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Pedestrian Safety Month

By Shiza Saad, NDAA Summer 2025 Intern

On July 23, 2025, the driver of a commercial motor vehicle hit a pedestrian around 10:30 PM in Trumbull County, Ohio. The suspect did not stay to help the victim or contact the authorities. As of July 30, the police identified the man killed; the suspect, however, still has not been found.¹

On July 20, 2025, a speeding driver struck and killed a pedestrian in San Fernando Valley in Los Angeles County, California. The suspect fled the scene and did not stay to help the victim, a disabled man in his mid-20s. A neighbor who witnessed the hit-and-run stated the speeding driver dragged the victim past several homes.²

¹ Stone, Laurel. "Identity Released in Fatal Pedestrian Hit-and-Run." WKBN, July 30, 2025. www.wkbn.com/news/local-news/weathersfield-news/identity-released-in-fatal-pedestrian-hit-and-run/.

² Kurzweil, Tony. "Disabled Pedestrian Killed in San Fernando Valley Hit-and-Run, Neighbor Says | KTLA." KTLA, July 21, 2025. ktla.com/news/local-news/disabled-pedestrian-killed-in-san-fernando-valley-hit-and-run-neighbor-says/.

On July 16, 2025, around 5:30 AM, a teenager driving an SUV hit a female jogger in Spokane, Washington. Police believed the 17-year-old suspect to be under the influence of alcohol and arrested him for vehicular assault, DUI charges, and felony hit-and-run. The victim died of her injuries in the hospital.³

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has deemed October as Pedestrian Safety Month. These recent cases illustrate the importance for organizations and leaders to address the urgent national crisis on America's roads.

NHTSA recently released pedestrian data from 2023, the most recent year for which data is available.⁴ According to NHTSA, traffic crashes killed 7,314 pedestrians and injured another 68,244, averaging one pedestrian death every 72 minutes and one pedestrian injury every 8 minutes. 46% of all fatal pedestrian crashes involved the reported use of alcohol. 77% of pedestrian fatalities occurred in the dark and 19% occurred in daylight. 89% of pedestrian fatalities occurred in single-vehicle crashes. Hit-and-run drivers struck and killed 1 of every 4 pedestrians killed in traffic crashes.⁵

Causes

Drivers are always legally responsible for their vehicles, but pedestrian actions may also contribute to many collisions. Thus, it is apparent that during Pedestrian Safety Month, it is important to raise awareness amongst not only drivers, but pedestrians themselves. NHTSA's 2023 data show that "the age groups with the highest percentage of pedestrian traffic fatalities were the 55-to-59 and 65-to-69 age groups at 23 percent each."⁶ Furthermore, children "in the 10-to-14 age group had the highest estimated percentages of pedestrians injured (6%) among the different age groups."⁷

Most pedestrian fatalities took place in the dark (77%), compared to in daylight (19%), dusk (2%), or dawn (2%). 26% of pedestrian fatalities in traffic crashes happened during 6 to 8:59 PM, followed by 24% during 9 to 11:59 PM. More pedestrian crashes occur during the weekends than on the weekdays.⁸

Technological advances have led to more collisions. A study by the NYU Langone Medical Center found that about 8% of both pedestrians and cyclists said they were injured while using an electronic device, including a cellphone or music player.⁹ The rising issue of short attention spans due to increased social media use is obvious in the increasing numbers of crashes resulting from distracted drivers. Drivers of new, advanced hybrid or battery-operated vehicles are 40% more likely to strike pedestrians because of their quietness. Pedestrians often detect oncoming traffic by their sense of hearing along with their sight, so the low volume of newer vehicles can be inadvertently dangerous. In residential areas, where the speed limit is at or below 35 mph and stops and turns are more frequent, the risk rises to 50%.¹⁰ This is especially dangerous for blind individuals, who rely on their ears much more than people who can see.

Traffic crashes killed 7,314 pedestrians and injured 68,244 in 2023.

³ King, Rob, Taylor Ansures, and Jordan Smith. "Jogger Who Was Hit by Teen near Manito Country Club Early Wednesday Morning Has Died, Police Confirm." KXLY, July 16, 2025. www.kxly.com/news/jogger-who-was-hit-by-teen-near-manito-country-club-early-wednesday-morning-has-died/article_0915bcb3-8530-464f-919f-30e696c1e916.html.

⁴ NHTSA's National Center for Statistics and Analysis. "Traffic Safety Facts: 2023 Data—Pedestrians." National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, June 2025. crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813727.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ "Traffic Safety Facts: 2023 Data—Pedestrians." National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Flegenheimer, Matt. "Crosswalks in New York Are Not Safe Havens, Study Finds." *The New York Times*, April 13, 2013. www.nytimes.com/2013/04/03/nyregion/study-details-injuries-to-pedestrians-and-cyclists-in-new-york-city.html.

¹⁰ Traffic Safety Store. "Why People Get Hit: Eight Causes of Pedestrian Accidents." Traffic Safety Resource Center, April 29, 2013. www.trafficsafetystore.com/blog/why-people-get-hit-eight-causes-of-pedestrian-accidents/?srsltid=AfmBOor9yWNeHjFd91n3yHtJbJ90Of4TtHqR3PZOBi3_JpoXmguj1xbq.

Improper lane use by cyclists is one of the leading causes of pedestrian collisions. Bikes mixing with foot traffic often causes confusion and congestion. Designating separate lanes for pedestrians and cyclists can ensure safety for both cyclists and pedestrians.¹¹ Unmarked crosswalks at intersections also contribute to pedestrian crashes. Areas lacking high-visibility markings, proper signage, and pedestrian-activated signals lead to more vehicle-pedestrian conflicts.¹² Signaled crosswalks cannot fully prevent any collisions in cases of left turns—three times as many pedestrians are struck by cars turning left than those turning right. Drivers are focused on the traffic and negotiating the intersection whilst pedestrians look straight ahead.¹³

As always, alcohol consumption is a large contributor to pedestrian collisions. The spike in the numbers of crashes occurring during nighttime and the weekends is also connected to alcohol. Of fatally injured pedestrians, about 37% have blood alcohol concentrations of at least 0.08%. 13% of pedestrian collisions involve drivers who are intoxicated.¹⁴

Preventing Pedestrian Crashes

Minimizing pedestrian collisions depends on both drivers and pedestrians; thus, organizations like NHTSA provide safety tips for both types of travelers.

For drivers, visibility should always be a priority. Drivers should always look for pedestrians and minimize blind spots, taking extra caution when driving during nighttime and bad weather. Pedestrians' safety should be ensured when driving near or through a crosswalk; drivers must always stop fully and with enough distance that other drivers can clearly see the pedestrians. Drivers should drive especially slowly in school zones and neighborhoods, always following the speed limit. They should also ensure to check for pedestrians before placing the vehicle in reverse. As always, no one should ever drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol.¹⁵

For pedestrians, obeying all signs, signals, and all traffic laws is the best way to ensure their own and all drivers' safety. People should walk on sidewalks whenever possible, but if sidewalks are not an option, walkers should face vehicle traffic and be as far from it as possible. Walkers should avoid jaywalking and use crosswalks when available. When crossing, they should look for cars in all directions. If crosswalks or intersections are not available, pedestrians should find a well-lit area where they can see traffic clearly, only crossing when there is a gap in traffic. Pedestrians should not consume alcohol or drugs before or during walking, since their abilities and judgement can be impaired.¹⁶



Due to size and weight, commercial motor vehicles involved in crashes traveling even at low speeds have catastrophic impacts. Pedestrian deaths involving large trucks increased by 18% from 2019 to 2022 with 75% of those fatal crashes occurring in urban areas.

Analysis Division, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, [Large Truck and Bus Crash Facts 2021](#) (November 2023), FMCSA-RRA-23-002, U.S. Department of Transportation, accessed September 10, 2025; and [Commercial Motor Vehicle Crash Data Overview](#), December 2024, accessed September 10, 2025.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ NHTSA. "Pedestrian Safety." National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2025. www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/pedestrian-safety.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Action Taken

The growing number of pedestrian fatalities and injuries has prompted legislative proposals seeking to curb more collisions.

For example, in February 2024, Ohio U.S. Representatives Emilia Sykes and Mike Carey introduced a bipartisan bill entitled the “Save Our Pedestrians Act.” The bill aims to improve pedestrian safety in rural, urban, and suburban communities by funding the building of new sidewalks and redesigning infrastructure. Representative Carey noted that Ohio’s Columbus metro region has seen rapid population growth, but its transportation and pedestrian infrastructure has not kept up.¹⁷ The Act requires that “five percent of all funding appropriated to states through the Highway Safety Improvement Program be used for projects that reduce the number of injuries and fatalities at high-risk pedestrian crossings.”¹⁸ As of July 2025, there has been no further action for the bill beyond its referral to the House Subcommittee on Highways and Transit.¹⁹

In August 2024, Pennsylvania U.S. Congresswoman Mary Gay Scanlon introduced a bill in the House of Representatives titled “The Pedestrian Protection Act.” Scanlon cited research that claimed the growing popularity of larger, higher, and heavier vehicular models in the country has led to higher risks being posed to pedestrians, especially children. A driver of a larger SUV or pickup has reduced visibility from the vehicle’s larger front blind zone, resulting in the driver being less able to see children in front of the vehicle.²⁰ The Pedestrian Protection Act would require NHTSA to develop vehicle safety standards to provide greater protection for pedestrians and vulnerable road users. This would include establishing standards for certain features, including vehicle height and hood and bumper design.²¹ The Act would also have NHTSA implement a minimum visibility standard for vehicles, to reduce blind zones that can lead to more pedestrian crashes. Consumers would also have to be provided with more information regarding vehicle safety through an update to the NHTSA’s New Car Assessment Program to include a driver visibility rating.²² As of July 2025, there has been no further action for the bill beyond its referral to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.²³

The growing number of pedestrian fatalities and injuries has prompted legislative proposals seeking to curb more collisions.

In October 2024, California U.S. Congressman Kevin Mullin introduced the “Driver Technology and Pedestrian Safety Act.” Mullin noted that countries like Canada and the United Kingdom have seen a decline in pedestrian collisions, whilst in the U.S. they reached record highs in 2022—but there is no clear answer as to why. He stated that the rise of the inclusion of touch screens in vehicles has changed the driver experience and might be contributing to more injuries and fatalities.²⁴ The Driver Technology and Pedestrian Safety Act would direct the Department of Transportation (DOT) and National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to study the impact of driver technology on pedestrian safety. The study would focus on touch screen-based

¹⁷ Sykes, Emilia. “Reps. Sykes, Carey Unveil Bipartisan Legislation To Improve Pedestrian Safety.” Congresswoman Emilia Sykes: Serving Ohio’s 13th District, February 22, 2024. sykes.house.gov/media/press-releases/rebs-sykes-carey-unveil-bipartisan-legislation-improve-pedestrian-safety.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Carey, Mike. “Text—H.R.7191—118th Congress (2023–2024): Save Our Pedestrians Act of 2024 | Congress.Gov | Library of Congress.” Congress.gov, February 1, 2024. www.congress.gov/bills/118/congress/house/bills/7191/text.

²⁰ Scanlon, Mary Gay. “One Pager: Pedestrian Protection Act—Mary Gay Scanlon.” Congresswoman Mary Gay Scanlon: Representing Pennsylvania’s 5th District, August 2024. scanlon.house.gov/uploadedfiles/one_pager_pedestrian_protection_act.pdf.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Scanlon, Mary Gay. “Text—H.R.9408—118th Congress (2023–2024): Pedestrian Protection Act | Congress.Gov | Library of Congress.” Congress.gov, August 23, 2024. www.congress.gov/bills/118/congress/house/bills/9408/text.

²⁴ Mullin, Kevin. “Driver Technology and Pedestrian Safety Act.” Congressman Kevin Mullin | California 15, October 28, 2024. kevinmullin.house.gov/about/votes-and-legislation/driver-technology-and-pedestrian-safety-act/.

systems and user interface design, as well as the impact of time of day and changes in traffic, weather, and volume of commercial vehicles on the road on pedestrian collisions. The DOT and National Academies would then provide recommendations, based on their findings, for actions Congress or agencies can take, such as updating guidance or standards.²⁵ As of July 2025, there has been no further action for the bill beyond its referral to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.²⁶

Additionally, in September 2024, NHTSA proposed a new rule with hopes to reduce fatalities and serious injuries for pedestrians struck by vehicles. The rule would establish a new Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard which would require new passenger vehicles to be designed to minimize the risk of serious-to-fatal injuries in pedestrian crashes. To achieve the goal of reducing head injuries, NHTSA has proposed test procedures simulating a head-to-hood impact and new performance requirements. An estimated 67 lives a year could be saved.²⁷

Relaying safety information to everyone is key to preventing pedestrian collisions.

Everyone is a Pedestrian

This Pedestrian Safety Month, it is necessary for communities to band together to ensure the safety of all their members. Relaying safety information to everyone, especially the most vulnerable members of the population, like the elderly and young children, is key to preventing pedestrian collisions. There must be a specific focus on teen drivers as well, since they are new to the rules of the road and more likely to make mistakes. Reducing the rising numbers of pedestrian collisions will require accountability, dissemination of information, and a newfound devotion to safety. Only through a joint effort of drivers, pedestrians, local governments, and traffic safety organizations can a change be made.

About the Author

Shiza Saad is from Hershey, PA, and is a sophomore at Georgetown University in Washington D.C. She is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Foreign Service in International Politics, as well as a minor in Chinese. At Georgetown, Shiza is involved in the university's chapter of the ACLU as a Community Engagement Deputy Director, where she creates partnerships between the chapter and other student-led or local organizations for advocacy opportunities. She is also a blog writer for the *Georgetown University Undergraduate Law Review*, recently publishing her piece, "A History of the Fourteenth Amendment at the Supreme Court and the Future of Birthright Citizenship in the United States."



Shiza is heavily involved with the Georgetown University Student Advocacy Office (SAO), where she helps Georgetown students facing allegations of misconduct or Honor Council violations navigate the disciplinary process. She is interested in using research-based advocacy to create a more equitable and just world for all communities and exploring the intersection between law, economics, and language. Outside of school, Shiza enjoys finding new spots in D.C., baking, and watching movies.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Mullin, Kevin. "H.R.10051—118th Congress (2023–2024): Driver ..." Congress.gov, October 25, 2024. www.congress.gov/bills/118/congress/house-bills/10051.

²⁷ NHTSA Media. "NHTSA Proposes New Vehicle Safety Standard to Better Protect Pedestrians." National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, September 9, 2024. www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/nhtsa-proposes-new-vehicle-safety-standard-protect-pedestrians.