



A Pedestrian Agenda for Massachusetts

State transportation planning and investment should reflect the needs of pedestrians. This position paper outlines the pedestrian-related leadership, policies, programs and capital investments that Massachusetts should adopt and undertake.

Good walking conditions are the backbone of every community's transportation system and one of the most important elements of livable communities. Neighborhoods where walking is an attractive, convenient and safe option are healthier for residents, have fewer cars on the road, and have a stronger sense of community. A complete and well-maintained walking network has the greatest importance for those members of the community who depend the most on walking – the poor, the elderly, the disabled, children and transit users.

Every trip involves walking, alone or in combination with public transit, driving or bicycling. In Massachusetts, walking trips are the second highest transportation mode. In this era of skyrocketing obesity, global warming, ever worsening traffic congestion and high energy costs, increasing the number and share of transportation trips that are accomplished by walking should be a key element of all of our transportation choices.

Leadership

- Select a Secretary of Transportation who understands the importance of a truly multi-modal transportation system and sees walking as an integral part of that system.
- Create an Under-Secretary of Transportation for Pedestrian Affairs. The Under-Secretary should have the role and authority to ensure that pedestrians are well-accommodated by the Commonwealth's transportation system and should forge cross-agency liaisons with the Departments of Health, Education, Elder Affairs, Economic Development, Energy, and Environmental Affairs. The position should not combine pedestrian and bicycle responsibilities because facilities and needs are significantly different.
- Create a culture of walking that sees the Governor and senior members of the administration serving as role models for Massachusetts residents. This should include visible walking and transit use by the leadership team. Short trips should be accomplished on foot by the staff of each agency, and EOT should join with all of the state's agencies and departments to encourage healthy and environmentally friendly travel by all employees.

Policies and Plans

- Support legislation to reduce the prevailing speed limit from 30 mph to 25 mph in urbanized areas. Speed kills pedestrians. A pedestrian hit by a vehicle traveling 45 miles per hour has an 85% likelihood of being killed. At 30 mph it is 40%; at 20 mph it is 5%.
- Use pedestrian-friendly design speeds for arterial and collector roadway projects. Design new roadways and modify existing roadways to ensure moderate design speeds that are safe for pedestrians, transit users and bicycles.

WalkBoston is New England's premier pedestrian advocacy organization, with members from 75 Massachusetts cities and towns. Walk Boston encourages walking throughout Massachusetts for transportation, health and vibrant communities. Our education and advocacy programs give voice to citizens to make their communities walkable.

MAKING OUR COMMUNITIES MORE WALKABLE

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- Pedestrian access should be planned and funded in all rail, bus and rapid transit projects, whether they are new projects or upgrades of existing facilities.
- Require review of pedestrian accommodations in state environmental review and permitting processes. Existing and proposed pedestrian facilities, including connections to transit, schools and commercial areas should be identified and discussed in ENFs, EIRs and other state review documents. State transportation agencies should take the lead in implementing this review.
- Bring the quality of pedestrian data up to that existing for vehicles. In our data-driven times, if you are not counted, you don't count. Currently, the state's data on pedestrian (and bicycle) crashes and injuries, including their frequency, numbers and locations, is poorly collected. Therefore there is inadequate information to target improvements. Pedestrian trip data – current or projected – should be collected systematically, as it is for vehicles.
- Support legislation requiring local pedestrian advisory committees. In order to receive state transportation monies, Massachusetts communities should engage in serious planning for pedestrian transportation needs. Local advisory committees are a low-cost method of initiating this planning.

Programs

- Give strong support for the new MA Highway Design Manual. In 2006 MassHighway published a new roadway design manual that was written in collaboration with cities, towns, and advocacy groups. It is a leader nationally and has received many awards. Continuing to train MHD engineers, local public works officials and consultants in using the approach is a must. The manual's re-assessment and updating must be on-going.
- Support and supplement Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Programs. SRTS programs – which were pioneered in New England by WalkBoston – are a highly effective way to motivate a wide variety of community actors in pedestrian safety including local police, school personnel, parents, school neighbors, local public works and transportation staff, and of course, children. Increasing walking (and biking) to school requires education, training and encouragement. Massachusetts should allocate funds for these purposes to supplement federal SRTS program monies.
- Educate both pedestrians and drivers about pedestrian safety. Training for new drivers should include greater attention to pedestrian safety through the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) training guides. Safety training for pedestrians should also be considered.
- Develop programs to encourage more people to walk. Walking is critical to good health and can contribute substantially to reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality. Massachusetts should undertake effective social marketing efforts [such as those successfully undertaken in Portland, OR (see www.gettingaroundportland.org) and Bellingham, WA] to increase walking (and transit and bicycle use). These efforts should be carried out in concert with transit providers, municipalities, local departments of public health, hospitals, community health centers, schools, universities and transportation management associations.
- Train state and local police about the importance of enforcing traffic laws that affect the safety of pedestrians (and all roadway users) including: speed limits, yielding to pedestrians in crosswalks, yielding to pedestrians on right turns on red, and no passing of school buses.
- Create programs to significantly improve sidewalk snow and ice clearance. The importance of roadway snow removal and ice clearance on pedestrian safety cannot be overemphasized. Snowy and icy sidewalks and blocked crosswalks disrupt such public services as postal deliveries or meals on wheels, and commuters and school children find

their routes blocked. Un-cleared sidewalks parallel to snow mounds often force pedestrians onto the street where pedestrian-automobile crashes are far more likely to occur. Even when sidewalks are cleared, roadway-related snow mounds impede safe walking and frequently block pedestrian access across intersections. Massachusetts should develop and implement a public marketing campaign to improve sidewalk snow and ice clearance by property owners, municipal, and state agencies. It should develop a snow clearance priority plan for state transportation comparable to the excellent plan developed last year by the Division of Conservation and Recreation.

Capital Investments

- Make use of Federal funding available for pedestrian improvements. For almost 20 years federal funding has been available for pedestrian facilities through the Enhancements, Congestion Management and Air Quality and Hazard Elimination programs. Massachusetts has not been using these funds. EOT should provide cities and towns with a simple and straightforward application process to access these funds, and provide transparency about their use.
- Include pedestrian improvements in all roadway and transit projects. Pedestrian improvements -- sidewalks, crosswalks, well-timed walk/don't walk signals, and traffic calming -- are integral to all roadway and transit improvements. State project budgets should include costs of pedestrian improvements. Waivers of sidewalk construction should be discouraged and universal design should be encouraged.
- Include pedestrian facilities in Fix-It-First projects. A long-term vision of a complete and safe pedestrian infrastructure should exist throughout the state, and should not be ignored in fix-it-first projects where the vehicle right-of-way is not being expanded but where pedestrians are not currently accommodated.
- Install countdown WALK signals at intersections. Studies show pedestrian countdown signals reduce pedestrian accidents by 50%.
- Invest in Safe Routes to Schools capital improvements. Walking to school is difficult or dangerous in many locations either because traffic is moving too fast, there are no sidewalks, or the sidewalks are inadequate. Safe Routes to School programs can only succeed where there are safe walkways for children. Cars ferrying children to school contribute 20 - 25% of all traffic during the morning peak hour. The construction of safe street crossings, traffic calming, and sidewalks (or trails) to encourage walking to schools will help reduce vehicle travel and should be given transportation funding priority.
- Supplement or expand Chapter 90 funding. A program for municipal pedestrian facilities should be established to supplement or build upon the Chapter 90 program to allow communities to meet pedestrian needs without reducing funding for vehicle traffic improvements.

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