



**BE HEALTHY
BE HAPPY**

Community Healthcare Coalition Greater Prince William

Greater Prince William **TRAILS** COALITION



PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IN GREATER PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY

Our Pedestrian Safety Crisis

At least 312 people suffered injuries in pedestrian- and motor-vehicle crashes, and 23 deaths in Prince William County, City of Manassas, and City of Manassas Park combined in the years 2021, 2022, and January to July 2023 total³.

Researchers suggest that these numbers are a fraction of the total number, since vehicle crashes are believed to be under-reported to police⁴. Crashes involving pedestrians and vehicles in the Prince William Health District – and nationwide— have grown since 2020- to present⁵.

Vehicle injuries take their toll on the quality of life of victims over the long haul as well. Researchers are connecting the relationship of traffic-related injuries and adverse mental-health problems⁶, they include depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and opioid prescription addiction⁷.



“ At least 312 people suffered injuries...and 23 deaths in Prince William County... ”

Low-income neighborhoods, African American, and Latino communities suffer these incidents with higher frequency and experience a higher risk of fatality than do other neighborhoods⁸.

These incidents permanently impact not only upon those involved, but their families and communities⁹.



Increasing Safety for ALL

To prevent future tragedies, the Community Healthcare Coalition of Greater Prince William is collaborating with community organizations, government leaders and residents to improve the overall safety as part of the Neighborhood and Built Environment Work Group.

To keep everyone safe and improve the quality of life for all residents, we support a Safe System Approach (SSA) to transportation safety.

The U.S. Department of Transportation defines SSA as a “holistic and comprehensive approach that provides a guiding framework to make place safer for people¹. ” Components of SSA are: Safer Speeds, Safer Roads, Safer Vehicles, Safer People, and Post-Crash Care².



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Why Active Living is Good for Your Neighborhood

There is a well-established link between active travel behaviors, transportation infrastructure, and health outcomes.

We promote physical activity among children and adults because of the tremendous health benefits of exercise.

Encouraging people to walk or bike to and from places is one of the easiest, time-efficient, and low-cost ways to get people their daily recommended exercise that may prevent or manage chronic disease. Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure correlates with residents heightened physical activity levels and active travel in those areas¹⁰. Research shows that physical activity helps reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, while improving mood, self-esteem and sleep quality^{11 12 13}.

Arlington was named America’s fittest city in 2022, in part because residents live in a walkable- and bikeable community with excellent access to parks, trails, and greenways. Combining the city’s physical-activity infrastructure with high rates of behaviors such as exercise, healthy eating and not smoking leads to lower rates of chronic disease, heart disease and diabetes¹⁴.

Interventions that increase options for active travel match up with lower rates of mortality, improved mental health, progress against type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, injuries, or weight gain¹⁵.

Arguably, it's cost-effective to increase the walkability of neighborhoods to enable easy access to local businesses and services¹⁶. There can be a positive effect to adding urban green space and green infrastructure that enables better health outcomes¹⁷.



“...physical activity helps reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, while improving mood, self-esteem and sleep quality.”

Action

We suggest that Prince William County government and the City of Manassas and City of Manassas Park adopt the following components of a Safe Systems Approach:

- **Safer People:** Encourage safe, responsible behavior by people who use our roads, and create conditions that prioritize their ability to reach their destination unharmed.
- **Safer Speeds:** Promote safer speeds in all roadway environments that are context appropriate, as well as equitable enforcement (reduce roadway design speeds with road diets, lane diets, planting street trees, wider medians, roadway buffers, curb extension, reduced curb radii, and adopt Automated Speed Enforcement [currently limited to school zones and highway work zones in Virginia]).
- **Safer Roads:** Enforce safe-driving behaviors, and design roadway environments that will reduce the incidence and severity of injuries to people over (damage to) vehicles.
 - Installing street lighting and other features that increase visibility of all road users, dedicating a part of the road for pedestrians/bicyclists and separating when possible vulnerable road users from high-speed vehicles (adding sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and overpasses).
 - Evaluate all pedestrian-crossing locations, both urban and rural. According to VDOT's 2018 Pedestrian Safety Action Plan¹⁸ only 51 percent of pedestrian injury crashes occur at mid-block crossing locations. At least 22 percent are at unsignalized intersections, and 5 percent are in parking lots.
 - Increase by 5 percent annually the number of sidewalks in equity emphasis areas, around schools, libraries, arterials and connectors.
- **Safer Vehicles:** Recommend more vehicle designs and features that help prevent crashes and minimizes the impact of crashes on both occupants and non-occupants.
- **Post-Crash Care:** Create a safe working environment for first responders and prevent secondary crashes through robust traffic incident management practices.
- **Promote Equity:** Ensure that traffic safety investments target the neighborhoods needing them the most.

Actions you can take with us:

- Join us in conducting neighborhood-walks audits, attending local transportation meetings and town halls. Email: mburton@institutephi.org if you are interested.

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