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Mayor Teresa Jacobs Joins the Nationwide Effort to Make Streets Safer

Orange County, FL – Orange County Mayor Teresa Jacobs announces that she accepted U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx’s [nationwide Mayors' Challenge](#) to help make roads more pedestrian and bike friendly.

Mayor Jacobs is one of the [120 nationwide mayors](#) – including the Mayors of Orlando, Casselberry, Kissimmee, Orange City and Longwood – who have so far signed an online pledge to participate in the Department of Transportation’s Mayors’ Challenge for Safer People, Safer Streets.

Since 2012, Orange County has been spearheading the development of a comprehensive local pedestrian safety initiative, the “Mayor’s Pedestrian Safety Program,” which will be presented to the Board of County Commissioners during an upcoming work session, and will launch later this Spring. In addition to the Orange County Pedestrian Safety Program, numerous local partners including *Best Foot Forward*, the City of Orlando, MetroPlan Orlando, LYNX, Orlando Health, Bike/Walk Central Florida, Orange County Public Schools, and local enforcement agencies have joined together to help boost pedestrian and bicycle safety, and to use the engineering, enforcement and education tools at the County’s disposal to improve street safety and create lasting, positive change.

“For several years, we’ve been keenly focused on pedestrian safety, and have already done a great deal of the groundwork on this issue,” said Mayor Jacobs. “Orange County will soon launch a countywide pedestrian safety action plan that will upgrade existing crosswalks, improve connectivity and work in partnership with businesses and facilities that have a high volume of pedestrian activity. These efforts will provide a safer environment for pedestrians and bicyclists that use Orange County roads to commute for work, school or leisure.”

The Mayors’ Challenge is based on the 2010 USDOT Policy Statement on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation to incorporate safe and convenient walking and biking facilities in transportation projects. As part of the challenge, mayors are encouraged to form a local action team to advance safety and accessibility, and take local action on seven activities. This includes taking a Complete Streets approach that considers walking and biking as equals with other transportation modes, forming a local action team with goals, and educating and enforcing the laws.

“For the past 50 years, roadway planning and design has failed to account for people who walk or bike, evidence by our region’s ranking *as most likely to be hit* while doing something as simple as crossing the street,” said Linda Chapin, former Orange County Mayor and founder of Bike/Walk Central Florida. “While there is no one silver bullet, *Best Foot Forward* is an example of what a powerful coalition can achieve when they are united with a singular focus to improve street safety by getting more drivers to yield to pedestrians in crosswalks and for pedestrians to use crosswalks.”

When Best Foot Forward launched, only 12 percent of drivers yielded to pedestrians in crosswalks on streets posted at 35 mph and less. Two years later, that number is 48 percent. For roads posted more than 40 mph and higher, only 1.2 percent of drivers yielded and today it hovers closer to 25 percent. But there is more work to do, including:

- Pedestrian enhancements at International Drive
- Commitment to pedestrian improvements near school zones
- Ongoing engineering repairs and pedestrian safety upgrades of crosswalks
- SunRail Sand Lake Station study with the Florida Department of Transportation

The Mayors’ Challenge activities include various initiatives throughout the year, including identifying and addressing barriers to make streets safer, gathering and tracking biking and walking data, improving walking and biking safety laws and educating and enforcing proper road use.

About Orange County Government: Orange County Government strives to serve its citizens and guests with integrity, honesty, fairness and professionalism. Located in Central Florida, Orange County includes 13 municipalities and is home to world famous theme parks, the nation’s second largest convention center, and a thriving life science research park. Seven elected members make up the Board of County Commissioners including the Mayor who is elected countywide. For more information please visit www.OCFL.net or go to the Orange County [facebook](#) and [twitter](#) pages.

About Best Foot Forward & Pedestrian Safety in Metro Orlando

Transportation For America ranked Metro Orlando as the “Most Dangerous” pedestrian metro of the past decade, where on average two pedestrians are injured every day and one is killed each week. The *Best Foot Forward* pedestrian safety initiative was launched in June 2012 to reduce pedestrian deaths and injuries in Metro Orlando by getting drivers to yield to pedestrians in crosswalks and getting pedestrians to be more careful crossing the street. More than a campaign, this “Triple-E” behavioral change process seeks to create lasting social good through the consistent and persistent application of low-cost engineering, community education, and high-visibility enforcement.

Initiated by Bike/Walk Central Florida under the leadership of former Orange County Mayor Linda Chapin, spearheaded by Orange County Mayor Teresa Jacobs by Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer, the Best Foot Forward coalition includes Orange County Government, Orange County Public Schools, Orlando Health, Lynx, Winter Park Health Foundation, MetroPlan Orlando, the City of Orlando, Winter Park, Maitland, Winter Garden, Apopka, and towns of Eatonville and Windermere as well as police chiefs throughout Orange County led by Orlando Police Chief John Mina and Orange County Sheriff Jerry Demings.

The long term goal is to cut pedestrian injuries in half in ten years. The short term goals are to increase driver yield rates by 60% on roads posted 35 mph and higher, and a 10% increase on driver yield rates year over year on roads posted 40 mph and higher. To learn more, go to www.iyield4peds.org.

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