



Statement of

National Transportation Safety Board

To the

Committee on Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
Maryland Senate

— *On* —

House Bill 487

Education – School Construction – Pedestrian Safety Plans

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Annapolis, MD • March 18, 2021



An Independent Federal Agency

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) appreciates this opportunity to provide you with information regarding its special investigation report on pedestrian safety, and especially our call for the increased use of pedestrian safety action plans.

The NTSB is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant accidents in other modes of transportation – railroad, highway, marine, and pipeline. The NTSB determines the probable cause of the accidents it investigates and makes safety recommendations aimed at preventing future accidents. In addition, the NTSB carries out special studies concerning transportation safety, such as our work on pedestrian safety. The recommendations that arise from our investigations and safety studies are the NTSB’s most important tool for saving lives and preventing injury.

In 2018, the NTSB released a [Special Investigation Report: Pedestrian Safety](#). This report followed our 2016 public forum addressing pedestrian safety. At that event, experts from around the country discussed the data we need to better understand the risks, technology that could prevent vehicles from hitting people, and highway designs that offer safer roads or paths for pedestrians. Following that initial public meeting, we conducted more than a dozen investigations into pedestrian deaths in order to gain insight into how we can prevent these deaths from happening.

This study led NTSB to make 11 safety recommendations addressing a variety of countermeasures. Among these, we addressed the importance for state and local transportation planners to develop municipal pedestrian safety action plans that develop a network of safety improvements. Transportation planners and engineers in local jurisdictions are asking what steps they should take to better design streets and walking networks for pedestrian use. Although there is no recommendation addressed specifically to state and local governments, we did urge the Federal Highway Administration to “. . . promote municipal pedestrian safety action plans that develop a network of safety improvements. (H-18-47)”

Local pedestrian safety action plans seek to safely incorporate pedestrians into the transportation network. Plans developed by municipalities can focus resources to yield the greatest possible reduction in the number of pedestrians who are severely or fatally injured by motor vehicles. The objectives of a pedestrian safety action plan are to establish a risk assessment framework, identify data requirements for selecting and evaluating actions, and prioritize countermeasures for increasing safety.

A plan for developing pedestrian safety action plans, prepared for the Federal Highway Administration and NHTSA by the Highway Safety Research Center at the University of North Carolina, calls for analyzing safety data, seeking public input, and coordinating the planning process. It also recommends engaging with citizen groups, local public agencies, affected private sector interests, and the media, as well as coordinating with other local plans.

In its study, NTSB reviewed pedestrian safety action plans developed by a number of states and municipalities and found cities have developed pedestrian safety plans that have proven effective. To cite one prominent example, in New York City, more than 50 percent of the people killed in traffic crashes from 2005 to 2009 were pedestrians. During 2010–2011, the city developed

a pedestrian safety action plan, which it updated in 2014. At NTSB's 2016 public forum, representatives of the New York City Department of Transportation described their work in data analysis, planning, and community outreach aimed at reengineering the urban environment for pedestrian safety. In the city's 2018 Vision Zero report, the mayor noted that where major engineering changes had been made since 2005, fatalities had decreased by 34 percent—twice the rate of improvement at other locations in the city.

NTSB's study led to several important conclusions:

- Effective street designs for pedestrian safety are highly context-dependent and should be managed by local interests; however, states and cities would benefit from resources, tools, and funding support to develop and implement effective plans.
- The design guidance needed to develop effective pedestrian safety action plans is readily available to local transportation planners.
- Addressing the pedestrian safety design changes needed for many of our urban environments will take substantially more resources.

I hope this information will be valuable to the Committee as it considers HB 478.