

**Identifying Barriers to Understanding Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety
Laws**

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Summary of Interview with Out-of-State Stakeholder

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Introduction

As part of the Identifying Barriers to Understanding Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Laws project, the project team spoke with an out-of-state stakeholder to understand how pedestrian and bicycle safety issues are viewed in another state. The purpose of this objective was to determine new approaches to overcoming barriers to understanding pedestrian and bicycle state laws. Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) researchers identified a leading researcher from another university-based transportation research organization outside of Texas to interview. The identity of the interviewee is confidential to meet with requirements from the Texas A&M University Institutional Review Board (IRB).

This researcher has a Ph.D. in epidemiology with a concentration in injury prevention and a Masters in Regional Planning. They have led a statewide education and enforcement program on pedestrian and bicycle safety in their home state and have been involved in the development of several Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) resources.

The interview took place on February 21, 2022.

Interview Responses

This section of the summary document provides the questions and responses heard during the interview.

- 1. What do you see as the primary safety issues for pedestrians and bicyclists in your state?**
 - Speed and access to safe crossings are the two biggest issues.
 - The pandemic has led to an increase in crashes involving higher speeds.
 - High-speed roads differentially effect low-income communities. These communities have a greater need for transit access and access to walking and bicycling infrastructure to access transit.
 - Drivers are less likely to yield to pedestrians on higher speed roads.
 - This impacts the ability of people to cross the road to get to their bus stop.
 - Within crash data, there are big differences in who is being injured based on injuries by road type and impact speed. These differences are apparent among ages, races, and genders.
- 2. What do you see as the biggest barriers to the public's understanding of pedestrian and bicycle safety laws?**
 - People understand that they are supposed to yield but don't understand laws about passing bicyclists.

- People do not understand Share the Road messaging.
- Laws are not clear and are hard to communicate. For example, regarding pedestrian right-of-way in midblock crosswalks, the public seems to know the signs. However, drivers often do not yield unless the speed is low enough.

3. What methods do you suggest for reaching more of the public with information about pedestrian and bicyclist safety?

- Examine the principles of health behavior change under which to base your messaging.
- Rely on social norms and how to address the gap between what people think is happening and what is actually happening. This could include raising awareness that most people yield to pedestrians here (in this community) and trying to advance that norm.
- Collect data to determine driver yielding rates.
- Rely on coalitions to reach networks.
- Meet people where they are - focus on places where people already get their information.
 - Utility bills
 - Bus wraps
 - Banners at schools, churches, large employment centers, hospitals (e.g., staff newsletters, employer-based communication)
 - Stencils in high crash locations
- Provide information in English and Spanish.
- Educate people about how they can get safety improvements in their communities.
 - The public needs to know how they can create change in their environment. They already know how to walk and how to push the button to activate a crossing signal.
 - Give them information on how to report crashes/problems to their state agencies and police department.
 - Provide suggestions on how to advocate for getting safer facilities, such as:
 - Making requests
 - Pointing out maintenance issues
 - Using See Click Fix (www.seeclickfix.com), a website which streamlines service requests
- Educate state employees on pedestrian safety.

- Educate people about the terms used to refer to newer pedestrian treatments, such as rectangular rapid flashing beacons, pedestrian hybrid beacons, etc.

4. Is there a particular set of research, or a program/initiative that you have worked on, that you found to be particularly effective or are particularly proud of?

- Good work is happening under the Safe Systems Approach.
- Starting to understand the role of the built environment and addressing behavior, and how this environment can play a role.
- Shifting from blame on individuals to the people/agencies that design the systems (e.g., roads, cars).
- There is a connection between built environments and behaviors.

5. What other stakeholders in your state have you found to be helpful in your efforts?

- Partnerships with:
 - Public health (e.g., state or local health agencies, hospitals, etc.)
 - Law enforcement
 - State, county or city governments (or transportation agencies)
- State employee networks
- It would be good to bring in the housing and social services programs.
- Stronger advocacy groups (like Families for Safe Streets) encouraging behavior change has been more effective than us showing up as researchers.

Other discussion points with a brief description of the issue:

- Getting away from victim blaming.
 - Victim blaming is holding the victim responsible for something that was done wrong to them by others. In the case of vehicular crashes with pedestrians and bicyclists, this means not taking into account the role of the motor vehicle driver in the crash. This is something that the interviewee said we need to avoid when addressing pedestrian and bicycle safety.
- People still don't understand the impact of speeds on pedestrians.
 - The speed of a vehicle has a profound impact on the severity of a crash with a pedestrian. The chances of a pedestrian surviving a crash with a motor vehicle traveling over 30mph is very low and diminishes as vehicle speed increases. The interviewee said we should emphasize this more in outreach and education.
- There is a bigger issue of speeding that affects all crashes.

- The issue of speed affects all crashes, as we saw a dramatic increase in crashes due to speed in 2020, especially fatal crashes. This also should be emphasized in outreach and education to the public, according to the interviewee.

Key Findings

The researcher interviewee provided the perspective of someone who has been in the pedestrian and bicycle safety education arena for many years, as a leader of a specific education and outreach program and the director of a clearinghouse of safety research. The overarching findings and recommendations of the interview are as follows:

- Recognize that laws are not always clear, are sometimes hard to understand, and sometimes even more challenging to communicate.
- Equity concerns should be a primary consideration in safety education and outreach.
- Consider broadening the education beyond practicing safe behaviors to providing people with knowledge about how to make their communities safer.
- The impact of motor vehicle speed remains a critical concern for the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists. Continued education is needed to increase awareness of how speed affects injuries.
- Meeting people where they are is recommended for education and outreach efforts. Providing information where they are already receiving it and making sure it's easy to understand.
- The built environment is an important safety consideration for people walking and bicycling.
- Reach out to partners in the community that can be helpful in education and outreach efforts such as advocacy groups, state employee networks, and social services programs.