

York Region Pedestrian Safety Campaign

1. Background

1.1 York Region

York Region covers approximately 1,800 square kilometers and is located in the heart of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) in Southern Ontario. The Region is made up of nine area municipalities: Aurora, East Gwillimbury, Georgina, King, Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill, Vaughan and Whitchurch-Stouffville. A map of York Region is provided in Appendix 1.

Since the creation of York Region in 1971, the population has increased dramatically from 169,000 persons to approximately 1.1 million in 2012. York Region is anticipated to grow to a population of 1.5 million by 2031 which is an annual average growth rate of 2 percent per year.

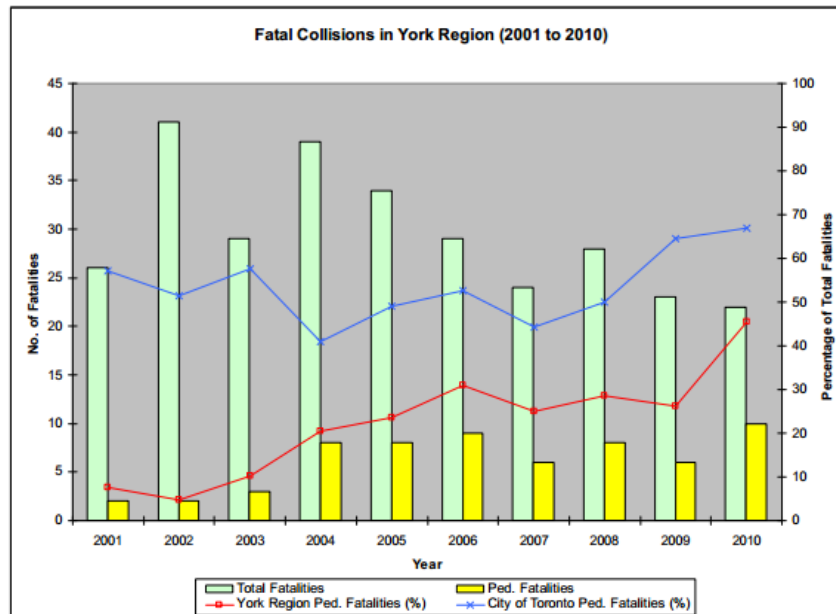
York Region's rapid population growth is particularly due to its strategic location north of the City of Toronto. Benefiting from an excellent transportation network, a high quality of life and available land space, York Region has become a major growth area of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

With this dramatic increase in population comes increased exposure between pedestrians and motorists. Understanding and changing social behaviour of pedestrians and motorists through education, enforcement and engineering will change how they interact and increase public safety Region wide.

1.2 Traffic Safety

A review of York Region's 2001 to 2010 collision statistics shows that the number of roadway fatalities has remained relatively constant over the past 10 years. However in 2010, a spike in pedestrian fatalities across the Greater Toronto Area is noted. While such a cluster of incidents at first seems alarming, a review of past occurrences indicates that such sudden spikes are likely random events. No particular factors that led to the spike in pedestrian fatalities in 2010 within the Greater Toronto Area could be identified. However, an analysis of our own data does show the percentage of fatalities involving pedestrians have been on the rise in York Region over the last decade (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
2001 to 2010 Fatal Collision Statistics



The trend identified in Figure 1 is consistent with statistics from the City of Toronto, which are also shown in Figure 1. While the Region compares favourably to our most southerly neighbour, we need to be aware that as areas of the Region urbanize, we will face the common challenge of accommodating higher volumes of pedestrians and motorists as safely as possible.

2.0 Goal

The goal of the Pedestrian Safety Program is to foster respect between motorists and pedestrians in an effort to reduce the number of collisions, injuries and fatalities on York Region roads.

3.0 Engineering, Education and Enforcement

York Regional Police and Transportation Services work co-operatively and collaboratively through Engineering, Education and Enforcement to help prevent collisions between vehicles and pedestrians.

3.1 Engineering

A study completed by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) suggest that the escalating trend in pedestrian collisions can mainly be attributed to the following:

- a) Increases in pedestrian activity – as the Region continues to urbanize, more trips are being made on foot. The increased interaction between pedestrians and vehicles unfortunately increases the likelihood of collisions. Growing transit usage also means more people walking on our streets because transit riders are always also pedestrians.

- b) Improvements in vehicle safety – advancements in vehicle design and new technology have reduced the likelihood of fatalities for drivers and passengers. Unfortunately, there are few options to provide pedestrians with the same safety benefits.
- c) The aging population – a large proportion of pedestrian fatalities involve seniors who are more susceptible to serious injury or death in the event of a vehicle-pedestrian collision. A 2004 Transport Canada study that analyzed collision statistics over a 10-year period indicated 26.9% of male pedestrian fatalities and 38.6% of female pedestrian fatalities involved pedestrians over the age of 65. See Appendix 2, Figures 2 and 3 which summarize the pedestrian fatality and injury data from the Transport Canada study.

As a result of the increase in pedestrian fatalities in York Region over the last decade, pedestrian safety improvements were developed in an effort to reduce the number of collisions, injuries and fatalities on York Region roads. These Engineering improvements include:

- Community Safety Zone installation in School areas
- Increased pedestrian crossing time at signalized intersections
- Pedestrian countdown signals
- Revised speed limit policy
- Zebra crosswalk marking installations

3.2 Education

In addition to Engineering improvements, Education plays an important role in reaching out to all age groups and communities throughout the Region and providing them with information necessary to increase pedestrian safety.

In 2010, York Region retained a marketing firm to investigate social issues around pedestrian related collisions in York Region. The objectives were to:

- Gain insight into why collisions occur, when they occur and who are involved;
- Identify emphasis areas; and
- Facilitate the planning and implementation of a Pedestrian Safety Campaign.

A total of four focus groups were conducted in February 2011 consisting of transit riders, motorists, pedestrians and cyclists across York Region. The research revealed that in York Region, there was a broken relationship between motorists and pedestrians, with each blaming the other for the high number of pedestrian injuries in the Region.

This insight helped to guide the creative strategy and provide an overarching focus for the campaign. The slogan, **“Motorists, Pedestrians – let’s work on our relationship”** was developed, along with a series of “Dear Motorist” and “Dear Pedestrian” messages that featured motorists and Pedestrians expressing their relationship concerns. Each seasonal safety issue was aligned with a relationship message, they are as follows: i.e.

- Fall Campaign - Visibility: ‘I want to see more of you’;
- Winter Campaign - Leaving space in winter conditions: ‘I need space’;
- Spring Campaign - Speeding: ‘We need to slow things down’;
- Back to School Campaign - Community Safety Zones: ‘I need to feel safe’.

3.3 Enforcement

The Region’s Transportation Services Department can initiate and administer all of the Engineering and Educational programs that are necessary but the success of said programs cannot be achieved without Enforcement by York Regional Police. Enforcement by York Regional Police plays an integral role in ensuring pedestrians and motorists alike are using Regional roads safely.

Working with our partners, we are able to strategically target Enforcement to coincide with Educational campaigns and Engineering initiatives in order to capitalize on the synergies that can be achieved by coordinating Three E programs.

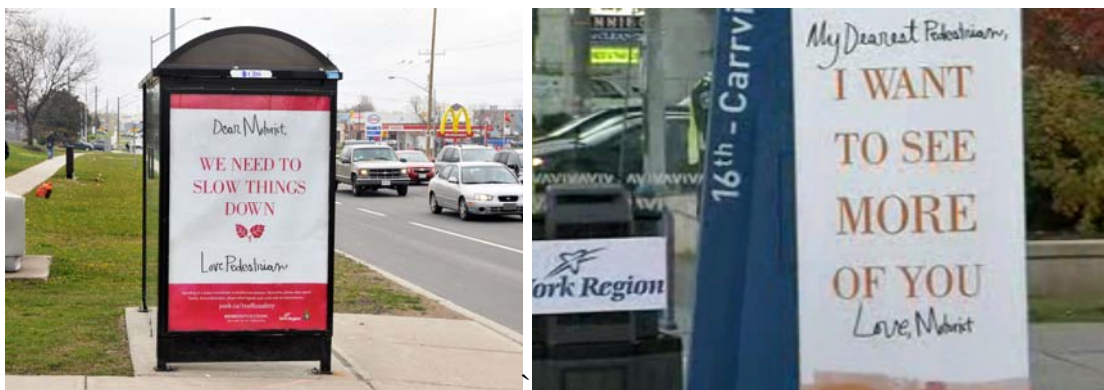
During each campaign, York Regional Police provided educational material such as Hallmark style cards to pedestrians and motorists. Their presence helped attract a significant amount of media interest which in turn allowed the Region to broadcast the campaigns to a larger audience.

In addition, York Regional Police conducted targeted Enforcement during each campaign season further emphasizing the Engineering initiatives. This may include issuing tickets related to speeding, failing to obey regulatory signs, pavement markings, blocking pedestrian crosswalks, and as well careless driving.

4.0 Pedestrian Safety Campaigns

Elements of the Pedestrian Safety Campaigns include promotional items such as Hallmark-style postcards, transit shelter advertisements, interactive games and contests, surveys, and also social and broadcast media clips. In addition, a new webpage, www.york.ca/trafficsafety, incorporated the campaigns’ objectives, a promotional video, and featured an ‘Ask an Expert’ section that mimicked a relationship advice column.

Several bus shelters throughout the Region were equipped with full-sized banners to convey the campaign’s objectives. The images below are a couple examples of the transit shelter ads:



The seasonal campaigns aligned with Education, Engineering and Enforcement strategies are described in the following sections:

4.1 Fall Campaign –“Visibility”

The objective of the fall campaign is to **Educate** pedestrians to make themselves more visible to motorists by wearing light coloured clothing, reflective strips, or attaching a small flashing light emitting device onto their backpacks/clothes.

To coincide with the daylight savings time changes, in November 2011, York Regional Police and Transportation Services staff launched the Fall campaign with the tag “*I Want to See More of You*”. The official launch of the campaign at a Mall adjacent to a high volume intersection with a history of pedestrian issues was attended by a number of major media outlets that distributed our message of increasing pedestrian visibility.

Engineering improvements such as zebra crosswalk markings, increased pedestrian crossing time and pedestrian countdown signals were showcased as part of York Region’s transportation initiatives for improving pedestrian safety. During the event, York Regional Police pulled drivers over and handed out educational materials and infraction notices when an offence was committed.

As part of this Campaign, Transportation staff provides York Regional Police with the Region’s top intersections which experience a high volume of pedestrian activity and/or pedestrian collisions for targeted **Enforcement**.



York Regional Police Deputy Chief Bruce Herridge and Commissioner Kathleen Llewellyn-Thomas pose at the fall campaign launch in Richmond Hill.

Zebra Crosswalk Marking Installation

Since 2011, York Region has been installing zebra crosswalk markings at all existing pedestrian signal locations and signalized intersections which have a combination of high pedestrian exposure and/or history of pedestrian collisions.

Increased Pedestrian Crossing Time at Signalized Intersections

With York Region’s commitment to active transportation and increasing pedestrian safety, York Region is now using a standard walking speed of 1.0 metre per second at all signalized intersections thereby giving more time to pedestrians to comfortably cross the street. This walking speed will provide sufficient crossing time for all pedestrians, including children, senior citizens and other persons with a limited gait.

Pedestrian Countdown Signals

Since 2007, pedestrian countdown signals have been installed at all new signalized intersections as well as existing signals with high pedestrian volumes. All signalized intersections in York Region are now equipped with pedestrian countdown signals.

4.2 Spring Campaign – “Slow Things Down“

The objective of the spring campaign is primarily to encourage motorists to reduce operating speeds on the Regional road network and to **Educate** drivers on the consequences of speeding.

In April 2012, York Regional Police and Transportation staff launched the Spring campaign with the tag “We Need to Slow Things Down” on Bathurst Street across from the Elgin West Community Centre in the Town Richmond Hill. This campaign was to coincide with the lowering of the speed limit on this section of Bathurst Street based on the **Engineering** science of setting speed limits in York Region.

During the event, York Regional Police were pulling drivers over and handing out educational material and infraction notices when an offence was committed. In addition media alerts and informational post cards were used to communicate the Campaign message to York Region residents.

As part of the Spring Campaign, Transportation staff provides York Regional Police with the Region’s annual speed limit revisions and locations which have experienced an over representation of collisions as a direct result of operating speeds for targeted speed **Enforcement**.



York Regional Police and Transportation Services staffs pose for the spring campaign launch in Richmond Hill.

Revised Speed Limit Policy

Revisions to existing speed limits take into account a number of factors to ensure the regulatory speed is appropriate for the existing roadway characteristics and roadside environment. To address speed limit requests, York Region uses the *Transportation Association of Canada (TAC)* guidelines for establishing speed limits.

4.3 Back to School Campaign – “School Safety”

The Back to School campaign is geared towards students returning to school, encouraging students to be attentive (i.e. discourages texting while walking) and to cross at controlled crossings. This campaign also **Educates** students and motorists of increased fines in school areas.

In September 2012, York Regional Police and Transportation staff launched the back to school campaign on Wellington Street adjacent to St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School in the Town of Aurora. This campaign was attended by major media outlets that captured students advertising pedestrian responsibilities to motorists.

This campaign complemented a Community Safety Zone installed prior to the event adjacent to St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School as a result of an **Engineering** control. During the event, York Regional Police pulled drivers over and handed out educational materials and infraction notices when an offence was committed.

As part of the Back to School Campaign, Transportation staff provides York Regional Police with the Region’s annual Community Safety Zone revisions and school locations which experience excessive operating speeds for targeted speed **Enforcement**.



St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School students advertise back to school campaign messages.

Community Safety Zone Installation in School Areas

Community Safety Zones are typically designated on roadways near schools, day-care centres, retirement residences or high collision locations. Within designated Community Safety Zones, traffic laws remain the same, but fines are increased through a special designation under the *Highway Traffic Act*. The intent of these zones is to modify driver behaviour to increase safety for all road users.

With a view to further improve pedestrian safety around schools close to Regional roads, in the Spring of 2012, York Region implemented a total of 69 Community Safety Zones covering 101 school sites on the Regional road network.

4.4 Winter Campaign

The objective of the Winter Campaign is to encourage motorists to leave enough space between them, pedestrian right of ways, and snow plow paths. Motorists are also encouraged to maintain good visibility by ensuring that windows and mirrors are clean and clear of snow and dirt.

In December 2011, York Regional Police and Transportation staff launched the Winter campaign with the tag “*I Need Space*” at the Colossus Movie Theatre on Highway 7 in the City of Vaughan. This campaign was attended by major media outlets that had an opportunity to experience the challenges of driving a snow plow truck.

Engineering measures showcased during this campaign included traffic signal sentries and reflective traffic signal backboards. As part of this Campaign, Transportation staff provides York Regional Police with locations that experience an over representation of driving too fast for road conditions for targeted **Enforcement**.



Snow plow advertises winter campaign message.

Traffic Signal Sentries

York Region is currently experimenting with traffic signal sentries at various traffic signal locations to evaluate the effectiveness of reducing the amount of snow accumulation on LED traffic signal heads.

Reflective Traffic Signal Backboards

In 2011, York Region replaced all standard backboards with reflective backboards to increase conspicuity of signal heads, especially during inclement winter conditions. The high reflectivity of the sheeting allows all road users to be aware of the presence of traffic signals, especially during heavy winter storms. An added benefit to the sheeting is that during power outages the reflective surface is still very visible and so the functionality of the respective intersection is partially maintained.

5.0 Challenges

Challenges faced by the Region in the quest to reduce pedestrian collisions include:

- Building mutual respect between motorists and pedestrians
- Breaking social behaviours as it relates to pedestrian and motorists
- Measuring the direct success of multi-disciplinary pedestrian safety campaign

6.0 Innovation

The Region is continuously making efforts to overcome its challenges in reducing pedestrian collisions and as well improving the overall safety of the Regional road network by:

- Continuing to foster relationships with organizations to promote Traffic Safety.
- Working with York Regional Police to identify emphasis areas in need of targeted enforcement.
- Implementing engineering solutions to improve the safety performance of the transportation network

7.0 Results and Lessons Learned

Website hits to www.york.ca/trafficsafety have been consistently high since the launch in 2011 and this is largely attributed to the updated content containing safety tips and the contest features (i.e. encouraging residents to watch educational videos for a chance to win retail prizes). Out of 300+ pages of Department content, the traffic safety page ranks as the highest viewed page during a campaign period, reaching a high of 2,042 views in one month. YouTube views for the back to school campaign reached the highest out of all York Region videos posted on the site at 3,419 views.

Contest entries continue to be an important measure for our campaign periods with the back to school campaign garnering over 550 entries.

Media coverage on the campaign was high upon initiation, including coverage in local ethnic media which helped to ensure that the campaign reached York Region's diverse communities. Media attention from the launches included clips on CP24, CityTV, CFTO, 680 News, Sing Tao and coverage in the Region's local newspapers through York Region Media Group.

As a result of the Pedestrian Safety Campaign, the Region will gain a better understanding as to how motorists and pedestrians interact with the hopes of enhancing the relationship through Education, Enforcement and Engineering. It is imperative that public safety be increased in other jurisdictions. Public and private agencies are encouraged to promote pedestrian safety as active transportation continues to increase.

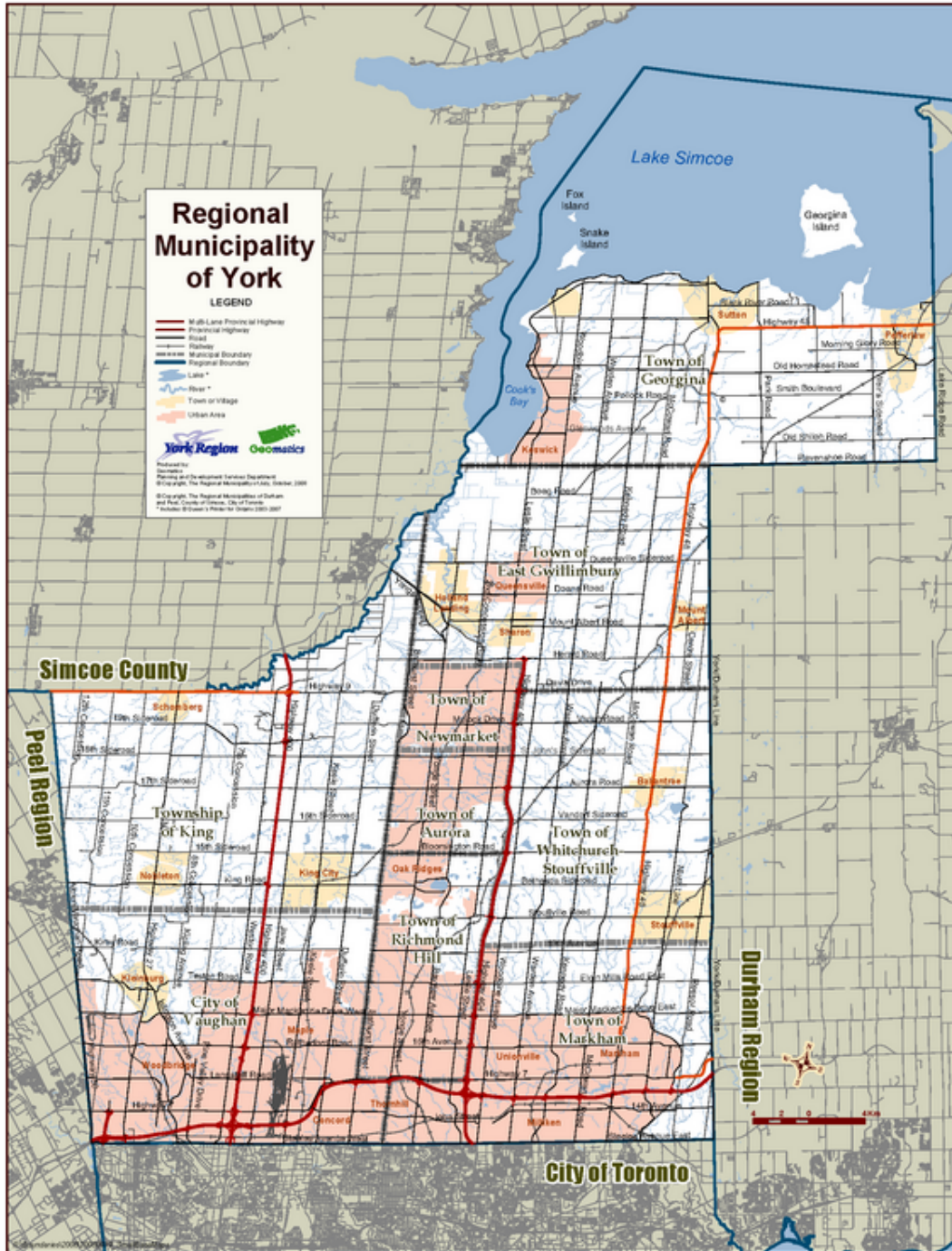
8.0 Closing Remarks

The need for a program such as the Pedestrian Safety Campaign became evident after 2009 when high number pedestrian collisions occurred. To adequately understand the reasons as to why

pedestrian collisions were increasing, the Region retained a consultant and performed an investigation. Through the involvement of York Regional Police and the implementation of advertising campaigns throughout the Region, we collaborate with the community to improve pedestrian safety.

One of York Region's mandates is to continuously make efforts to address the needs of its residents by providing a safe and efficient transportation network. The Pedestrian Safety Campaign is just one of the many safety initiatives that helps achieve this mandate by strategically combining elements related to Engineering, Education, and Enforcement which, in turn makes York Region a better place for its residents.

APPENDIX 1



APPENDIX 2

Figure 2
Male Pedestrian Fatalities and Injuries

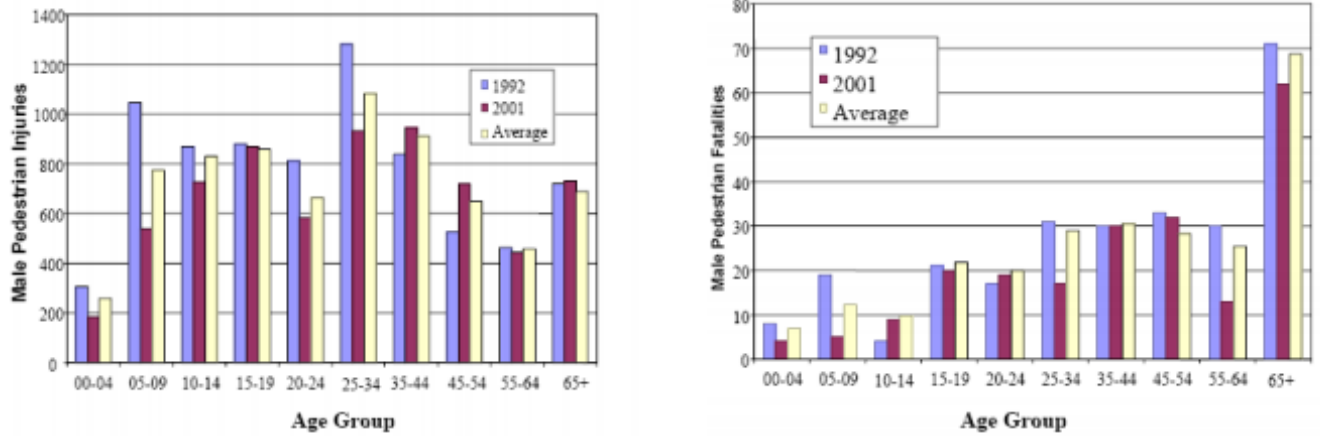
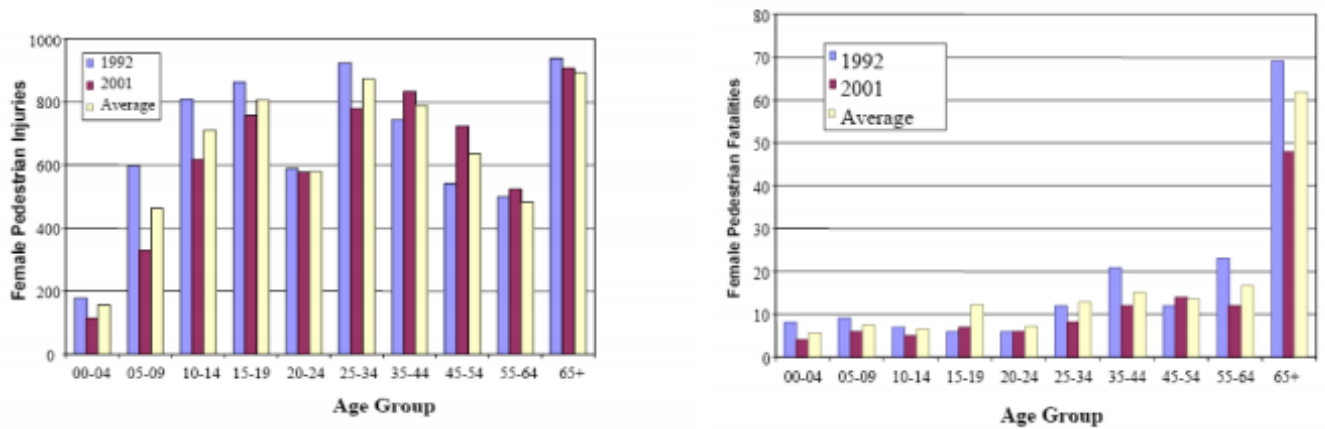


Figure 3
Female Pedestrian Fatalities and Injuries



APPENDIX 3

Brochure Front



Brochure Back

There are laws and rules to help you safely walk on sidewalks and cross the streets. When there are no sidewalks to safely walk, you should always walk facing traffic on the shoulder of the road and stay as far away from the road as possible.

What About Crossing the Street?
When you cross the street at a corner with a traffic signal there are lines on the road called a *Crosswalk* for you to walk between. There are also special signals to tell you it is okay to cross the street. The *Walk Signal* has a button that you can press that will allow you to cross safely.

Tips to Help You Cross the Street Safely

- Always make eye contact with drivers before you cross the street.
- Always cross when the traffic has come to a complete stop.
- Always cross the street at cross walks with an adult.
- Always stand away from the road when you are waiting for the pedestrian light.
- Always Stop, Look and Listen before crossing.
- Always cross when you see the *Walk Signal*.
- Always look both ways before and while you cross the street, by looking left, right and left again to make sure no cars are coming or turning onto the *Crosswalk*.

The Walk Signal
The *Walk Signal* has a flashing hand or a number that counts down. This tells you how many seconds you have to cross safely.

- Always watch for cars that are turning and do not run.
- Always wear brightly coloured clothing so you can be seen.

DO NOT Start to Cross the Street When:

- The flashing hand and or the solid hand can be seen.
- If the *Walk Signal* is counting down, it is too late to start crossing the street. Press the *Walk Signal* button and wait for the next *Walk Signal* before crossing the street.