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Best Foot Forward to launch in Osceola County and City of Kissimmee to address rising trend in pedestrian injuries and fatalities

KISSIMMEE, FL – (October 27, 2017) – Osceola County, City of Kissimmee, their respective law enforcement agencies, MetroPlan Orlando, LYNX, Osceola County Public Schools, Florida Health Department and local safety advocates have joined forces to launch Best Foot Forward, a grassroots pedestrian safety initiative, to reverse escalating pedestrian injuries and fatalities by changing driver behavior at pedestrian crosswalks. The official launch ceremony and press conference is scheduled for Monday, October 30 at 11 a.m. in the Osceola County Commission Chambers.

According to the *Dangerous by Design* report, the Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford (Metro Orlando metropolitan statistical area) has consistently ranked as one of the most dangerous regions in the nation for pedestrian deaths and injuries for the last ten years. Last year in Osceola County, 148 people were injured and 19 were killed in crashes, a 30 percent increase from 2014 to 2016, as reported by the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles.

Best Foot Forward is a data-driven, multi-prong approach of combining education, engineering and enforcement to get more drivers to stop and yield for people at crosswalks as Florida law requires. Short-term success is measured by the percentage of drivers yielding to pedestrians at marked crosswalks. The ultimate measure of success, however, will be the reduction of pedestrian deaths and injuries.

“Pedestrian safety is a complex issue, and it takes a comprehensive solution to address the challenge. We’re pleased to help the Best Foot Forward coalition grow into a regional program, starting with expansion into Osceola County,” said Harry Barley, executive director for MetroPlan Orlando, a founding coalition partner of Best Foot Forward. “Driver yield rates have steadily increased in Orange County and City of Orlando since the program was launched in 2012, and we hope to see the same success in Osceola.”

“We are thrilled to bring Best Foot Forward’s proven strategies to our City, shining a spotlight on the need to look out for each other whether you are a driving a car, riding a bike or walking across the street,” said City of Kissimmee Mayor Jose Alvarez. “By joining together and putting our Best Foot Forward, we are changing a mindset and making lasting improvements that will in turn save lives in our community.”

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Partners and participants in the Kissimmee/Osceola County *Best Foot Forward* coalition launch ceremony include: Osceola County Commissioner Cheryl Grieb, City of Kissimmee Mayor Jose Alvarez, School District of Osceola County Superintendent Dr. Debra Pace, Kissimmee Police Chief Jeff O'Dell, Osceola County Sheriff Russell Gibson, MetroPlan Orlando Executive Director Harry Barley, LYNX CEO Edward Johnson, Florida Department of Health in Osceola County Nursing Program Specialist Linda Clarke, and Bike/Walk Central Florida Executive Director Amanda Day.

Osceola County and Kissimmee transportation planners and law enforcement have identified 15 crosswalks to pilot monitoring of driver yield rates, enforcement of the driver yield law and improvement of engineering treatments. At the same time, *Best Foot Forward* will educate the public through outreach programs in the community and education in Osceola schools.

Pedestrian injury and fatality facts

In 2016, the tri-county area saw 911 pedestrian injuries and fatalities, and 148 of those pedestrian injuries and fatalities were in Osceola County.

According to the Center for Transportation at the University of South Florida, 14 percent of Florida pedestrian fatalities occur in marked crosswalks. Contrary to popular belief, residents, not visitors, account for more than 90 percent of injuries, with males outpacing females. Additionally, Florida's senior population is not overrepresented compared to the national average.

About Best Foot Forward

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.

The Best Foot Forward for Pedestrian Safety coalition includes: MetroPlan Orlando, Orange County Government and Sheriff's Office, Osceola County Government and Sheriff's Office, the City of Kissimmee Government and Police Department, the City of Orlando and Police Department, Florida Department of Health, School District of Osceola County, Orange County Public Schools, Orlando Health, Lynx, Winter Park Health Foundation, the Florida Department of Transportation, Orange Cycle, the University of Miami's WalkSafe and Bike/Walk Central Florida.

To learn more, visit www.iyield4peds.org.

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