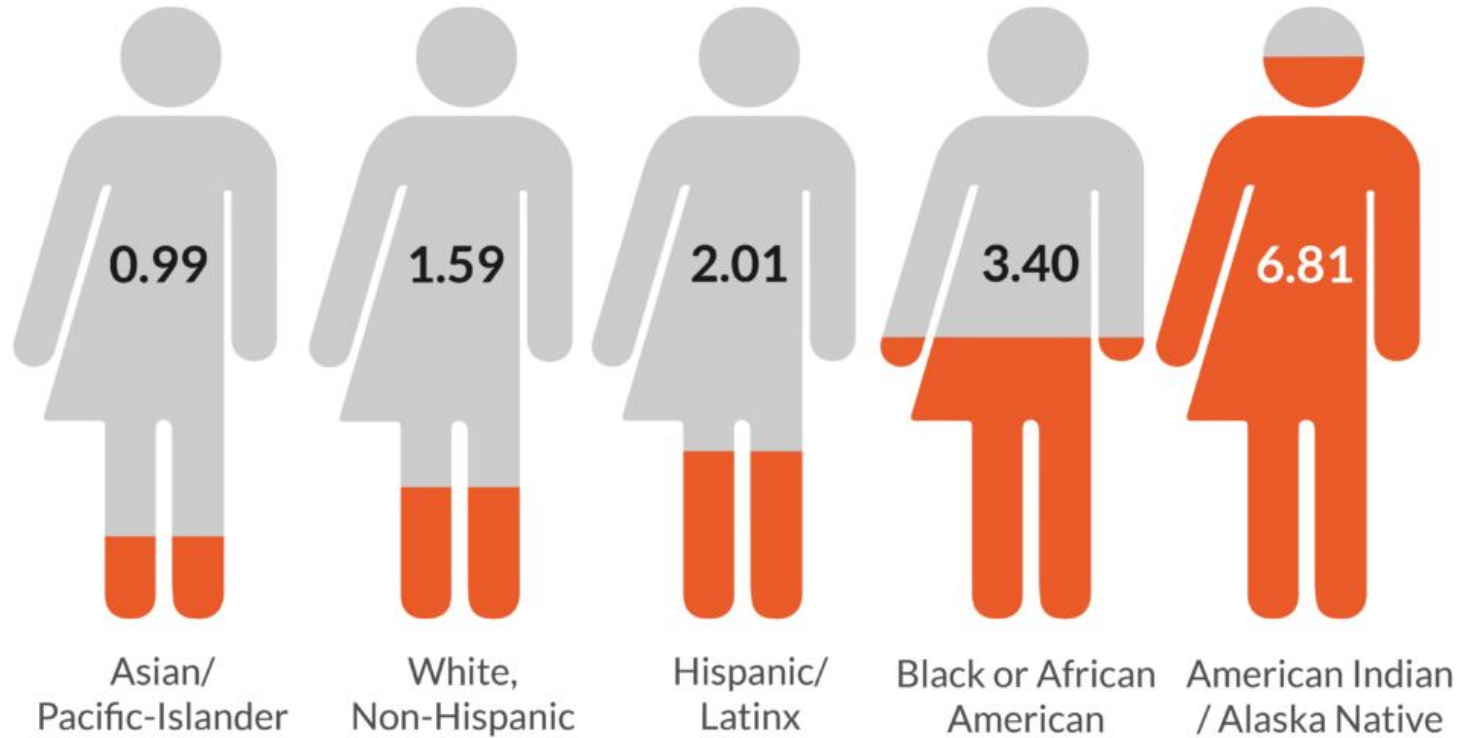


## 75 percent increase in the deaths of people walking since 2010



**U.S. pedestrian deaths (2010-2022)**

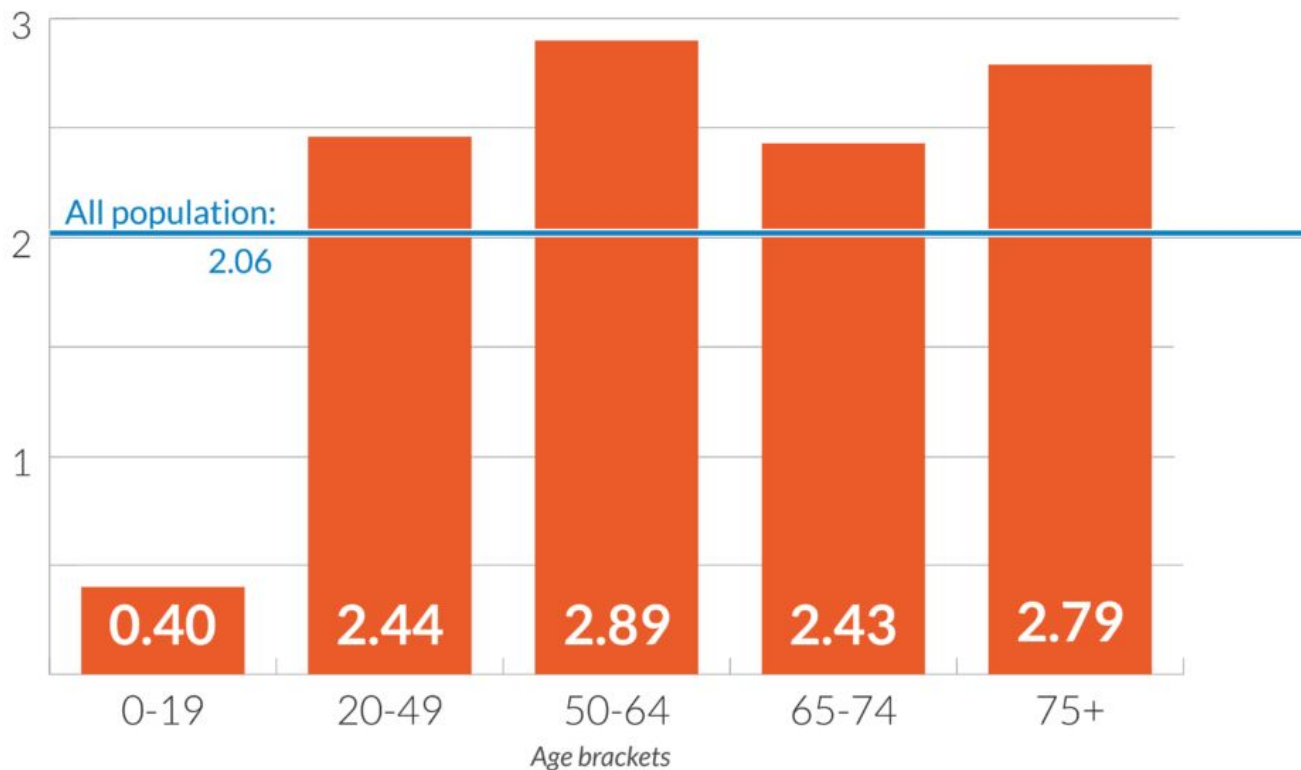
# Pedestrian deaths per 100,000 by race & ethnicity (2018-2022)



Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.  
(2024). Fatality Analysis Reporting System.

## Adults between age 50-64 are most likely to be killed

Pedestrian fatalities per 100,000 people by age



Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (2024). Fatality Analysis Reporting System.





# Our streets are “Dangerous by Design”

## Pedestrian Deaths (2008-2022)

Year:

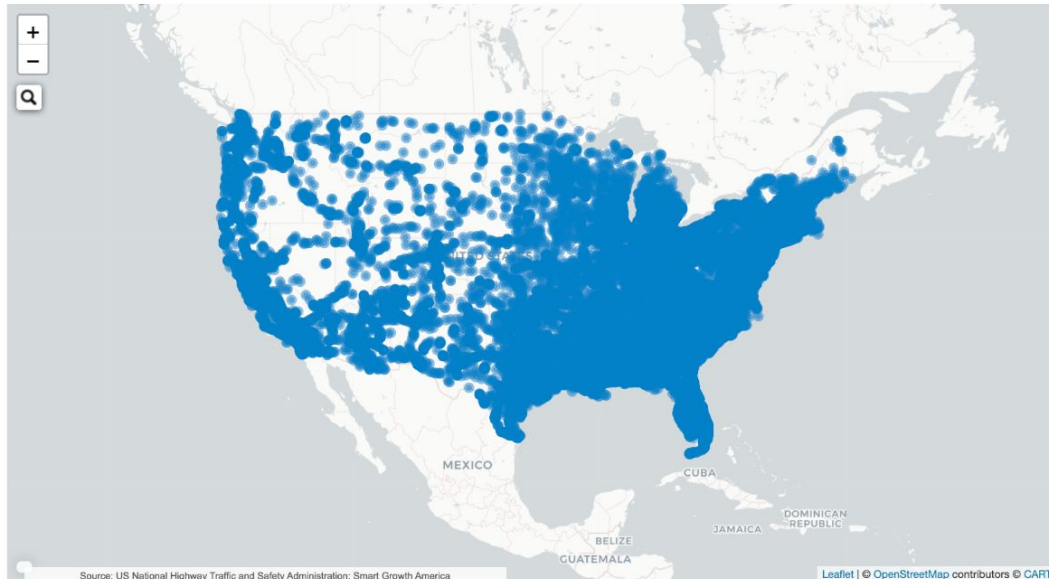
State:

Race:

Hispanic Ethnicity:

Sex:

Age:



# Complete Streets are for everyone.

Complete Streets is an approach to planning, designing, building, operating, and maintaining streets that enables safe access for all people who need to use them, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities.

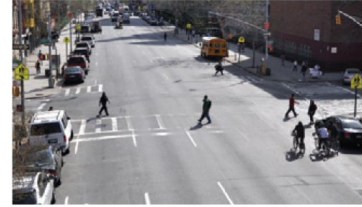


# Complete Streets are healthier, greener, and more pleasant!

## Manhattan

First and Second Avenues

BEFORE



### Traffic Signals

Synchronize traffic signals to slower, safer speeds to discourage speeding

### Bus Lane

Dedicate lane for buses

### Crosswalks

Add crosswalks where pedestrians want to cross

### Lane Designation

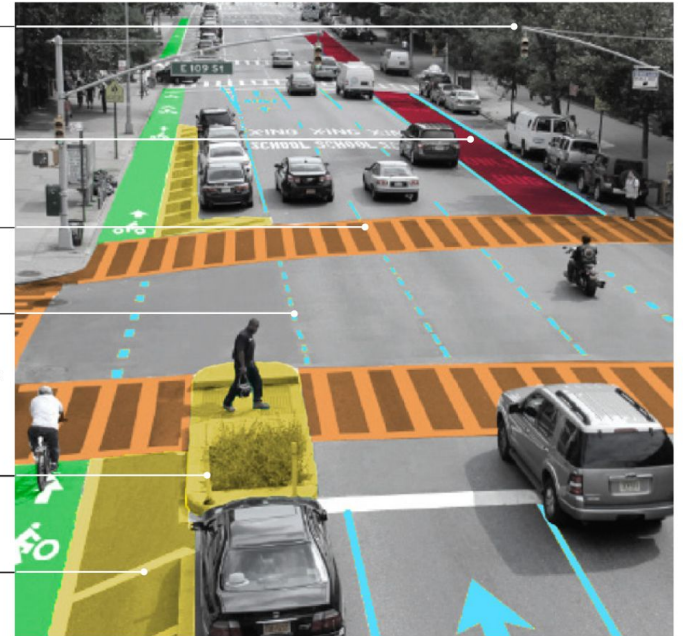
Clarify who belongs where; Use appropriate lane widths: 10 feet wide in urban areas, with 11-foot lanes (one per direction) on bus and truck routes

### Pedestrian Safety

**Islands** Shorten the crossing distance

### Parking Protected / Buffered Bicyclist Lane

Provide greater separation between users reducing conflict



AFTER





# Health

## Activity-friendly routes

Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit  
**transportation** systems

**Higher activity rates** lead to health benefits for all age groups, including decreased risk of depression, obesity, and chronic diseases







# Economy

- Lower collision & injury costs
- Transit-oriented development
- Higher retail sales
- Higher employment rates



Source:  
“Building Better Budgets” Smart Growth America (2015)  
“Foot Traffic Ahead” Smart Growth America (2023)



# Environment

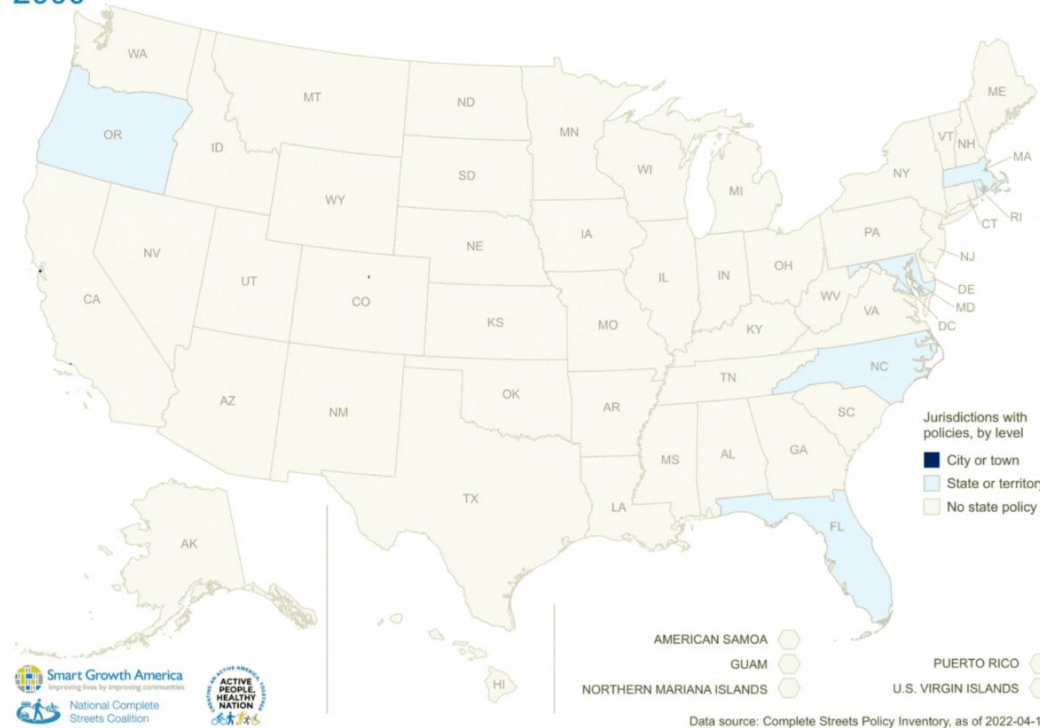


- Transportation is the top greenhouse gas emitting sector in the U.S.
- Fewer autos=less pollution
- More green spaces=decreased impacts of extreme heat & pollution
- Complete Streets can also contribute to other issues such as stormwater management

# Complete Streets policies

## Complete Streets Policy Adoption 2000

9 jurisdictions with policies  
3 cities and towns  
6 states



# What makes a strong Complete Streets policy?



ELEMENT 1

### Establishes commitment and vision



How and why does the community want to complete its streets? This specifies a clear statement of intent to create a complete, connected network and consider the needs of all users.

ELEMENT 4

### Allows only clear exceptions



Any exceptions must be specific, with a clear procedure that requires high-level approval and public notice prior to exceptions being granted.

ELEMENT 7

### Requires proactive land-use planning



Considers every project's greater context, as well as the surrounding community's current and expected land-use and transportation needs.

ELEMENT 2

### Prioritizes underinvested and underserved communities



Requires jurisdictions to define who are their most underinvested and underserved communities and prioritize them throughout.

ELEMENT 5

### Mandates coordination



Requires private developers to comply, and interagency coordination between government departments and partner agencies.

ELEMENT 8

### Measure progress



Establishes specific performance measures that match the goals of the broader vision, incorporate equity considerations, and are regularly reported to the public.

ELEMENT 3

### Applies to all projects and phases



Instead of a limited set of projects, the policy applies to all new projects, retrofit or reconstruction projects, maintenance projects, and ongoing operations.

ELEMENT 6

### Adopts excellent design guidance



Directs agencies to use the latest and best design criteria and guidelines, and sets a time frame for implementing this guidance.

ELEMENT 9

### Sets criteria for choosing projects



Creates or updates the criteria for choosing transportation projects so that Complete Streets projects are prioritized.

ELEMENT 10

### Creates a plan for implementation



A formal commitment to the Complete Streets approach is only the beginning. It must include specific steps for implementing the policy in ways that will make a measurable impact on where goals build and where.



# Integrated and Implemented Complete Streets



ADOPTED BY THE  
MAYOR AND COUNCIL  
February 1, 2015

ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_\_  
RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION; AUTHORIZING AND APPROVING ADOPTION OF  
THE CITY OF TUCSON COMPLETE STREETS POLICY.

WHEREAS, on December 10, 2014, the Free Association of Governments adopted a Complete Streets Resolution encouraging "member jurisdictions to develop locally appropriate Complete Streets guidance or other policies and track performance measures for Complete Streets implementation"; and

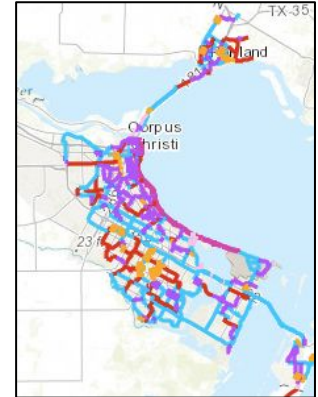
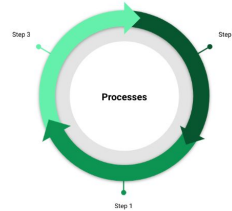
WHEREAS, on January 23, 2015, the Mayor and Council directed staff to move forward with the development of a Complete Streets Policy and on May 22, 2015, approved the Complete Streets Guiding Principles to serve as the basis for the policy; and

WHEREAS, mobility is a fundamental human right and it is a priority for the City of Tucson to create a transportation network where all people can choose from a variety of safe, comfortable, reliable, affordable, and accessible transportation options; and

WHEREAS, increasing walking, biking, and transit use through Complete Streets helps improve traffic safety, reduce traffic congestion, increase mobility options, stimulate economic development and support the local economy, encourage healthier lifestyles, foster more vibrant streets and livable neighborhoods, improve air quality, create a more sustainable street ecology, promote equity, and enhance the quality of life of all Tucsonians; and

WHEREAS, the City of Tucson is committed to rebalancing its transportation network as streets are a public resource, and people walking, biking, using assisted

(continued)



Political will /  
Champions

Policies

Practices

Projects

Network



# Calls to action

Everyone

Greater awareness of Complete Streets, what , where, and why!

States

Should follow through and lead–prioritize Complete Streets & work with localities!

Municipalities  
without Complete  
Streets policies

Create one!

Municipalities with  
Complete Streets  
policies

Implement and improve!

**Complete Streets are for everyone!**

**Dustin Robertson**

Thriving Communities Senior Program Manager

[Drobertson@smartgrowthamerica.org](mailto:Drobertson@smartgrowthamerica.org)



# Asheville, NC - A Culture of Carnage

- In North Carolina there are only City and State roads.
- Asheville consistently ranks as one of the worst cities in North Carolina relative to road safety ([North Carolina 2020 Traffic Crash Facts](#)).
- Asheville has stagnated as a Bronze level Bicycle Friendly Community. Asheville first received the designation from the League of American Bicyclists in 2020.
- People for Bikes gives Asheville a rank of [18 out of 100](#).

# The Existing Conditions on Merrimon Ave

- 150% higher rate of crashes on Merrimon compared to other similar roadways across the State (for every 10 crashes on other similar roads, Merrimon gets 15).
- Approximately 23% of crashes on Merrimon involve an injury and property damage estimates total more than \$7 million.
- On average, Merrimon experiences about 13 crashes every month. The chart below summarizes the corridor's crash statistics.

Source: **City of Asheville, NC**  
Developed in collaboration between the [Department of Planning & Urban Design](#) and the [Transportation Department](#). February, 2022. Supported by the [NCDOT](#).

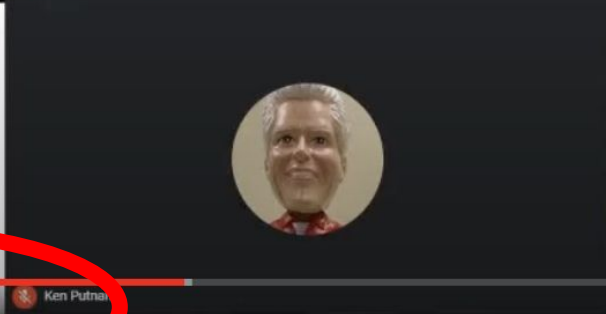
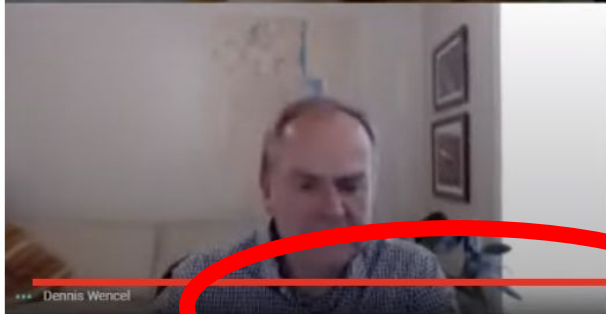
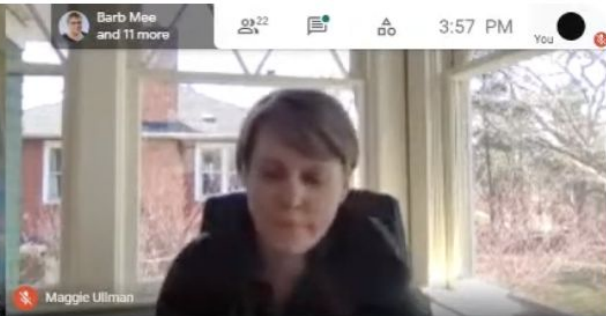
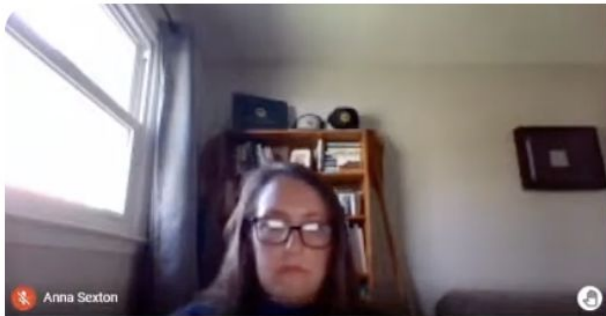
# The Challenge: City & NCDOT Unwilling to Consider a Reconfiguration

- In 2021
  - The City of Asheville and NCDOT agreed not to consider a road reconfiguration.
  - In March, discussion of a potential road reconfiguration was pulled from the City of Asheville's Multi-Modal Transportation Commission (MMTC) agenda.
  - Merrimon Ave would not be included on any future MMTC agenda

# The Opportunity: The Power of Public Comment



- Local resident Gaia, agreed to give public comment to the MMTC about the harm she experienced attempting to cross Merrimon Ave and asked the commission to elevate safety along the corridor.
- [Link to Gaia's public comment on 3/24/21](#)



Meeting controls bar with a red circle highlighting the play/pause button. The bar includes a play/pause button, a volume icon, a timer showing 57:06 / 2:12:41, and icons for Raise Hand, Turn on captions, and Present now.

# The Opportunity: Reference & Highlight Policy



## Asheville on Bikes 2022 Merrimon Study

Source: [Asheville on Bikes 2022 Merrimon Study](#)

The reconfiguration of Merrimon Avenue from a four-lane street to a three-lane street with bike lanes is supported by more than 15 years of City, MPO, and NCDOT plans and policies. It is also supported by published design guidance and policies from the Federal Highway Administration and AASHTO.

### City of Asheville

- ✓ Complete Streets Policy (2012)
- ✓ Comprehensive Bicycle Plan (2008)
- ✓ Asheville in Motion (2016)
- ✓ Comprehensive Plan (2018)

### French Broad River MPO

- ✓ Complete Streets Policy (2013)
- ✓ Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2008)
- ✓ Metropolitan Transportation Plan (2020)
- ✓ Congestion Management Process (2018)

### Federal Highway Administration

- ✓ Safe Systems / Vision Zero
- ✓ Bikeway Selection Guide
- ✓ Bike/Ped Design Flexibility Policy
- ✓ Road Diet Informational Guide

### NCDOT

- ✓ Mission (Current)
- ✓ Complete Streets Policy (2009, 2019)
- ✓ Complete Streets Planning & Design Guidelines (2012)
- ✓ Roadway Design Manual (2021)
- ✓ Context Sensitive Solutions (2003)
- ✓ Vision Zero Policy (2015)
- ✓ WalkBikeNC Plan (2013)
- ✓ Transportation-Health Policy (2012)
- ✓ Executive Order 246
- ✓ AECOM Traffic Study (2021)

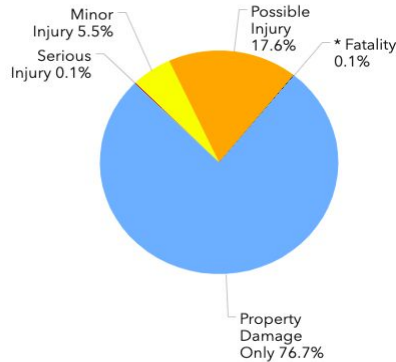
### AASHTO

- ✓ Green Book
- ✓ A Guide to Achieving Flexibility in Highway Design

# Opportunity: Share the Data

Crash Statistics (10 Year Period: 2012-2021, From I-240-Midland Rd)

## Merrimion Ave Crash Severity



\* Citywide, there is a crash-related fatality approximately one per month

## Total Merrimion Crashes

**1549**

Approx one every other day

## Bicycle/Pedestrian Crashes

**27**

2% of total

## Total Crash-Related Injuries

**361** 

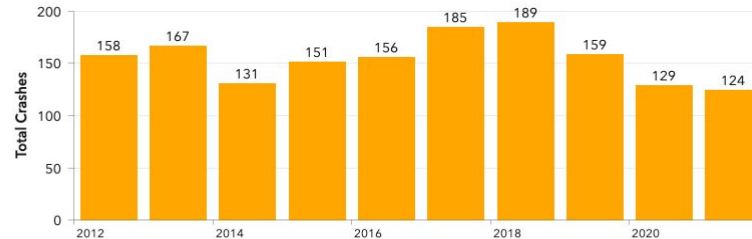
Approx three injuries per month

## Estimated Property Damage

**\$7,119,146**

~\$60,000/Month

## Merrimion Avenue Crashes by Year



Source: ([City of Asheville / NCDOT Merrimion Story Map, Crashes](#))

# Opportunity: Provide Survey Guidance



**AoB 2022**

**MERRIMON SURVEY  
RESPONSE GUIDE**

Source: [AoB '22  
Merrimon Survey  
Response Guide](#)



# Opportunity: Engage the Public, Leaders & Press

## Business owners on Merrimon Avenue begin petition, call for city to undo changes to road

by Taylor Thompson | Wed, May 10th 2023 at 11:14 PM



Updated Wed, May 10th 2023 at 11:22 PM



MAY 10, 2023 - Many business owners along Asheville's Merrimon Avenue say the recently implemented road diet has curtailed the number of customers visiting their establishments. (Photo credit: WLOS staff)

- Implementation is construction.
- Nobody likes construction
- Construction isn't the project.
- Stay engaged event when it's uncomfortable.

# Celebrate: Share the Safety, Welcome People

## SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS SINCE IMPLEMENTATION\*

Total  
Collisions

↓ 23%

Collisions  
with Injuries

↓ 30%

Frontal  
Crashes

↓ 55%

## MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION SINCE IMPLEMENTATION\*

Cycling Use

↑ 269%

Motor Vehicle Speeds

↓ 3-5mph



A big win for traffic safety  
and multimodal transportation



Source: [NCDOT's 4 Lane to 3 Lane Conversion Preliminary Data](#)

# Merromon Diet Traffic Study Results

- A decrease in total collisions (down 23%)
- A decrease in collisions with injuries (down 30%)
- A decrease in motor vehicle speeds (down 3-5 mph)
- A shift in remaining crashes from frontal crashes to rear end crashes (frontal crashes down 55%)
- An increase in cycling use on the corridor (up 269%)
- A minimal increase in travel times for cars (up 2-14 seconds)



# Celebrate: Welcome People to Participate



# Momentum: Success Leaves Clues



# The Work Continues:



Mike Sule

Executive Director, [Asheville on Bikes](#)

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# Learn More...



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<https://smartgrowthamerica.org>



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RIDE YOUR CITY

<https://ashevilleonbikes.com>



<https://bikeleague.org>



# Additional Links from the Webinar Chat:

## Smart Growth America:

- [2024 Dangerous by Design report](#)
- [SGA's Complete Streets Policy Framework](#)
- [Complete Streets policy evaluation tool](#)
- [Complete Streets Policy Action Guide](#)

## Asheville on Bikes:

- [Video: First hand account of pedestrian injured on Merrimon Ave in Asheville NC](#)
- [Asheville on Bikes' 2022 Study of Merrimon Ave 4 - 3 Conversion Plans](#)
- [City of Asheville & NCDOT Public Survey on Merrimon Ave Reconfiguration](#)
- [Merrimon Crash History](#)
- [Video: Cathy Ball, Assistant City Manager, voices support for collaborating with NCDOT to consider what could be done to improve safety on Merrimon Ave.](#)
- [Merrimon Ave 4 to 3 Lane Conversion, Safety and Mobility Update – June 2024](#)

## League of American Bicyclists:

- [The AARP Bike Audit Tool Kit](#)
- [Upcoming Webinars & Webinar Archives from the League](#)
- [Join us at the 2025 National Bike Summit next March!](#)

# Join us next week!



**LESSONS FROM LIME DATA:**  
HOW CITIES CAN USE SHARED MICROMOBILITY  
DATA FOR TRANSPORTATION PLANNING & POLICY

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Wednesday, September 25th @ 2:00 PM ET

<https://bikeleague.org/webinars>



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