Pedestrian Safety Workshop
A Focus on Older Adults

The Pedestrian Safety Workshop: A Focus on Older Adults was developed by the Highway Safety Research Center at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill through funding from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
Today’s Agenda

• Welcome and Introduction
• Walking and Older Adults: Safety, Health, and Transportation
• Watching Out for Us! Skills for Safe Walking
• Break
• The Walking Environment
• Completing the Picture: Education, Enforcement, and Encouragement
• Taking an Observational Walk
• Discussion and Next Steps
Walking and Older Adults

Safety, Health, and Transportation
Why care about walking?

- Valuable form of transportation
- Provides health benefits of physical activity
- Opportunity to socialize
- Can contribute to higher quality of life
Health benefits of regular physical activity are many:

- Helps maintain mobility and independence
- Increases balance and muscle strength
- Helps prevent depression and has other mental health benefits
Health benefits of regular physical activity are many:

- Associated with increased longevity and lower rate of disability

- Lowers risk of chronic illnesses including: high blood pressure, heart disease, colon cancer, obesity, diabetes, and osteoporosis
“I walk about three and a half miles a day in my neighborhood and the last time I had my check-up at the doctor’s office, the nurse said, ‘From what I can tell, you have the heart of an athlete.’”

- Resident of Dorada, NC
“I started walking for exercise when I quit work and I only knew maybe the next door neighbors or the neighbors across the street, but I’ve gotten to know everybody in the neighborhood now.”

-Resident of Dorada, NC
Why focus on older adults?

Older adults are:

- A growing part of the population
- Less likely to drive
- More likely to get hit by vehicles when walking

More...
Why focus on older adults?

- More likely to walk than do other types of physical activity
- Less likely to meet weekly physical activity recommendations
Addressing the realities of aging

- Vision
- Hearing
- Cognition
- Physical mobility
- Falls
Whether walking to the store, a friend’s house, or just around the block . . .

What makes a walk feel safe?
Safety Factors

- Pedestrian behavior
- Driver behavior
- Walking environment
Community conditions can make walking difficult
Great conditions, but where are the people?
Community partnership

- Pedestrians taking control of their safety
- Communities understanding unsafe behaviors and conditions and identifying strategies to improve them.
- Everyone encouraging more people to walk more
Watching Out for Us! Skills for Safe Walking

Developed by the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center through funding from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
Walkers need to know . . .

- **What** are the situations that increase the chances of being hit by a car
- **How** we can control those situations
What situations

1. Intersections
2. Backing vehicles
3. Drivers not seeing you
4. Too much trust in the system
INTERSECTIONS

What: Turning vehicles
INTERSECTIONS

What: When stepping off the curb
INTERSECTIONS

What: Visual screens
INTERSECTIONS

What: Crossing time at signals
BACKING VEHICLES

What: Parking lots
BACKING VEHICLES

What: Crossing behind parked cars
What: Driveways
BACKING VEHICLES

What: Driveways
What: Distraction, low lighting
TOO MUCH TRUST IN THE SYSTEM

What: Take control
What should the pedestrian do?
What should the pedestrian do?
What should the pedestrian do?
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What should the pedestrian do?
What should the pedestrians do?
What should the pedestrians do?
How many pedestrians do you see?
How many pedestrians do you see?
Recalling the basics

- Before crossing, look left, right, left, and all around for cars
- Walk on the sidewalk
- When there’s no sidewalk, walk facing traffic
Selecting the best routes

- Places to walk
- Places to cross the street
- Conveniences
- Personal safety
Walking in groups

- Greater visibility
- Look out for each other
- Help overcome limitations
- Fun and friendships
- Encourages more walking
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
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<td>Speeding drivers</td>
<td>Police</td>
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<td>Drivers failing to yield</td>
<td>Police</td>
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<td>Signal timing</td>
<td>Transportation engineers</td>
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<td>Sidewalk broken or blocked</td>
<td>Public works</td>
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<td>Need for sidewalks</td>
<td>City council, city manager</td>
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Summary

- Be alert at intersections
- Watch for backing vehicles
- Be seen
- Double-check the system
- Choose carefully where you walk
- Recognize how you’re feeling
- Report issues you encounter
Spread the word
The Walking Environment
“I couldn’t handle the traffic anymore. It was impossible to cross on foot and there would be no way for an elderly person to make it.”

-Resident of Ocean City, MD
Situations where the physical environment can help

- Intersections
- Backing vehicles
- Traffic speeds
Topic outline

Walking along the street
Crossing the street
Speed of traffic
Walking along the street

Crossing the street

Speed of traffic
What’s wrong with this picture?
What’s wrong with this picture?
Good sidewalks encourage walking
What’s wrong with this picture?
ADA requirements
Curb ramp design
What happens when driveways are built like intersections?
What happens when sidewalks continue across driveways?
What’s wrong with this picture?
Which street looks more inviting for walking?
Additional features

- Street lighting
- Places to sit
- Access to restrooms
- Water fountains
- Public art
Walking along the street

Crossing the street

Speed of traffic
What’s wrong with this picture?
Shortening the crossing

Curb extensions at crossings
Parking restrictions at corners

Restricting parking close to crosswalks provides better visibility for both drivers and pedestrians.
Crossing islands
High-visibility crosswalks

Ladder-style markings
Pedestrian pushbuttons
Countdown signals
No-turn-on-red may increase pedestrian safety
Topic outline

Walking along the street
Crossing the street
Speed of traffic
Why are we concerned with slowing down traffic?

**PEDESTRIAN INJURIES AT IMPACT SPEEDS**

- **40 MPH**
  - 85% death
  - 15% injured

- **30 MPH**
  - 45% death
  - 50% injured
  - 5% uninjured

- **20 MPH**
  - 5% death
  - 65% injured
  - 30% uninjured

*UK Department of Transportation (1987)*
Speed is a central issue for pedestrians
Wide turns mean traffic can move faster
Tight turns slow down motor vehicles
Speed humps and speed tables slow down traffic
Raised pedestrian crosswalks
Thoughts?
Older adults:

Pick walking routes with features that have safety benefits.

Work with transportation professionals to improve places that don’t feel safe.

More...
Transportation professionals:

Get to know the issues that put older pedestrians at risk.

Use engineering tools to build environments that encourage safe driver and pedestrian behavior.
Completing the Picture
Education, Enforcement, and Encouragement
Education: Who needs pedestrian safety education?

1. Pedestrians
2. Drivers
3. Neighborhood residents
4. Elected officials and decision-makers
Safety messages for drivers

- Pedestrians are an important part of the transportation system
- Speed matters: 5 mph difference can be deadly
- Driver mistakes are costly for pedestrians
  - Make complete stops
  - Avoid distractions
  - Expect pedestrians
Safety messages for neighborhood residents

- Keep sidewalks clear
- Prune bushes and trees
- Drive the speed limit
Safety messages for decision-makers

- Walking is a critical part of the transportation system
- Pedestrians are a good indication of a healthy community
- Designing a walkable environment requires careful attention
- Physical improvements must go hand in hand with policy support
Community efforts

- Neighborhood meetings
- Neighborhood signs and materials
- Pruning parties
Community efforts

• Neighborhood speed watch programs

• Neighborhood pace cars to remind drivers of speed limit
Media campaigns
Law enforcement

Officers are valuable partners who can play many roles

Enforcement includes an array of methods to improve unsafe behavior
Unsafe driver behavior

- Speeding
- Failure to yield
- Running red lights or stop signs
- Distracted driving
- Not anticipating pedestrians
- Blocking the crosswalk
Unsafe pedestrian behavior
Law enforcement methods

- Speed trailers/driver feedback signs
- Pedestrian decoys
- Progressive ticketing
- Photo enforcement
Speed trailers and active speed monitors

- Increase awareness of local speed limits
- Reduce speeding
- Trailers: Can be moved from place to place
- Monitors: More permanent
Photo enforcement

- Movable units can provide citywide coverage
- Permanent units supplement police efforts
Pedestrian “decoy” enforcement actions
Progressive ticketing

First: educate
Second: warn
Third: ticket
Media coverage

Maintain good public relations by informing and preparing the community
Success story: Heed the speed

- Education about speeding
- Yard signs/speed trailers
- Citations and tickets
- Repeat if speeds increase
Encouragement programs
How are communities promoting walking?

- Group walks
- Events
- Walking maps
- Media campaign
- Mileage tracking
- Contests
- Park and walk
Group walks and walking clubs

- Regularly scheduled walk on a designated route
- Chance to socialize
- Sense of safety in group
Special events

- A chance to “try out” walking
- Build enthusiasm
- Opportunity for media coverage
Walking maps

Identify
- Sidewalks
- Walking routes
- Crossings
- Destinations
- Benches
- Restrooms
- Water fountains
Media campaigns

“You’re just two feet from some of the best places in town.”
Walk Wise Drive Smart

Hendersonville, NC

- Focus on pedestrian-friendly environments for seniors
- Includes: educational workshops, changes to the physical environment, neighborhood walks
Live Long, Live Well
New Jersey

- Logbook to track mileage
- 356K miles in 3 years
- Average age: 72
- 88% report increased levels of physical activity
Wheeling Walks
Wheeling, WV

- Focused on health benefits of walking
- Used TV, radio, newspaper
- Walking “prescriptions”
- Results: 30% of inactive residents increased walking versus 16% in community without the program.
Summary

- Education and enforcement both work to change unsafe behaviors
- Encouraging more people to walk can provide many benefits
Taking an Observational Walk
Questions to ask when walking

- Is there room to walk?
- Is crossing the street easy?
- What is the condition of the walking surface—are there tripping risks?
Questions to ask when walking

- How are drivers and pedestrians behaving?
- Do the surroundings feel safe?
- Do the surroundings feel comfortable?
Discussion and Next Steps