

Understanding Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Laws in Rural Communities

Instructor/Presenter Guide

Purpose: The presentation was created under a Texas Department of Transportation funded project to provide slides that raise awareness of pedestrian and bicycle safety laws in Texas. The presentation and associated materials are available to anyone who wants to present on the topic in their community.

Target Audience: All Texans. The presentation is designed to be delivered to all audiences. However, if you have a specific concern you may remove slides.

- **Pedestrian: 1-8; 12-24**

- **Bicyclist: 1-2; 9-24**

Script: The team has included a script for instructors/presenters to use, but please feel free to modify as you see fit. The script is included below as well as available as notes in the Powerpoint File.

Slide 1: Understanding Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Laws in Rural Communities

Good morning/afternoon, I am (Insert Name) from (Insert Organization). Today we are going to talk about pedestrian and bicycle safety in urban areas in Texas based on a TxDOT funded project conducted by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute focused on increasing awareness of pedestrian and bicycle safety laws.

Slide 2: What do we know about pedestrian and bicycle crashes in rural areas?

So, what do we know about pedestrian and bicycle crashes in rural areas?

Let's go through findings from a crash analysis that tells us about pedestrian and bicycle crashes in rural areas of Texas.

Slide 3: Impact of Crashes: Pedestrians

There were 2,782 pedestrian crashes from 2015 to 2019 in rural areas. Of these there were 451 fatalities and 2,368 injuries of pedestrians resulted from these crashes. Some crashes could involve more than one injury or death, which is why the numbers don't necessarily add up.

Interestingly 34% of these crashes involved an intersection which shows they may have been preventable had existing pedestrian and bicycle safety laws on yielding right of way been followed.

Slide 4: Impact of Crashes: Bicyclists

During the same time period there were 843 bicyclist crashes which resulted in 40 bicyclist fatalities and 726 bicyclist injuries. Some crashes could involve more than one injury or death, which is why the numbers don't necessarily add up.

A higher percentage of bicyclist crashes involved an intersection at 55% which again supports the need for increased awareness of laws designed to protect pedestrians and bicyclists.

Slide 5: What did Texans tell us about pedestrian and bicycle safety in rural areas?

What did Texans tell us about pedestrian and bicycle safety in rural areas?

Now that we know a bit about crash statistics in Texas, let's explore the results of a statewide survey and focus groups conducted to get Texan's thoughts on pedestrian and bicycle safety in rural areas.

Slide 6: Survey Findings: Barriers to Walking

The survey found the top reported obstacles to walking more were weather, lack of sidewalks, time to get to destination, and poor lighting. Are there other barriers you've encountered to walking more? Next we'll talk about what can be done about it.

Slide 7: Survey Findings: Barriers to Walking (con't)

So how can we address weather, lack of sidewalks, time to get to destination and poor lighting? In traffic safety, the 3Es of Engineering, Education and Enforcement are the most common way to address safety issues.

The 3Es can be used to address some of these barriers, including:

- Engineering
 - Build more sidewalks!
 - Improve/increase number of pedestrian crossings to reduce time.
 - Improve signal timing to prioritize pedestrians.
 - Improve/increase amount of lighting.
- Education
 - Education targeting drivers on laws regarding pedestrian and bicycle safety.
 - Education of pedestrians on being visible at night.
- Enforcement
 - Enforcement targeting drivers on laws regarding pedestrian and bicycle safety.

Can you think of other ways to address these barriers? What can we do when we are out on the road?

Slide 8: Survey Findings: Reported Pedestrian Behaviors

The survey then asked pedestrians about their behaviors. This table show the percentage that very often or always report each behavior.

23% reported crossing the road at a location other than a crosswalk or intersection. It is illegal to cross the road outside of a marked crosswalk between two adjacent intersections where there are traffic signals in use.

A majority respondents reported they follow pedestrian signals when available which is important as these indicate right-of-way.

Less than 25% of respondents reported wearing reflective clothing when walking at night.

Approximately 64% of respondents reported that they walk on the left side of the road facing traffic if no sidewalks are present which allows a pedestrian to react to vehicle movements. This is a particularly important part of education, given the survey respondents saying that lack of sidewalks are a barrier to walking more.

Slide 9: Survey Findings: Identified Barriers to Riding a Bicycle

The survey found the top reported obstacles to riding a bicycle more were weather, lack of bike lanes/trails and driver behavior. Are there other barriers you've encountered to walking more?

So what can be done to address these issues?

Slide 10: Survey Findings: Identified Barriers to Riding a Bicycle (con't)

The 3Es can also be used to address these barriers, including:

- Engineering
 - Build more bike lanes/trails
- Education
 - Education targeting drivers on pedestrian and bicycle safety laws
 - Education of bicyclists on how to share the road with motorists and bicycle safety laws.
- Enforcement
 - Enforcement targeting drivers

Can you think of other ways to address these barriers? What can we do when we are out on the road?

Slide 11: Survey Findings: Reported Bicyclist Behaviors

The survey then asked bicyclists (those who reported riding a bike) about their behaviors. This table show the percentage that very often or always report each behavior.

The survey found that 18.3% reported riding against traffic in the road when bicyclists should ride the same direction as motor vehicle traffic (bicycles are considered vehicles according to Texas Law!). However, less than 30% reported that they use a light on the front and red reflector or light on the rear of the bicycle at night which is required by the law.

The survey then asked about personal protective equipment which found 27.3% of respondents wore reflective clothing at night and 22.6% reported wearing a helmet. Reflective clothing can increase your visibility and wearing a helmet decreases your change of a brain injury.

Slide 12: Survey Findings: Reported Motorist Behaviors

Motorist behaviors around pedestrians and bicyclists were examined in the survey responses. Again, this table show the percentage that very often or always report each behavior.

The survey showed that a majority of motorists reported yielding to pedestrians as appropriate, however, much lower percentages reported doing so away from intersections.

The majority also reported stopping the vehicle before crosswalk lines and ensuring a safe distance between themselves and a bicyclist. These are all important behaviors that keep pedestrians and bicyclists safe.

Now let's review how pedestrian and bicycle safety laws affect these behaviors.

- Drivers must yield to pedestrians in the following situations:
 - At both marked and unmarked crosswalks
 - When pedestrians are in a crosswalk if there is no traffic control signal
 - When making turns – even if the light is green – unless you have a green turn arrow
- Stopping before the crosswalk lines provides a safe space for pedestrians to cross the road.
- Passing bicyclists at a safe distance is the law and provides them with comfort while riding.

Can you think of other motorist behaviors that may impact pedestrian and bicyclist safety?

Slide 13: Focus Groups

Focus groups found that laws are confusing and difficult to understand which this project aims to address through educational efforts and by designing easy to understand materials which will be presented in a few minutes. Specific to rural areas, higher speed limits outside of urban areas can pose risks to the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists. In addition, there is less interaction with people walking and biking and therefore it might not be something drivers are thinking of.

And, the quote here is interesting, "Of course, we are all pedestrians at one point, but we may not walk daily." Therefore, some people may not consider themselves a pedestrian because they don't walk everyday, but in reality we are all pedestrians at one point and that can help to humanize the pedestrian experience when you are driving in a car.

Slide 14: Knowledge Assessment

Now that we have learned a bit about pedestrian and bicycle safety, let's test our knowledge!

Slide 15: Let's Test Our Knowledge #1

True/False. Bicyclists do not have the same rights and responsibilities as a motor vehicle on Texas roadways.

Answer: False

Bicyclists have the same rights, to:

- Ride in the road (unless a sign indicates they are prohibited)

This also means drivers need to Share the Road with bicycles as if they were any other vehicle.

Bicyclists also have the same responsibilities, to:

- Follow traffic laws
- Follow traffic signals/signs (such as stopping at red lights/stop signs)

Slide 16: Let's Test Our Knowledge #2

True/False. As a pedestrian if a sidewalk is available and accessible they must use it.

Answer: True

Pedestrians must use a sidewalk if there is one there that they can use.

Key terms are "available" and "accessible."

For example:

If you are in a wheelchair and there are no ramps to get to it

If there is something blocking it such as a vehicle or other object

Slide 17: Let's Test Our Knowledge #3

True/False. As a pedestrian, if a sidewalk is NOT available and accessible, you should walk on the left-hand side of the street-facing traffic.

Answer: True

Pedestrians should, if possible, walk against the traffic flow so they can see and react to vehicle movements.

It's also the law.

The law does say "if possible," realizing it's not feasible or even safe in all circumstances, but it is generally the safest option.

Slide 18: Let's Test Our Knowledge #4

Which of the pictures contain a crosswalk?

Image 1

Image 2

Image 3

Image 4

Hint: There is more than one

Answer: All of them

Most likely it was image 3 that threw you off. Let's explore that in detail...

Slide 19: Unmarked Crosswalks

The third image is of an unmarked crosswalk at an intersection. This is basically a crosswalk where the lines just haven't been painted.

Be aware that these exist at all 4-way intersections, even if there is no traffic control (e.g. stop sign) in your direction of travel.

This video helps to explain it a bit more.

Slide 20: Infographic

This infographic is designed to be used as an educational tool. It uses the main findings of the survey to tie-in the pedestrian and bicycle safety laws.

Slide 21: Infographic

This infographic specifically talks about intersection safety and what each of the different road users should be aware of at intersections.

Slide 22: Factsheets

There are also factsheets available to education bicyclists, pedestrians and motorists on the laws. They are available in both English and Spanish.

Slide 23: Educational Resources

All of the resources mentioned in the previous slides are available on the project webpage.

In addition, there are YouTube videos available that demonstrate pedestrian and bicycle safety laws and other educational materials.

Slide 24: Questions? (Contact Info)