

**Remarks Prepared for
David Friedman, Acting Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety Administrator
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The “RITE” Approach to Pedestrian and Cyclist Safety
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Thank you to the World Traffic Safety Symposium for your warm welcome and for the commitment of all of NHTSA’s safety partners who are here today. Your work is saving lives and everyone at NHTSA knows and appreciates it.

Today, here in the always vibrant, always changing city that is New York, I want to talk with you about how Americans’ shifting transportation needs are posing new safety challenges and how—together—we will meet these challenges and offer safer transportation solutions.

Transportation in America is a story of dreamers, builders, and workers who transform the way we live, work, raise our families and simply get from point A to point B.

When a young nation needed to speed the flow of commerce to its interior, we built canals, and when we needed to connect the two coasts of a continental power, we invested in railroads.

As cities grew we built mass transit systems and later, as automobiles became a mass consumer good, an interstate highway system to better connect the country.

At each point in the history of American transportation, we made choices to invest in ways that reflected how Americans were getting around and to ensure that they could do so safely.

Today, we’re seeing a significant change in Americans’ transportation choices. Americans are voting with their feet—by walking, running, and cycling—as a way to get to work, school, or to stay in shape.

But this not simply about someone else. This is not about some nameless, faceless them.

This is about you, this about everyone listening to this speech, about everyone reading a story about this issue or watching it on TV or listening to it on the radio.

This is about everyone, because at some point just about each and every day, everyone is a pedestrian. And while not everyone is a cyclist, more and more Americans are choosing that efficient mode of transportation every day.

Just as one example, more than 40 cities now have bike share programs—including New York—and they’re being planned or have been proposed in 30 more.

Here in New York City, you already know that everyone is a pedestrian.

The busy city crosswalks of morning and afternoon commutes or of tourist spots almost each and every moment of the day demonstrates that for many.

But everyone who drives a car is also a pedestrian when they park and walk across a street or a parking lot to work, shop or play. The same is true for everyone who takes a bus or train, every child on their way to school or the park.

This daily activity combined with the renewed interest in walking and cycling brings challenges.

We need to adapt to protect the safety of the American public because:

- Pedestrian fatalities were up more than 6 percent in 2012, reaching 4,743 lives lost in that year alone.
- That's one pedestrian's life lost every two hours.
- Injuries were also up 10 percent in 2012, leading to one pedestrian injury every seven minutes.
- Cyclist fatalities and injuries were up too, with 726 lives lost and nearly 50,000 injured.

Equally frightening, and also deeply disappointing, is the fact that nearly one-in-five crashes involving pedestrians and cyclists were hit and run.

That said we should be careful not to place the blame entirely on drivers. A little more than a third of pedestrians and cyclists killed had BACs of 0.08 or higher—in other words, above the legal limit to drive.

So we all have to improve if we're going to see fewer fatalities and injuries and to achieve safer roads.

And we all must remember that the pedestrian and cyclist fatalities injuries in 2012 are not just statistics... These are lives forever lost or forever changed—the lives of our family, friends, and neighbors.

All you need to understand the urgency of this issue is to think of Cooper Stock, whose heartrending story I'm sure many of you know.

Cooper lived right here in New York City on the Upper West Side. He was just 9-years old, an avid Yankees and Knicks fan, and a boy who sounds like his smile could light up a room.

But, while holding his father's hand and crossing a street not too far from home, Cooper was struck and killed by a taxi that was making a left hand turn.

These tragedies do not need to happen. They are 100 percent preventable. And no family should ever know such pain.

For Cooper, for his family, and for so many others whose lives have been cut tragically short, we can and must do better.

I believe we can enhance pedestrian safety if we're ready to take the RITE approach. In this case, I spell right R-I-T-E.

Yes, I am an engineer, so my spelling is suspect, but in this case it is intentional. R-I-T-E stands for Responsibility, Infrastructure, Technology, and Enforcement.

Responsibility because there will never be a replacement for an attentive driver or pedestrian who is obeying the rules of the road.

Infrastructure because we know that the design of our roads and bridges, crosswalks and sidewalks can improve or undermine safety.

Technology because pushing the envelope of new vehicle systems and other safety advances will save lives.

Enforcement because a ticket is one of the fastest ways to send a message to drivers, cyclists and pedestrians who are risking their safety and that of others by not obeying the law.

It begins with personal responsibility because we've yet to build a road, write a law, or invent a technology that will substitute for a driver, pedestrian, or cyclist who takes ownership of their own safety and acts with concern for the safety of others.

We know that we all take risks with our safety that we just should never take. We're human.

In a rush, we might cross against the light. On our bikes, we might not stop at every stop sign. As drivers, being late for work can mean the temptation to rush into a crosswalk before the pedestrian does to get across and save a bit of time instead of waiting for them to walk safely by.

You can see this happening on the streets of New York. I did on my walk from Penn Station to Times Square yesterday afternoon.

You can also see it in towns big and small, and even right outside of DOT Headquarters in Washington where I work.

Our headquarters sits on a long, flat, urban six-lane road, which means cars often racing toward a yellow light.

Our corner has a bus stop and on the diagonal corner, there's a Metro station, which means pedestrians rushing across the road—sometimes against the light. And there have been injuries and deaths.

We should all know better. And we could all do with a refresher course on pedestrian safety.

To provide that refresher, NHTSA and our colleagues at the Federal Highway Administration launched “Everyone is a Pedestrian,” an education initiative and accompanying web site with tips to help Americans stay safe.

The site also provides resources for local leaders, city planners, and others to help them provide safe walkable communities.

We will keep doing all we can at NHTSA to speak to the American people about how to stay safe as a pedestrian.

But each of us is part of the foundation for success.

Now, if I sound a little pedantic or preachy, please excuse me. In addition to being the Acting Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, I’m also the father of a young son.

I always make him look both ways when crossing the street and even when we’re navigating the garage in our apartment complex. Even then, he recently almost stepped off the curb in front of an oncoming car when he and my wife were rushing to catch a bus.

Her firm grip ensured that he was safe, but it was a frightening reminder of how close any of us can come to tragedy.

The passion I have for my son’s safety is the same that I bring to my job at NHTSA. We all have to be the first line of defense when it comes to our safety and our children’s safety.

Of course, there are limits to what a responsible person can do to protect ourselves when others choose to be irresponsible. That’s why there are four parts to the RITE way to enhance roadway safety. And the “I” in RITE stands for infrastructure.

We now understand a great deal about how, for example, an intersection’s design can enhance or undermine the safety of pedestrians.

Our friends at the Federal Highway Administration have catalogued what they call “proven safety countermeasures.”

They guide us to safer designs for medians and crosswalk signals that are shown to reduce pedestrian crashes.

For example, pedestrian hybrid beacons, also known as HAWKS, which include lights and signs to warn drivers of pedestrians in the crosswalk, have been shown to reduce pedestrian crashes by nearly 70 percent.

These are not expensive solutions but they do deliver a massive return on investment in terms of lives saved and injuries prevented.

Since 2009, FHWA has committed more than \$3.8 billion to more than 11,000 projects that make it safer for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Which brings us to the third letter in the RITE way—and T stands for technology.

The last decade has seen amazing growth in vehicle technology that has made our cars and trucks safer than ever.

Technology also has tremendous potential to improve roadway safety pedestrians and cyclists.

For example, NHTSA recently issued our final rule mandating improved rear visibility, basically back up cameras and video screens, in all new light vehicles by 2018.

On average, there are 210 fatalities and 15,000 injuries each year caused by backover crashes.

The majority of these are children younger than age 5 and seniors over age 70. Improved rear visibility can help save lives and prevent those injuries, especially among some of our most vulnerable pedestrians.

In January, I joined Secretary Foxx in announcing that we would develop rules that would require new technology to enable vehicles to communicate with one another and warn drivers of impending crashes to help avoid them in the first place.

Manufacturers are also looking at that same technology as a way for vehicles to communicate with mobile devices carried by pedestrians or cyclists to warn both of a potential crash.

Advances in vehicle safety technologies like these can deliver great lifesaving potential and be a part of the RITE way to enhance safety on our roadways.

Finally, when it comes to saving lives and preventing injuries on America's roadways, there is no more essential element than the men and women of law enforcement. Enforcement is, of course, the "E" in the RITE way.

NHTSA is tremendously proud of our safety record.

Since 1970, highway fatalities have declined by 36 percent. Just in the past decade, we've seen fatalities fall by 22 percent.

How did we achieve these lifesaving results? With regard to road user behavior, it's because we stick to what works: effective highway safety laws, public education, and aggressive enforcement.

A similar approach can work for pedestrian safety.

Cities across America are making pedestrian safety a greater priority and NHTSA is ready to help.

Last year, we invited states with cities that had the highest rates of pedestrian safety deaths and injuries to apply for grants that would help them improve education and enforcement as part of a Pedestrian Safety Action Plan.

Today, I have the pleasure of announcing the states and cities that will be sharing \$1.6 million of funding. These awards recognize both the challenges these communities face in pedestrian safety and pay tribute to each city's commitment to safer, more walkable communities.

Kentucky was awarded \$307,000 and Louisville will use the funds to create a pedestrian education program for school-aged children, safe walking routes for senior citizens, and to conduct law enforcement training and cross walk enforcement activities.

Pennsylvania was awarded \$525,000 and Philadelphia will use the funds to address pedestrian safety in downtown areas by educating vehicle drivers in 20 high-crash locations, and using viral marketing to reach pedestrians in these areas.

Finally, New York State was awarded more than \$800,000 and New York City will use the funds to increase pedestrian safety by focusing specifically on addressing speeding and drivers who fail to yield to pedestrians in crosswalks.

I wish all the governors and mayors, including of course Mayor DeBlazio, great success in working to reduce pedestrian deaths and injuries.

These grants are just the most recent and visible evidence of the commitment of the U.S. Department of Transportation and NHTSA to pedestrian safety.

When Secretary Foxx attended one of his first events in his new role, he announced the availability of the very grants we are awarding today.

And when he made his first major speech earlier this year outlining his priorities, he made clear that safety—and specifically the safety of pedestrians and cyclists—would be a major focus of the Department under his leadership. So you have that commitment right from the top at DOT, from me and from everyone at NHTSA.

Pedestrian safety is a complex challenge, which is why the RITE way offers a multidimensional effort.

With the RITE approach, we can have safer roadways for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists—and that will mean fewer tragedies, less sorrow, and stronger, safer communities.

Thank you for asking me to be with you today.