



Online Newsletter *Volume 1, Number 1: August 2002*



Making Oakland Safer for Older Pedestrians

The concern among older adults that walking could lead to being injured may be a significant barrier to achieving the advantages that come from being more physically active, according to Oakland's leading pedestrian advocacy group.

Related Links and Resources:

For more information on the Oakland Pedestrian Safety Project, call Tom Van Demark 510/238-7049 or [email](#)

A description of [signal timing strategies for pedestrian safety](#)

The UC Berkeley Traffic Safety Center's [work on the Oakland pedestrian scramble](#)

Related [story about the Oakland pedestrian scramble](#)

Other stories this issue:

[Older Adults Are Driving Transportation Policy](#)

[Why Older Adults Don't Walk](#)

[Scrambling for Safety](#)

[Aging Behind the Wheel](#)

"We believe that there is a substantial group of senior citizens who are intimidated by the traffic environment to such a degree that they are not able to walk in their communities and as a result, miss out on the physical and mental benefits of an active lifestyle," notes Tom Van Demark, of the Oakland Pedestrian Safety Project.

Older pedestrians in Oakland suffer a disproportionate share of pedestrian fatalities. In 2001, according to the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency, which includes Oakland in its jurisdiction, adults 65 and older accounted for nearly one-quarter (24 percent) of the city's pedestrian fatalities, but they made up only 10.5 percent of the city's population. This trend reflects a nationwide pattern: in 2000 (the most recent year for which national data is available), pedestrians 65 and older accounted for 21 percent of the nation's pedestrian fatalities but were only 13 percent of the population, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

This spring, the Oakland Pedestrian Safety Project offered a series of mini-grants for grass roots approaches to pedestrian safety. Specific intersections have been identified as high-risk for seniors and are being targeted for improvements. They include upgrading crosswalks and controlling traffic speed and flow. (See related story on the Oakland pedestrian scramble.)

"The county's goal is to reduce the deaths and injuries caused by cars in Oakland, and seniors and children are most at risk," said Darryl Stewart, aide to Nate Miley, who represents Oakland on the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, and previously served on the Oakland City Council. (Miley is also on the UC Berkeley Traffic Safety Center's advisory board.)

Miley, who is also executive director of United Seniors of Oakland and

[Making Oakland Safer for Older Pedestrians](#)

[Getting to the Heart of Aging and Mobility](#)

[The California Task Force](#)

[Local Transportation Programs](#)

[Top of page](#)

[Download PDF of this page](#)

[Download PDF of August 2002 issue \(1.5MB\)](#)

[Send us your comments or email a letter to the editor](#)

[Back to Front Page](#)

[Traffic Safety Center Home](#)

Alameda County, is one of the leaders demanding attention for older pedestrians. While on the city council, he was known as "the speed bump king," notes Stewart. Other tools he has advocated to slow traffic and give seniors more time to cross include traffic circles and countdown signals at crosswalks, Stewart said.

Education is another area where Oakland is specifically targeting seniors, Van Demark said. "We're finding that as we do education around pedestrian safety, many adults also don't know about certain safety measures, like what different traffic signals mean," he said. Crosswalk signals are also frequently unclear to older adults. Stickers explaining them with pictographs have been added to light poles at a number of crosswalks to pedestrians' attention. Other basics include explaining the importance of looking all four ways (left, right, ahead, and behind) before crossing a street and not crossing on a yellow light.

Another educational effort is a new project funded by the California Department of Transportation's Office of Traffic Safety that pairs local youngsters and seniors to make presentations on traffic safety at community gatherings. Aiming to make people both safer drivers and safer pedestrians, the senior-teen teams address topics such as driving under the influence, red-light running, jaywalking, and crossing streets safely.

