

SAFETY CENTRAL



Westbrook Safe Mobility and Access Committee

WSMAC began with a Facebook post in the fall of 2016 concerning the safety of the crosswalk at Main and Stroudwater Streets in Westbrook. Neighborhood resident Leelee Prince expressed frustration with repeated close calls with cars while attempting to cross the street in her wheelchair. Several other residents responded and started talking about forming a group to try to do something to make streets safer for all users. We began meeting regularly in 2017, at the same time that the Maine DOT chose Westbrook as the first community in which to hold a series of public workshops on pedestrian safety. Since then, we have become a presence at Westbrook Together Days, the Westbrook Kids Safety Fair, and other events promoting our message of advocating and educating to make Westbrook's roads safer.

For more information about the topics in our newsletter and other topics please visit our website at <http://www.westbrooksafemobility.org>



GENERAL SAFETY by Kimberly Tarbox, Chair

Often, as we are traveling we don't think about what will make us courteous and safe travelers. As motorists we are required to pass a written permit test and then take a driver exam in a vehicle but as pedestrians and bicyclists there are no mandatory tests to prepare us for safe travel. We don't think of these other modes of travel unless we are using them. What can we as a society do to become safer travelers?

First, it is imperative that we make sure that we are visible to each other. How we do that will vary a bit but is very easy in the long scheme of things. Motorists, it is important that you be able to see what is around you and to be seen. Keep your windows and mirrors free from debris and avoid hanging items from your rearview mirror and placing unnecessary items on your dashboards. Use your headlights in any low visibility setting. Pedestrians should wear high visibility clothing with reflective strips, carry a flashlight, and never attempt to cross the street from behind obstacles (cars, trashcans, trees, etc.). Bicyclists, make sure that you have both a headlight and a red light on the rear. Wear high visibility clothing and never dart in and out of traffic or from around obstacles.

Everyone needs to know the traffic laws and ordinances for the area that they are in. Don't assume anything. For example, a bicyclist may often use the full lane of the road and is not required to ride in the breakdown lane as many assume. They should ride as far to the right when it is safe to do so. Be courteous of one another. Don't go around a stopped car because you are in a hurry. There may be a mom with a stroller crossing the road. A few moments of patience could be the difference between life and death.

Make sure you can be seen.

Know traffic laws for your area and don't assume anything.

Be courteous to one another.

Stay alert and don't get hurt.



Pedestrian Safety by Dennis Marotte, Vice Chair

Pedestrian safety practices cover a variety of environments and conditions, from a busy summertime pier as families walk to a ferry dock, to push-button crosswalk controls that will stop multiple lanes of traffic.

A grandfather walking with his 5-year-old granddaughter arrived at a marked crosswalk at a busy downtown intersection, with traffic signals and push-button pedestrian controls. The writer observed the grandfather showing his granddaughter how to push the button, and pointing to the post mounted orange raised hand across the busy street, which changed to an illuminated white walking figure. Hand in hand, they proceeded to the opposite side. That gentleman taught his granddaughter by example how to stop moving vehicles of all sizes, so that they could walk safely across Main Street.

Unfortunately, there are many different danger situations even for a pedestrian doing everything right. A driver might pass to the right of stopped cars as the pedestrian is in the crosswalk, intrude on the crosswalk while pulling forward to make a right turn, or turn across a crosswalk to their right before looking in that direction. Some crosswalks have signals, and some don't.

Regardless of the situation, walking across the street is a TWO WAY VISUAL COURTESY PROCESS for all involved. Eye contact is critical. DO NOT take for granted that drivers will see you and come to a stop. The lead driver and even the 2nd driver may fly right past you. When vehicle drivers in both directions stop, wave in acknowledgement and make eye contact.

At night, visibility and eye contact is reduced – this dangerous condition can be improved by wearing BRIGHT AND/OR REFLECTIVE COLORS THAT CAN BE SEEN BY DRIVERS.

Sun glare can be a problem on east/west roads during certain times of the year, especially when the sun is low at the beginning or end of the day. In the winter, reflective glare from wet or icy roads adds to the problem. IN these conditions a pedestrian and driver must make eye contact to prevent a collision with severe or fatal injuries to the pedestrian.

"Flying" through large parking lots, diagonally cutting across empty parking aisles is a dangerous practice. Anyone walking, especially with a loaded shopping cart or young children in tow, may not see the driver flying in.

Taking the most direct, straight path from point A to point B, for a pedestrian, is a roll of the dice. Walking across a busy street in between marked crosswalks can be dangerous and may be illegal. A driver may have to make a split second decision: "Should I stop?" They may also look quickly in their rear view mirror before stopping and hope the driver behind is paying attention. Families need to teach their children about the dangers of walking across a busy street without using marked crosswalks and pedestrian activated crosswalk controls.

A few final tips for pedestrians:

- Walk on the sidewalk if there is one, or on the left side, facing oncoming traffic.
- Talking on your cellphone while crossing a street, even in a marked crosswalk, is not safe.
- NEVER STEP INTO TRAFFIC FROM BETWEEN PARKED VEHICLES.

Safe Winter Cycling by John Brooking, Secretary, Certified Cycling Educator

Here we are in the middle of winter. Can you still cycle in the winter? Yes! But you definitely need to prepare. Here are the most important ways.

Lights

While we are still in the dark days of winter, lights are probably the very most important safety consideration. They are legally required at night, and important for safety as well in daytime rain, snow, and fog. Even if you only ride in town with streetlights and you can see fine, others need to see you. You might not realize how hard it is to be seen without car headlights shining directly on you, and there are plenty of situations where they aren't. Reflectors and reflective accessories don't do anything without light shining on you, and they also don't work as well when you're off to the side. So even cheap lights are much better than none.

Lights are required to be white in the front and red or orange in the back. Steady is better than blinking for tracking movement in the dark. It's best to buy actual bike lights that mount to the frame, rather than try to jury-rig something with a flashlight or lights on your clothes.

Clothing

Speaking of clothes, how do you stay warm? If you're going more than a few blocks, it's absolutely essential to protect your extremities -- face, fingers, and feet. A balaclava (face mask with nose piece) is useful, and a helmet over any other headwear not only protects your head from a crash, but also helps keep your body heat in. I find that mittens are the best for my fingers, and will accommodate hand warmers if necessary. If you have standard flat pedals, you can wear winter boots.

On the rest of your body, layering is key. Unless your trip is very short, you will warm up from the exercise, in which case a puffy winter coat may become too warm. A windbreaker, though thin, is actually less drafty, keeping your warm air in and the cold air out without overheating you. And most cycling windbreakers are fluorescent, adding visibility. Reflective ankle straps similarly add visibility while also preventing cold air coming up your pant legs.

Using Roads

As with driving a car, you will need to go slower than usual on slippery roads, and avoid any sudden moves. Accelerate and brake only gradually, and never lean into a turn. If you're serious and can spend some money, you have some other options, from "fat tire" bikes to studded tires. With or without these, taking your time will always help.

Though it may seem scary, riding further into the road has major advantages over riding at the edge or on sidewalks. The surface is nearly always better. It's easier for you and others to see each other around corners which may have snow piles. At night, you are more visible sooner due to being more central in car headlights. Obey the same laws, and communicate your intentions. Check out CyclingSavvy.org for how to ride safely and confidently around traffic.

What Would Walnut Do? by Kimberly Tarbox

Walnut is so excited. He just had a wonderful day at school learning how to be a good walker. His teacher said a walker is called a pedestrian. He was jumping for joy when Mama asked him if he wanted to walk to the park and show her what he learned.

They walked together hand in hand to the street corner at the end of the block. "Okay, Walnut what do we do?" asked Mama.

"Mama, do you see that button on the post right there?" Walnut points to a funny pole that was beeping.

"Yes Walnut. I do." Mama was beaming at him.

"Well, we push that button and then we wait until that light over there says we can cross."

"Then what do we do, Walnut?"

"We look both ways and then we use that funny path painted on the road and cross to the other side."

Just then the crossing signal changed telling them they could cross. They both looked left, then right, then left again. There were no cars so they crossed the street. Walnut was grinning ear to ear as they reached the other side.

"Walnut, that was a great job. You did a great job of showing me how to cross the street. I am very proud of you for paying attention."

"Thank you Mama. Soon we will be learning how to safely ride our bikes too!"

Mama grinned. Her little boy was growing up. As he got to the park Walnut ran over to his friends. Some of them hadn't yet learned about crossing a street safely so Walnut taught them too.

What would you do?



WALNUT'S ACTIVITY CORNER

Can you find all ten words?

WALNUT WALK SAFETY WARNING
ALERT BIKE CAR EYES EARS HELMET

W	A	L	N	U	T	W	H
A	S	G	B	W	S	A	E
L	E	A	S	A	A	R	L
K	A	G	F	R	F	N	M
E	L	B	C	E	E	I	E
K	E	A	R	S	T	N	T
I	R	C	A	K	Y	G	D
B	T	K	E	Y	E	S	U