

Press Release

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12 Ways to Make Roads Safer for Pedestrians

New international report highlights ways for policy makers to improve walking conditions for more liveable cities

Walking is inexpensive, emission-free, uses no fossil fuel, offers important health benefits and, for those without substantially impaired mobility, is accessible regardless of income. Walking is the most fundamental form of mobility.

But walking can often also be challenging. Pedestrians are particularly vulnerable in traffic crashes. The number of pedestrians killed on roads is estimated at above 400 000 per year, i.e. around a third of annual road fatalities around the globe.

Pedestrian Safety will be the focus of the United Nations Road Safety Week from 6-13 May 2013. A report released by the International Transport Forum (ITF) at the OECD highlights the role of national governments in improving pedestrian mobility and proposes 12 sets of measures to create safer walking environments.

“We need to learn again how to walk. And that means learning how to organise the space for walking” said José Viegas, Secretary-General of ITF, on the occasion of the report’s launch. “Urban environments are often making it difficult to enjoy this most fundamental form of moving. This report will help governments to take the right steps towards better mobility and more liveable cities.”

ITF road safety expert Véronique Feypell de la Beaumelle added: “Pedestrians are amongst the road users most vulnerable to traffic injury. It has become highly challenging, especially for older people and children, to cope with the complex, sometimes hostile, traffic conditions that characterise today’s cities and towns.”

The study, entitled “Pedestrian Safety, Urban Space and Health”, was prepared by a Working Group of transport experts and urban planners from 19 countries and the World Health Organization under the leadership of the ITF.

Key facts on walking from the report:

- ▶ Walking represents up to 50% of trips in urban areas. The vitality of a city is closely linked to people being out and about on foot for many purposes.
- ▶ An 80% drop in pedestrian risk of death is achievable by traffic speed reductions from 50 km/h to 30 km/h. Lowering motorised traffic speeds is a key to improving pedestrian safety.
- ▶ Around 30% of pedestrians have impaired mobility at any given time – from mothers negotiating traffic with young children to walkers carrying heavy items to older pedestrians with physical handicaps.
- ▶ Up to 75% of pedestrian injuries result from walkers falling in public spaces. This hazard is in part related to maintenance and design of public spaces, not to a collision with a vehicle. It is underrated and frequently ignored.

- ▶ Pedestrians suffer severe trauma from road accidents. The magnitude of the consequences is known to be underestimated.

Key recommendations of the report:

1. Integrate the needs of pedestrians at the earliest stages of urban planning projects and transport investments.
2. Establish clear administrative responsibilities at all levels of government for coordination of initiatives to promote walking.
3. Improve knowledge about walking: Create a standardised methodology for measuring, reporting and monitoring pedestrian mobility. Create national pedestrian observatories and encourage international comparisons.
4. Treat public transport services as an integrated part of the development of new urban areas. This can support a shift towards higher-density, mixed-use walking and transit-oriented urban environments.
5. Give more space to non-motorised traffic in city centres: Provide easy, safe, well-maintained pedestrian access to public transport and city centre destinations. Develop car-free areas, discourage over-use of cars in city centres, and prevent parking on pavements and pedestrian crossings.
6. Develop national pedestrian planning guidance for local administrations. Plans should routinely consider the impact of projects on pedestrians and cyclists. They should also include targets for future levels of walking.
7. Encourage employers to create incentives for employees to walk and cycle to work.
8. Adopt a “safe system” approach for the design of walking environments. (The “safe system” approach recognises that road users make mistakes and requires road design to take account of this to reduce the risk of serious injury).
9. Implement traffic-calming zones and generalise 30 km/h zones in areas with high pedestrian activity.
10. Introduce high-quality road safety education in schools and local community centres.
11. Review current traffic codes to strengthen the legal and financial protection of pedestrians.
12. Commission more research to better understand mobility behaviour and trends.

[Download the report](#) from the OECD bookshop.

[Browse a free copy](#) of the report online.

[Watch a video](#) with Working Group Chairman Thanos Vlastos.

[More information on the report's Working Group](#).

Go to ITF website (www.internationaltransportforum.org).

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