



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

Senator Kennedy, New Yorkers for Active Transportation Call for Investment in Pedestrian and Bicycling Projects

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY January 14, 2014

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More than 50 organizations, 1,300 Postcards, one message—NYS Budget needs dedicated pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure funding

ALBANY, N.Y. — Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo, and New Yorkers for Active Transportation continued their push today for safer, more complete streets in Western New York and across the state. New Yorkers for Active Transportation (NY4AT) delivered a united message to the Governor this afternoon: more than 1,300 postcards, from New Yorkers across

the state, calling for dedicated funding to improve New York's pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure. The postcard delivery is a follow-up to [a letter, sent in December 2013, from more than 50 organizations](#) representing environmental, health, aging, equity and transportation groups.

The postcards and letter call for an allocation of \$20 million in the 2014-15 state budget specifically dedicated to funding pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure projects, with an additional commitment of \$20 million annually over the next five years. Advocates emphasized the impact better infrastructure can have on a community's quality of life – its ability to create safe walking and biking environments and a healthier population, increase local real estate values, provide more equitable and affordable transportation options and reduce air pollution.

Senator Kennedy, who introduced [new legislation to expand the state's Complete Streets law](#), supports targeted funding for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure as a means to boost quality of life and community development in Buffalo and across the state.

“Investing in bicycle and pedestrian safety will ensure our children have safe routes to school and improve quality of life for local families by providing more opportunities to walk and bike safely,” said Senator Kennedy. “Safer roadways lead to stronger communities, and an expanded Complete Streets law, backed by targeted investment, will pave the way to an improved transportation network and a stronger state. This new infrastructure investment will make a long-lasting impact on the safety of our roads and highways, and help strengthen neighborhoods in Buffalo, Cheektowaga and throughout all of New York State's towns, villages and cities.”

“This initiative is about economic development. It's about creating a transportation system in which New Yorkers feel safe enough to get out of their cars, walk to local stores, and pull

out their wallets,” stated Robin Dropkin, Executive Director of Parks & Trails New York.

Justin Booth, executive director of GObike Buffalo, said, “With the highest fatality rate in the nation for pedestrians and bicyclists, 27 percent, New York State is only spending a few pennies on the dollar to protect the most vulnerable users of our roads. For the good of the economy and the health, safety, and quality of life of all New Yorkers, an increase in the state’s financial commitment to pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure should be paramount.”

In 2012, New York State had the worst pedestrian and cycling safety record in the nation, with 27 percent of road fatalities involving a bicyclist or pedestrian. Between 2009 and 2012, Erie County witnessed 3,468 vehicle collisions with pedestrians and bicycles. At least 43 of those Erie County incidents involved pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities.

In 2011, a Complete Streets law was signed by Governor Cuomo, a law intended to improve the safety of roads for all users. However, a recent Tri-State Transportation Campaign analysis showed New York State will be investing less money on pedestrian and bicycling safety over the next four years than before passage of the law.

Beth Finkel, State Director for AARP in New York, said, “AARP commends the Governor for signing the Complete Streets bill, but it won't improve or maintain safety for pedestrians and bicyclists if New York doesn't initially invest in safe passageways. Walkability is critical to keeping New Yorkers—and their money—here as they age.”

“New York is dedicating only a couple pennies on the dollar to help communities make long-overdue and much-needed investments that make it safer and more enjoyable for all New Yorkers to walk and bike. We can do better. And we should do better. We need Governor Cuomo to take the lead to assure our new Complete Streets law is fully implemented,” stated

Josh Wilson, Executive Director of New York Bicycling Coalition.

Governor Cuomo's State of the State address tackled issues related to dangerous driving, including tougher new laws for DWI and driving while texting. Advocates believe targeted investment is necessary, along with these stiffer penalties, to help turn around the state's troubling safety statistics.

"While tackling drunk and distracted driving is laudable, speeding cars pose a significant threat to lives throughout the state. Funding to help pay for simple and inexpensive improvements to the road network will reduce speeding and save lives statewide," stated Veronica Vanterpool, Executive Director of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign.

In December, Senator Kennedy outlined [new legislation to expand the state's Complete Streets law](#) at the busy and often dangerous intersection of Union Road and Maryvale Drive in the Town of Cheektowaga. Kennedy's bill will refine and expand the scope of the law to ensure more infrastructure projects include complete-streets design features. Current law only requires complete-streets compliance when the state undertakes a major road construction or reconstruction project. Under Kennedy's legislation, complete-streets requirements would be extended to resurfacing, maintenance and road preservation projects on state roads – which tend to be the majority of DOT's road projects, especially under its Preservation First policy.

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NY4AT is a coalition of nonprofits and local governments dedicated to ensuring that all New Yorkers have access to safe opportunities for bicycling and walking in the state's cities, villages, and towns through the development of sidewalks, bike lanes, Complete Streets and multi-use trails. The coalition is coordinated by the New York Bicycling Coalition, Parks & Trails New York, and Tri-State Transportation Campaign.

Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate's 63rd District, which is comprised of the town of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is

available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.