



Teaneck Co-Hosts Community Pedestrian Safety Meeting With EZ Ride

By Ellie Wolf
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(Credit: Courtesy Teaneck.gov)

Think pedestrian safety is a simple and straightforward issue? Think again.

Teaneck was recently host to a jointly sponsored public forum concerning pedestrian safety in the community. The meeting was led by Teaneck Councilwoman Hillary Goldberg, with brief closing remarks by Mayor Mark Schwartz. The Teaneck Police Department was represented by Lieutenant Charles Antinori, commander of the Traffic Bureau, who took not only questions from the attendees, but also copious notes as he quipped about his pen running low on ink. Antinori responded to concerns

and inquiries expressed by residents, explaining about the “nuts and bolts” of implementing safety changes as well as the costs of making them.

Lisa Lee, director of sustainability programs for the Ez Ride organization, presented a slide show describing various safety upgrade options available for different pedestrian scenarios, detailing the range of optimal to minimal efficacy, as well as the cost of various enhancements and improvements ranging from mere hundreds to millions of dollars. She then invited residents to step to the podium to describe problems they have observed that are dangerous and in need of improvement. Like Antinori, she also took several pages of notes, recording the particulars and locations of concerns described by residents, and because Ez Ride is commissioned to help address those concerns.



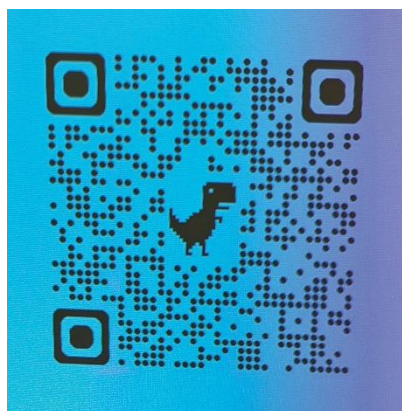
(Credit: Courtesy Teaneck.gov)

Sometimes, Lee added, one of the most effective and lowest-cost enhancements to pedestrian safety is reducing and enforcing a lower speed limit. One resident reported that the speeding on her residential street is so pervasive that their family has lost three vehicles to speeding drivers, “totaling” all three. Fortunately none of her family members

were injured. However, even during the accident investigation and despite the presence of an ambulance and other emergency vehicles, drivers continued to speed around those emergency vehicles!

Lee provided a sobering statistic: Although a pedestrian hit by a vehicle traveling at 20 mph has a 90% survival rate, at 40 mph the survival rate drops to an alarming 10%. One resident advocated for a township-wide speed limit of 25 mph and also lamented how long it takes to implement even a minor change that has been approved—often years. Another resident brought up the problem of the drag racing that occurs regularly on Teaneck Road (primarily overnight), a general safety concern and certainly a pedestrian's nightmare, despite reduced pedestrian traffic during the nighttime hours.

Use this QR code for sharing your pedestrian safety concerns.



Because Teaneck has recently suffered several pedestrian fatalities in multiple locations, residents and authorities are highly focused on how to more effectively prevent such pedestrian accidents. Experts point out that one primary culprit in pedestrian accidents is poor visibility, often combined with inadequate pedestrian crossing skills. The time-worn mantra of “look both ways before crossing” is really no longer sufficient. Lee informed the group that Ez Ride is offering safety presentations in the schools. The organization has an education module that comprehensively teaches students the safest ways to prepare for and proceed in crossing a street.

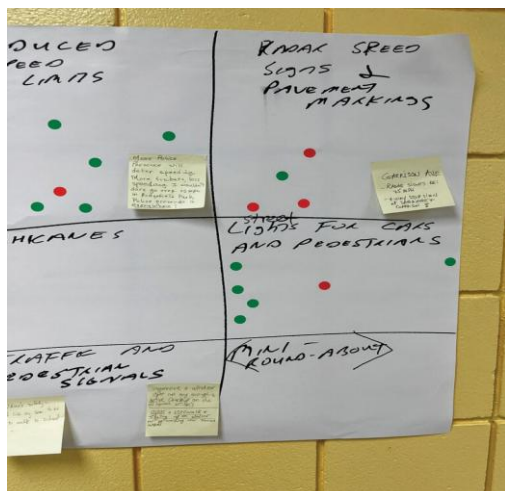
Lee emphasized one concept, which applies to adults as well: Being in a designated crosswalk does not guarantee safety or driver compliance with crosswalk laws. Distracted or speeding drivers, poor pedestrian visibility, inadequate signage and minimal or worn markings can all contribute to reducing crosswalk safety. Teaching updated pedestrian awareness skills for crossing a street include:

Looking all the way around corners for turning vehicles.

Looking all the way up and down the street for approaching vehicles.

Checking the curbs for parked cars pulling out. Making eye contact with a driver.

And of course: Never assume a vehicle is going to stop just because you're there.



Prioritizing pedestrian concerns via “dot vote.”

How often have you stepped into a designated crosswalk marked with lines and signs, only to be completely ignored by drivers who clearly don't acknowledge your presence, or don't even seem to recognize that you are there? Lee explains that there are significant improvements that can be made to increase visibility and efficacy of crosswalks, and many are not expensive.

Antinori agreed that one of them is to ticket drivers who violate the speed and crosswalk laws. He shared that the police department recently hired a special officer designated to enforce parking laws and stop crosswalk violators who plague busy pedestrian locations around the community.

Lee also noted that speedbumps can have their pros and cons. Surprisingly one of the cons turns out to be the noise they create when vehicles “bottom out,” scraping the pavement, or tires screech all day and night after approaching a speed bump (or speed table) too quickly.

Lee observed that the average citizen is generally not familiar with the potential cost of reworking a complicated intersection. Besides replacing and reprogramming traffic signals, it requires intricate and expensive road work including assessment, reconfiguration and placement of surface or overhead sensors and other roadway infrastructure, and upgraded technology and software. Sometimes it includes flexible operability by local municipal authorities, such as police, fire or public works administrators. She reported that a single intersection traffic control system can cost \$1 million. Part of the work of the Ez Ride commission is helping municipalities generate grant funds to provide some of the safety upgrades they seek, without depleting their already tight budgets.

One of the takeaways from the discussion was the sage advice to both pedestrians and motorists: Just be patient, no matter which role you are in at the time.

The program closed with an interactive “voting” option in which participants could place dot stickers on various charts, indicating their priorities of possible solutions to pedestrian safety concerns. Antinori invited people to use the QR code on screen to share their concerns as well. “We are listening,” he said. Residents can also reach the lieutenant by calling his direct number: 201-837-2600, ext. 2326 or by emailing cantinori@teaneckpolice.org