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## **Report Ranks Central Florida Number One in the Nation For Preventable Pedestrian Deaths**

*2014 report finds pedestrians disproportionately killed or injured due to poor street design and planning*

**ORLANDO, Fla** — According to a new report released by the National Complete Streets Coalition, Central Florida ranks as the most dangerous metropolitan region for walkers over the ten year period of 2003 – 2012 with the state of Florida taking first place in the nation. Statewide 5,189 people were killed for doing something as simple and necessary as crossing the street, with 583 of those deaths taking place in Lake, Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties.

The report, “Dangerous by Design 2014,” ranks how safe people are while walking in the major metropolitan areas by looking at the number of residents who walk to work and the pedestrians killed over a select time period. This is referred to as the Pedestrian Danger Index (PDI). The report finds high PDI is a function of low walking rates and roads that are designed to move cars quickly. Accordingly, the top four deadliest major metropolitan areas in the country for pedestrians are in Florida – Central Florida, Tampa-St. Petersburg, Jacksonville and Miami-Ft. Lauderdale where, on average, less than 1.5% of residents commute to work on foot.

The report also looks at pedestrian death rate (per 100,000 people) for the past five years (2008-2012) by metro area and by county ([www.smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/state-statistics](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/state-statistics)). According to the report, the Deltona-Daytona Beach-Ormond Beach metro area has the highest pedestrian death rate of 3.83 per 100,000 people. The Central Florida metro area is ranked eight out of the 20 metro areas in Florida, with a pedestrian death rate of 2.75 (per 100,000 people), just slightly above Florida at 2.83 and 1.56 nationwide. By county over the same period, Monroe County had the highest death rate with Orange listed at 13, Osceola 34, Lake 38 and Seminole 52 out of the 67 counties in Florida. When comparing the Pedestrian Danger Index (PDI) of Central Florida to the Daytona Beach metro area, Central Florida ranked as the most dangerous, given the very few residents that walk to work (1.1%) compared with the number of pedestrian deaths.

Pedestrian deaths and injuries are preventable. That’s why in June 2012 a local, grassroots pedestrian safety coalition, called *Best Foot Forward*, formed to address these challenges in Orange County and the City of Orlando. *Best Foot Forward’s* objective is to increase driver yielding behavior at marked crosswalks and reduce injuries and deaths by 50% over five years.

In examining the pedestrian injuries and fatality data in Orange County and within the City limits of Orlando, on average, 37 pedestrians were killed and 500 were injured over a four year period

from 2010 to 2013. Orange County experienced a slight decrease in pedestrian deaths - 38 to 36 - in 2012 and 2013. Of the 154 traffic crashes in 2012, 24% were pedestrian fatalities with the majority being male and on roads with a posted speed limit above 40 mph in Orange County. Injuries range from slight fractures to severe head trauma, according to Orlando Regional Medical Center's (ORMC) Level 1 Trauma Center. The data shows it's the local residents, not visitors, who are being hit as pedestrians or are driving the cars involved. Of the 425 pedestrians admitted at the ORMC Level 1 Trauma Center, all but 76 resided in Central Florida in 2012.

Since launching *Best Foot Forward* over a year ago, driver yield rates on roads with posted speed limits at 35 mph and less in Orange County and the City of Orlando jumped from 12% to 48% due to a concerted effort of the Orlando Police Department and Orange County Sheriff's Office ticketing drivers for failing to yield, City and County engineering improvements at those crosswalks, and educating the community, students, drivers and walkers in that particular area. For those roads posted 40 mph and higher, only 1.2% of drivers yielded to a pedestrian in a crosswalk. After a sustained period of the "Triple E" – Enforcement, Engineering and Education – driver yield rates at these crosswalks bumped to 5%.

"As stated in the report, the majority of pedestrian deaths occur on roadways that are dangerously designed and engineered to move cars, not people, and the driver yield rates are just one more indicator that we have much more work to do locally," says Amanda Day, project director for *Best Foot Forward*. "What is unique about *Best Foot Forward*, is the fact we are the only coalition in the state – if not nation – where local elected officials, enforcement agencies, city and county governments, public agencies, schools, hospitals, non-profits and businesses pool together their resources and work in concert to improve safety for all walkers. It's truly a grassroots movement and with SunRail, bike share and expanded LYMMO services in the downtown corridor, there is urgency to make streets walkable and remind drivers, walkers and bikers to look out for each other."

As the report points out, Florida grew in the post-war period, mostly through rapid spread of low-density neighborhoods that rely on wider streets with higher speeds to connect homes, shops and schools -- roads that tend to be more dangerous for people walking. Seventy-three percent of pedestrian deaths in Florida were on roads where the posted speed limit was 40 mph or greater (compared to 61.3% nationally). In Orange County, the percent was even greater – 83.6%.

Pedestrian safety is often perceived as a strictly local issue but, for decades federal dollars have been invested in thousands of miles of state and local roads in the heart of communities. In fact, 68 percent of all pedestrian fatalities over the past decade occurred on federal-aid roads--roads that follow federal guidelines and are eligible to receive federal funds.

"Older adults have the greatest fatality rate of any group," said AARP Florida State Director Jeff Johnson. "Although Florida has made strides to address pedestrian fatalities in the last few years, there is clearly much more work to be done to make Florida streets and highways safer for all pedestrians," Johnson said. "AARP stands ready to work with Florida state, county, city and advocacy groups to make our streets safer for all."

The “Dangerous by Design” report includes recommendations for federal, state, and local officials to help communities save lives and improve the safety and comfort for everyone who uses the roadways. Orange County and the City of Orlando have already undertaken some of these recommendations. MetroPlan Orlando adopted a Pedestrian Safety Action Plan for its three-county region – Orange, Osceola and Seminole. This action plan includes many improvements highlighted in the national report. One more example is that the City of Orlando, Orange County and FDOT District 5 are working to improve lightening on the major corridors and around SunRail stations as well as move forward with larger engineering projects to improve the safety for walkers.

“Florida and Central Florida have a long way to go to improve the safety for all road users, but at least we’re pushing the safety needle forward,” says Day. “It’s just a matter of time before we hold the most notable achievement in pedestrian safety – ranked last place by Dangerous by Design.”

- Full report, click here: <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/dangerous-by-design-2014/dangerous-by-design-2014.pdf>
- Florida report, which contains data at metro and county level, click here: [www.smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/state-statistics](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/state-statistics).
- Link to interactive map of fatalities: [www.smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/map](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/map)

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#### ***About The National Complete Streets Coalition***

The **National Complete Streets Coalition**, a program of Smart Growth America, seeks to fundamentally transform the look, feel and function of the roads and streets in our community, by changing the way most roads are planned, designed and constructed. Complete Streets policies direct transportation planners and engineers to consistently plan and design streets with all users in mind. [teamSGA@mrss.com](mailto:teamSGA@mrss.com)

#### ***About Smart Growth America***

**Smart Growth America** is the only national organization dedicated to researching, advocating for and leading coalitions to bring better development to more communities nationwide. From providing more sidewalks to ensuring more homes are built near public transportation or that productive farms remain a part of our communities, smart growth helps make sure people across the nation can live in great neighborhoods.

#### ***About Best Foot Forward***

Best Foot Forward for Pedestrian Safety is a coalition of civic leaders, public safety officials, engineers, educators, transportation planners, advocates and concerned citizens. Initiated by Bike/Walk Central Florida under the leadership of former Orange County Mayor Linda Chapin, the coalition includes MetroPlan Orlando, Orange County Government, City of Orlando, Orange County Public Schools, Orlando Health, Lynx, Winter Park Health Foundation, Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), Florida Bicycle Association, the cities of Winter Park, Maitland, Winter Garden, Apopka and towns of Eatonville and Windermere, as well as police chiefs throughout Orange County led by Orlando Police John Mina and Orange County Sheriff Jerry Demings. To learn more, go to [www.iyield4peds.org](http://www.iyield4peds.org) or YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/BFFOrlando/videos>

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