



Montgomery County, MD Celebrates Five-Year Anniversary of Pedestrian Safety Initiative; Efforts are Reducing Collisions and Saving Lives

On December 17, 2012, Montgomery County, MD Executive Isiah Leggett celebrated the five-year anniversary of his December 2007 Pedestrian Safety Initiative, which for the first time provided a blueprint for action to improve pedestrian safety based on measurable strategies. Since 2009, pedestrian collisions have decreased 12 percent and the most severe collisions, those where pedestrians are incapacitated or killed, has declined 21 percent.

“In 2007, we charted a course to dramatically improve pedestrian safety and accessibility in Montgomery County – a course that is proving to be successful,” said Leggett. “We are seeing significant reductions in pedestrian collisions in areas where we have taken a comprehensive and targeted approach. Every resident deserves a truly walkable community where pedestrians can safely cross the street. Our challenge in the future is to continually reassess what we are doing, keep what’s working well and find new and creative ways to significantly expand our pedestrian safety efforts.”

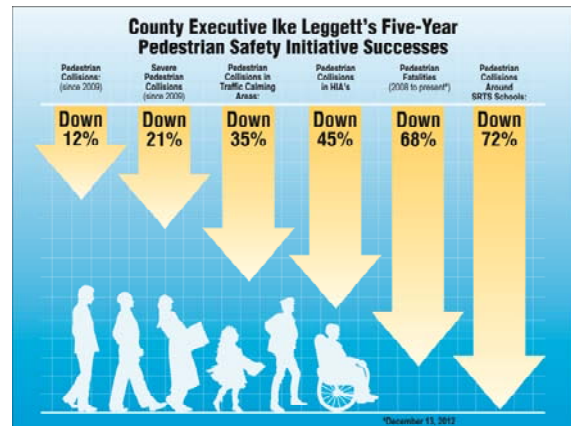
The Initiative outlined an approach to pedestrian and traffic safety that focused on three essential components: education, engineering and enforcement. The Initiative significantly enhanced the County’s investment in educating motorists and pedestrians, keeping enforcement efforts visible and intensive and aggressively applying the most innovative and pedestrian-friendly road engineering designs.

To fulfill Leggett’s vision for increased pedestrian mobility and safety, the Initiative established goals to:

- Reduce pedestrian-related crashes, injuries, fatalities, and their associated social and economic costs; and
- Ensure that all areas of the County provide safe and convenient travel options for pedestrians.

Some of the achievements of the Initiative include:

- Reducing pedestrian fatalities from a high of 19 fatalities in 2008 to 11 in 2011 and six in 2012.
- Reducing pedestrian collisions 12 percent since 2009.
- Reducing the most severe collisions that incapacitate or kill pedestrians 21 percent since 2009.
- Reducing collisions 35 percent in areas where traffic calming measures have been installed.
- Reducing collisions by 45 percent In High Incidence Areas (HIAs), locations with the highest concentrations of collisions.
- Reducing collisions by 72 percent within a quarter mile of schools targeted for engineering, education and enforcement activities under the Safe Routes to Schools program.



The first County budget to include additional resources to implement the Initiative began in July 2009. During 2008 and part of 2009, staff planned and developed the programs and reallocated existing resources. During fiscal year (FY) 2009, capital and operating funds already allocated to transportation projects improving pedestrian and traffic safety totaled about \$30 million. An additional \$5 million was approved to fund the strategic plan laid out in the County Executive’s Pedestrian Safety Initiative. Despite the fact that the County was dealing with unprecedented budget shortfalls, resources to improve pedestrian safety were significantly increased under the Initiative as follows:

- FY09: \$4.9 million
- FY10: \$4.6 million
- FY11: \$3.7 million
- FY12: \$3.2 million
- FY13: \$4.9 million

The Initiative identified seven strategies to reduce collisions. The strategies and a brief summary of progress to date on each are presented below:



Randolph Road Median Treatment (East)

Strategy 1: Target pedestrian safety improvements in High Incidence Areas (HIAs)

To date, ten HIAs have been identified, with work beginning on two or three areas a year since 2008. The first step following designation of an area as an HIA is conducting a pedestrian safety audit to determine the short-term and long-term improvements needed to increase safety. Short-term improvements are made relatively quickly following the audits. Long-term improvements are usually multi-year efforts, some of which are still in progress. Because of the effectiveness of the HIA approach, SHA has adopted an audit process based on the County’s model.

Collisions in HIAs are down 45 percent. Most of the roads in designated HIAs are State roads, and the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) has been an active partner in the HIA improvement process. Between fiscal years 2009 and 2013, \$2.2 million has been invested in HIA-related analyses and planned or completed improvements.

Strategy 2: Assess and improve the pedestrian network and connectivity needs

For fiscal years 2010, 2011 and 2012, the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) constructed 16 miles of new sidewalk segments and 173 new ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) projects, investing nearly \$8.6 million.

Under the bus stop improvement project, MCDOT assessed conditions at 5,400 bus stops for accessibility and pedestrian safety. About two-thirds of the bus stops were found to need improvements, with 2,500 completed so far. In fiscal years 2010, 2011 and 2012 nearly 7.6 miles of sidewalks were added around bus stops and 62,100 square feet of new bus stop pads were installed, investing \$4.2 million.

*Rippling Brook Dr across Matthew Henson Trail
350 linear feet of new sidewalk with bike grooved stairs*



Strategy 3: Increase emphasis on pedestrians and bicyclists in the planning process

Previously, the process to construct sidewalks in the County included the requirement to hold a Public Hearing. To streamline this process, the hearing requirement has been eliminated for uncontested sidewalks.

MCDOT also adopted regulations detailing Context Sensitive Road Design Standards, known as the “Road Code,” that allow for creation of safer streets for pedestrians and bicyclists, and enhance the environment through improved stormwater management and accommodation of street trees.

Strategy 4: Identify and implement corridor and intersection modifications and traffic calming treatments

MCDOT has completed nearly 80 traffic calming projects throughout the County that have decreased pedestrian collisions in those areas by 35 percent.

Through the Safe Routes to Schools program, 208 County schools have been assessed and nearly 90 outreach and education meetings have been held for the school community through fiscal year 2012. The program has reduced collisions by 72 percent within a quarter mile of designated schools.



Example traffic calming

Strategy 5: Upgrade pedestrian signals

By the end of this fiscal year 2013, 52 percent of the pedestrian signals in the County will be retimed to provide more time to crossing pedestrians at a cost of \$587,000. Also launched in fiscal year 2013 was the County's effort to upgrade pedestrian signals for the sight-impaired.

Strategy 6: Assess and enhance street lighting

Lighting improvements are an important part of HIA upgrades. Following the pedestrian safety audit, malfunctioning lights are repaired and any additional lights needed to enhance illumination are added to existing PEPCO poles.

In addition to the HIAs, major lighting projects have been installed along MD Route 124 (Airpark to Fieldcrest), MD Route 355 and Montrose Parkway and Wisteria Drive. Investments in these three areas totaled about \$2 million.

Strategy 7: Modify pedestrian and driver behavior through enhanced enforcement and educational efforts

Education:

Raising public awareness of the role both drivers and pedestrians play in pedestrian safety is an integral part of the County's effort to reduce the number of pedestrian collisions. Over the past five years, education efforts have focused on HIAs, partnering in regional education efforts, working with school personnel, parents and students and targeting groups at high risk for involvement in pedestrian collisions.

Education efforts in the HIAs vary based on the data about who is most involved in collisions in each particular area. About \$530,000 has been invested in HIA education. Just a few examples include:

- Non-native English speakers were targeted in an innovative way that included using bilingual safety promotion teams, movie theater ads and curb markers indicating where it is and isn't safe to cross.
- High school students developed promotional ideas that helped engage other teens.
- Partnering with the State Highway Administration and a Spanish language radio station brought the deejay on site and the safety information to a wider audience.



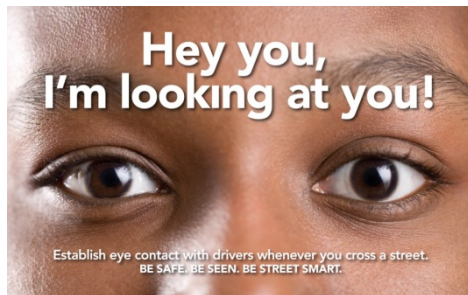
- A volunteer brigade attended fairs and festivals and distributed information and reusable bags with safety messages imprinted and reflective materials.

In 2002, Montgomery County was a founder of the regional Street Smart pedestrian safety education campaign and has continued to be an active participant. The twice yearly, four-week promotions use transit shelters and bus advertising in HIA corridors to endorse safe pedestrian behaviors and raise awareness of drivers and pedestrians about the importance of bicycle and pedestrian safety.



Through the Safe Routes to Schools program, staff has met with school administrators, parents, and students to improve safety, investing more than \$250,000 in State grant and County assistance. Forty-seven schools participated in International Walk to School Day this year, a 68 percent increase since 2007. And, the "Safe Walk" program is training high school students to teach safe walking skills to elementary kids.

Collision data has helped to target education efforts to groups or in areas (in addition to HIAs) at higher risk of being involved in pedestrian collisions. Two videos were produced: Walk Safe educates non-native English speakers on safe pedestrian behaviors; and Drive Safe targets new drivers (teens and adults) to teach them about the consequences of unsafe behaviors and the vulnerability of pedestrians.



A data analysis revealed that nearly 23 percent of pedestrian collisions in the County were occurring in parking lots, and an education campaign was developed to reach out to shoppers, and particularly seniors.

Enforcement:

Enhanced enforcement of pedestrian and traffic safety laws help modify perceptions of risk and responsibility on the road and can change behavior and contribute to building a culture of safety. Montgomery County Police have been instrumental in helping reduce the number of pedestrian collisions by:

- Targeted enforcement in HIAs, issuing nearly 3,000 citations and about 1,000 warnings to both pedestrians and motorists.
- Targeted school enforcement, issuing more than 500 citations and 400 warnings to both pedestrians and motorists.
- Countywide speed camera and red light camera enforcement that is slowing traffic, resulting, in FY11, in more than 13 million speed camera citations and nearly three million red light camera citations.
- Use of cameras on school buses to better protect students as they get on and off buses.
- Special pedestrian crosswalk, operation safe streets corridor, holiday and school enforcements.
- Annual "Shop with a Cop" targets shoppers in parking lots; police distribute visible shopping bags.



An enhanced pedestrian safety website was recently launched. It can be viewed at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/walk.