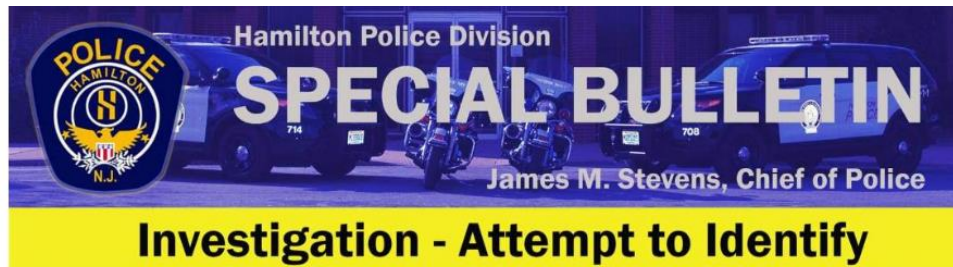




## Mercer County has 6<sup>th</sup> Highest Pedestrian Death Rate in NJ



Immediate Release  
December 5, 2021

Contact: Lt. Richard Mastropolo  
(609) 581-4000

### **Pedestrian Motor Vehicle Crash Involving Serious Bodily Injury**

On December 5, 2021 at approximately 2:17am a 17-year-old male Hamilton resident was walking westbound on Rt 33 in the area of Weston Ave when he was struck by a vehicle that was also traveling westbound. The suspect vehicle fled the area and is described as a dark colored Ford Mustang with damage to the windshield, front grill and passenger side headlight area. The victim suffered serious injuries and was transported to Capital Health Hospital at Fuld for treatment.

The crash is being investigated by Officer Hendricksen and Officer Micharski of the Hamilton Police Traffic Unit. Any witnesses are asked to contact the Hamilton Police Traffic Unit at (609)581-4000.

Information may also be left anonymously on the Hamilton Police Crime Tip Hotline at 609-581-4008.

## VICTIM CLASSIFICATION

	2021	2022	2023
<b>DRIVER</b>	180	227	163
<b>PASSENGER</b>	39	49	39
<b>PEDALCYCLIST</b>	12	12	7
<b>PEDESTRIAN</b>	93	93	82
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>291</b>

**Source: NJSP Fatalities in NJ**

Year to date in 2023, NJ is already at 89 deaths to pedestrians and cyclists. (Source: NJSP [swfcs2.pdf \(nj.gov\)](#). Street fatalities are on the rise nationally, and right here in New Jersey. The National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports. The 7,508 projected pedestrian fatalities in 2022 is up 1% from the year before and is the highest number of pedestrian deaths since 1981

In 2019, a 22-year-old youth was hit and killed by a motor vehicle in Cornell Heights, Hamilton township while riding his bike home from the train station after work. His name was Michael. His lifeless body remained on the road for several hours, bleeding out onto the road. The police on the scene had to keep placing additional sheets (they used white) for they became blood soaked within minutes. For years now, Michael's mom comes to the corner where he was killed and placed flowers next to the front wheel of his bike that has been securely fastened to the telephone pole near the crash site. No mother should ever lose a child in this manner.

The residents of Cornell Heights for many years have fought to get signage for their community to make it safer. The speeds at which people drive through neighborhoods is unsafe. It took over 8 years to get signage to remove tractor trailers from the peaceful neighborhood. It took another resident in the area 4 years to get signage for her autistic child and when they were installed, the wrong signs were installed. A recent post on a community site for the area near the train station stated, (see below). It's not just tonight, it's every night. One may question why residents must fight for these types of things. Why the local leadership is not actively walking the streets to best understand the reality of their towns. The Mayor of Hamilton does walks through a local structure garden, to drive healthy living. He should be walking the 40m miles of Hamilton to best see the reality.



Tractor trailers in Cornell Heights, took Hamilton 8 years to put up signs to change this

We have included a letter that came from the State of NJ as residents fought for signage in Cornell Heights for 8 years to remove the trucks. Residents were also told the reason that guardrail was not approved in the budget was because there had not been enough fatalities, or accidents on Sloan Rd to warrant it. There was an 18-year-old youth who several years ago was decapitated when his vehicle went out of control and flew down the embankment that lacked a guardrail. It was not until a few years ago during a snowstorm, when a state worker (who worked for the Division of Taxation) slipped on the road and went down the embankment. She did not get hurt, thankfully. A call to the State the day this happened, we learned they would investigate the approval to install the guardrail. Eighteen months later, the guardrail was installed.



## State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
P.O. Box 600  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0600

PHILIP D. MURPHY  
*Governor*

DIANE GUTIERREZ-SCACCETTI  
*Commissioner*

SHEILA Y. OLIVER  
*Lt. Governor*

**Commercial Motor Vehicle Restrictions**  
Rutgers Avenue  
Trinity Avenue  
Vetterlein Avenue  
Leigh Avenue  
Sandalwood Avenue  
Hamilton Township  
Mercer County

November 25, 2019

Richard S. Williams, PE, P.P., C.M.E.  
Director of CP&C & Township Engineer  
Township of Hamilton  
2090 Greenwood Avenue  
Hamilton, New Jersey 08650

Dear Mr. Williams:

This is in reference to your letter, dated September 25, 2019, requesting that the New Jersey Department of Transportation investigate the feasibility of "restricting" *Commercial Motor Vehicle (CMV) by weight limit* along Rutgers Avenue, Trinity Avenue, Vetterlein Avenue, Leigh Avenue and Sandalwood Avenue, between Carlisle Avenue and Sweetbriar Avenue (CR 649) in the Township of Hamilton, County of Burlington. The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) and the Bureau of Traffic Engineering (BTE) share your concern for motorist and pedestrian safety.

Approval by the Commissioner of Transportation is required to "*limit the use of streets by Commercial Vehicles*" pursuant to N.J.S.A. 39:4-197b, and involves an investigation to determine that the traffic controls are in the "*interest of safety and the expedition of traffic*", pursuant to N.J.S.A. 39:4-8a.

Based upon a review of your submitted *Truck Study* dated May 22, 2019, prepared by Center State Engineering for the Township of Hamilton, and a field investigation conducted by staff of BTE, it has been determined that approval to restrict *Commercial Motor Vehicles* by "weight limit" on Rutgers Avenue, Trinity Avenue, Vetterlein Avenue, Leigh Avenue and Sandalwood Avenue is not recommended based upon the following reasons.

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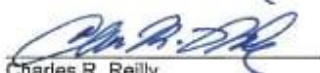
1. No safety issues generated by CMVs were identified by the submitted certified Engineer's Report, or by an evaluation of the submitted motor vehicle crash reports for Rutgers Avenue, Trinity Avenue, Vetterlein Avenue, Lehigh Avenue and Sandalwood Avenue, which reflected no CMVs were involved in crashes.
2. The "Truck Study" prepared by Center State Engineering, established that on average four percent (4%) of the total vehicle volume on each of the roadways were identified as vehicles "Large" (>20 feet in approximate length). Our observations conclude that those "Large" vehicles were smaller trucks of the delivery and utility type as defined by Classes 5 & 6. No Class 7 or above (classes 8 thru 13 "articulated vehicles") were observed.
3. The proposed alternate routes would force vehicles displaced by any weight limit restriction, to traverse a more circuitous route possibly involving additional time and distance to their destinations.

Considering the lack of any safety issues or *Commercial Motor Vehicle* involved crashes, and the circuitous nature of the alternative routes, the Bureau of Traffic Engineering has determined that restricting CMVs from Rutgers Avenue, Trinity Avenue, Vetterlein Avenue, Lehigh Avenue and Sandalwood Avenue, between Carlisle Avenue and Sweetbriar Avenue is neither in the "interest of safety or the expedition of traffic", pursuant to N.J.S.A. 39:4-8a, and therefore cannot be recommended for approval.

If Hamilton Township's request is to direct CMV's to utilize specific streets only, you may wish to consider establishing a "municipal truck route" system, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:67-16.1 requirements, establishing only those streets for trucks over 4 tons, except for the purpose of the pickup and delivery of materials, and restricting all other streets to a 4 ton weight limit within the Township of Hamilton.

If you should have any questions please contact me at 609-963-1761. Please enclose a copy of this letter with any further correspondence concerning this matter in order to expedite the process.

Sincerely,



Charles R. Reilly  
Supervisor, Traffic Investigations  
Bureau of Traffic Engineering

C: Chief James M. Stevens, Hamilton Township Police Department  
Eileen Gore, RMC, CMC, MMC, Hamilton Township Clerk

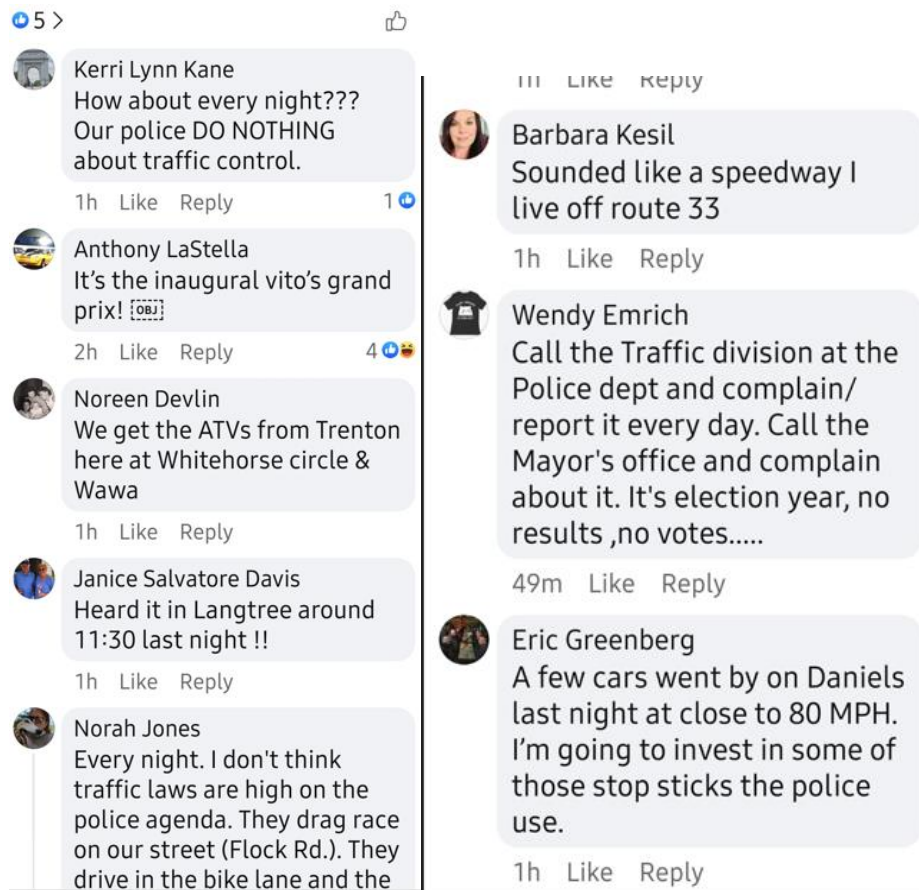


There is a bad pattern of engagement by NJ leadership to address these critical issues. If residents do not push for it, it would never happen to add signage. The safety of residents MUST be a priority. It is not in Hamilton, NJ.



Photo of vehicle that went down embankment on Sweetbriar Ave due to lack of guardrail.

Residents in Hamilton took to a community blog recently to share their frustrations on the lack of enforcement in the community as it pertains to speeding.



In New Jersey, our streets and roads claimed 699 lives in 2021, with 220 pedestrian fatalities accounting for approximately 30% of those fatalities.

The faster a vehicle is traveling, the higher the risk of it killing someone it strikes. This risk grows from just 10% at 23 miles per hour (mph) to 90% at 58 mph.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, a driver has less time to react to a pedestrian in the roadway when they are traveling at greater speeds. Research confirmed that speeding and other risky driving behaviors increased during the pandemic and persisted into 2021, and national FARS data bear this out. In 2020 and 2021, speeding was cited as a factor in 29% of all fatalities, a greater proportion than the prior four years.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the total number of speeding-related fatalities in 2021 increased by 7.9% from the previous year.

Speeding is a major factor in traffic deaths and injuries. The role of speeding in crashes is described in terms of its effect on the driver, the vehicle, and the road. Excessive speeding reduces the amount of time the driver must react in a dangerous situation to avoid a crash, increases vehicle stopping distance, and reduces the ability of road safety structures (such as guardrails, impact attenuators, crash cushions, median dividers, and concrete barriers) to protect vehicle occupants in a crash.

Speeding was a factor in 29% of all traffic fatalities in 2021, killing 12,330, or an average of over 33 people per day. The total number of fatal motor-vehicle crashes attributable to speeding was 11,057. A crash is considered speeding-related if the driver was charged with a speeding-related offense or if racing, driving too fast for conditions, or exceeding the posted speed limit was indicated as a contributing factor in the crash.

2021 is the third consecutive year with an increase of speeding-related deaths. In addition, the percentage of deaths involving speeding (29%) is above the historic low set in 2019 when 26% of deaths involved speeding. Speeding-related deaths increased 7.9% from 2020 and were the most deaths recorded since 2007.

Smart Growth America released its Dangerous By Design Report for 2022, which paints a stark picture of our lack of progress on street safety nationally and in New Jersey by delving deep into the 2021 statistics on crashes throughout our roadway systems. The results depict New Jersey as the nineteenth most dangerous state in the United States when it comes to street safety. Mercer County ranks the 6<sup>th</sup> worst county in the state on this topic. If only the leadership of the county would embrace making changes as it pertains to resident safety, residents would be safe.

Pedestrian fatalities directly relate to street design that prioritizes automobile speeds and places pedestrians and cyclists in conflict with larger, faster, deadly vehicles. Conditions that pose the greatest risks to pedestrian safety include places without sidewalks, crosswalks, street lighting (as is common in areas of South Jersey), or urban areas where pedestrians and cyclists must compete with an array of motorized vehicles along busy city arterials (common in North Jersey). As the report states, "Lower-income neighborhoods are much more likely to contain major arterial roads built for high speeds and higher traffic volumes at intersections, exacerbating dangerous conditions for people walking." In New Jersey, as throughout the United States, these lower-income neighborhoods are predominantly communities of color facing economic hardship and historic disinvestment.



One commonly dangerous type of roadway found throughout New Jersey is what is known as the “stroad”. The term “stroad” was coined to express the conflict within modern traffic engineering to balance “street” uses, like commerce, temporary parking, and property entrances, with “road” usage, where high speeds are prioritized to connect vehicles between longer distance destinations. Stroads often lack sidewalks and crosswalks and are particularly dangerous for pedestrians and multi-modal transit users. New Jersey has developed dozens of stroads throughout the state—in part, our famous jughandles are aimed at reducing conflicts on stroads between drivers making turns across oncoming traffic. Mercer County and Hamilton in particular is loaded with stroads. It was not until this year that some sidewalks have been installed in the township.

Despite the predominance of stroads, not every corner of the state is facing a pedestrian fatality crisis. We need look no further than Hoboken to find a city that has managed four years without a pedestrian fatality. The City of Hoboken has made a concerted effort to transform its streets during standard repaving efforts into complete streets, facilitating safe crossings for pedestrians, bicyclists, and importantly, people with disabilities who use a walker or a wheelchair when traversing urban streets.

The attention to street safety and fatality rates is increasing in tandem with a greater focus on “Vehicle Miles Traveled” (VMT), a measurement that advocates assert provides more information than measurements of congestion, speeds, or greenhouse gas emissions alone. Looking closely at VMT in tandem with land use patterns can assist planners and transportation agencies in reducing car trips overall (along with congestion and fatalities), by informing decision-makers about where to build denser housing and mixed-use developments, reduce speeds, add bus-only lanes, or expand public transit options.

“New Jersey Future believes that safe street redesign and embracing vision zero principles will facilitate lower fatalities, vehicle miles traveled, and greenhouse gas emissions,” said Tim Evans, research director with New Jersey Future in a statement released in response to Smart Growth America’s Dangerous By Design report.

State Senator Diegnan and Assemblyman Karabinchak introduced a bill in June 2022, S2885/A4296, which would establish a Vision Zero Task Force to address traffic safety for all road users by prioritizing “access, equity, and mobility” and to advise state leaders and agencies on policies and programs to “help achieve the goal of zero traffic fatalities and serious injuries” on New Jersey’s streets and roadways.

“At the end of the day, this all boils down to lives on the line. We have an imperative to reduce fatalities on our streets with safe design, just as we have a duty to cut our greenhouse gas emissions by reducing car trips and vehicle miles traveled. If we want people to drive less, we need to make safe places for people to travel without a car. Fostering safer street design will encourage people to consider multi-modal and low-emission transportation options by making

walking, biking, and scooter trips more inviting to New Jerseyans,” stated New Jersey Future’s executive director, Peter Kasabach.

This past week Merce County DOT installed over 12 new signs on Sloan Road in Hamilton Mercer County. They are located at all the on and off ramps for 295. In addition, there is a single sign in Cornell Heights where a young 22-year-old man (pedicyclist) was killed in 2019. However, they lack lighting for anyone to see the new signage until a motorist is on top of them is puzzling. The new signs are a step, but we need leadership that will be proactive in this arena, not wait until residents are killed, hurt, or maimed for life to take a step to make change.



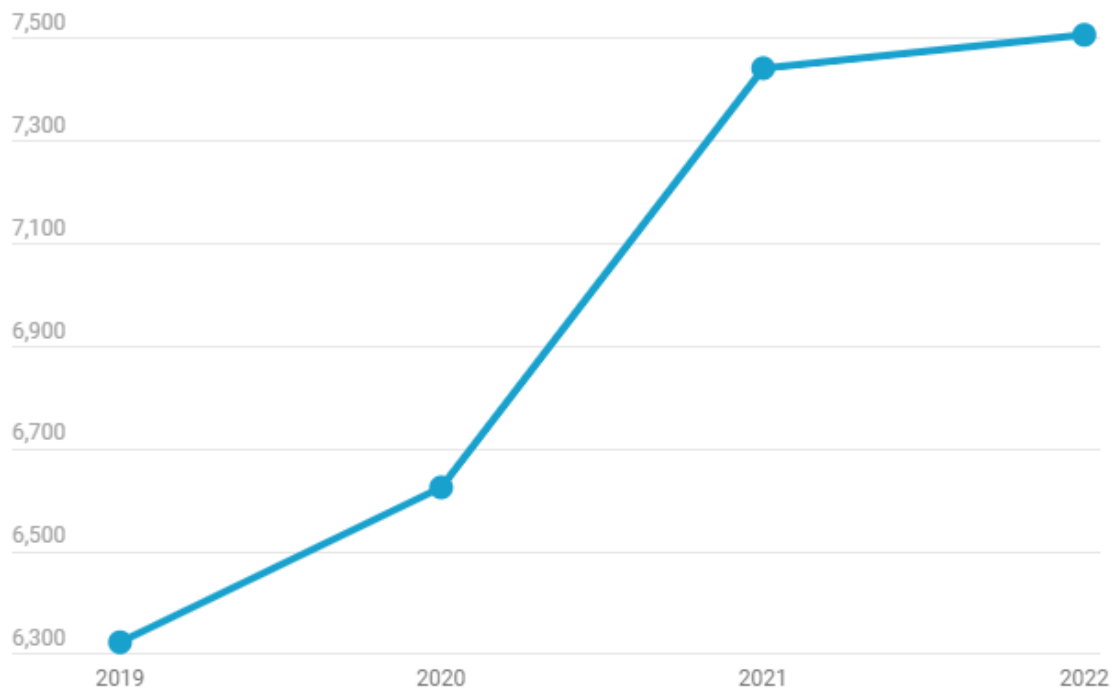
295 on ramp Sloan Rd Hamilton NJ



Sandalwood and Carlise site of pedicyclist death in 2019

## U.S. Pedestrian Fatalities, 2019-2022

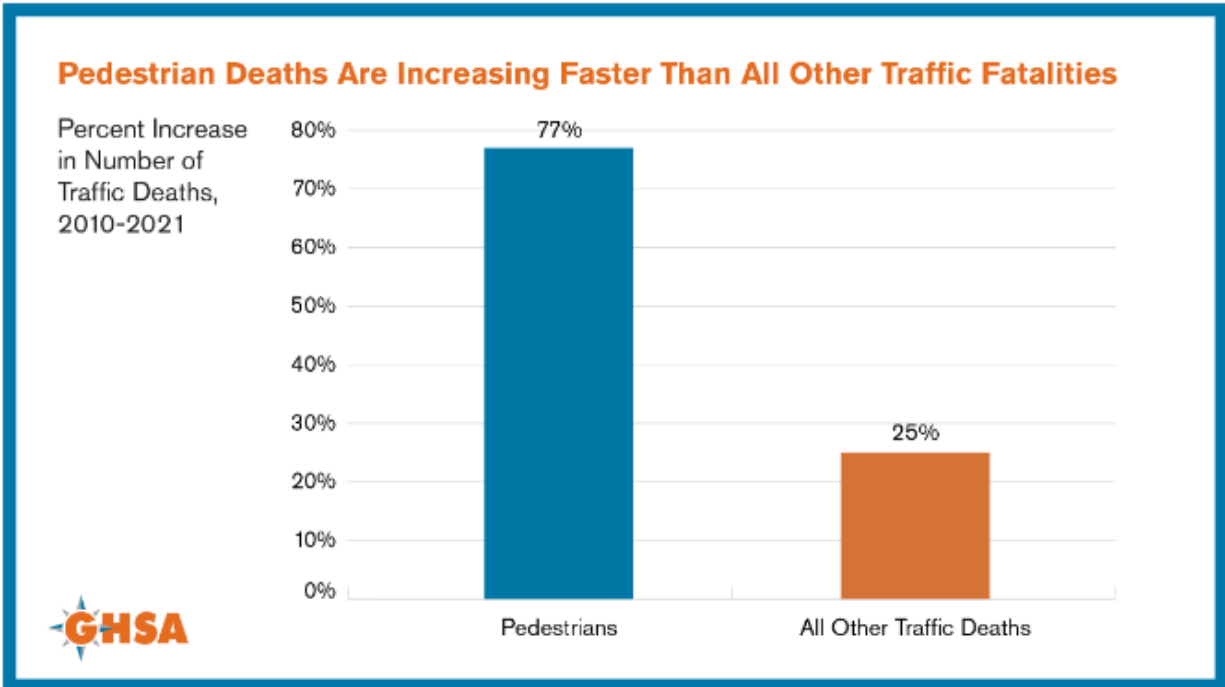
Deaths of people walking surged 19% in just three years



*\*Oklahoma excluded because complete data was not available*

Source: Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) • [Embed](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Between 2020 and 2021, pedestrian deaths increased 16%, while other traffic fatalities increased 10%. More alarmingly, since 2010, **pedestrian deaths have gone up a shocking 77%, compared to a 25% increase in all other traffic fatalities** (Figure 1).



Sources: [ZERO Roadway Fatalities in Hoboken for the Last Four Years! - The New Jersey Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center \(njbikeped.org\)](#)  
[Pedestrian Traffic Fatalities by State: 2022 Preliminary Data | GHSA](#)  
[Pedestrian Traffic Fatalities by State: 2022 Preliminary Data | GHSA](#)  
[GHSA - Pedestrian Traffic Fatalities by State, 2022 Preliminary Data \(January-December\).pdf](#)  
[Speeding - Injury Facts \(nsc.org\)](#)  
[ptccr.pdf \(nj.gov\)](#)  
[Amidst rising pedestrian and traffic fatalities, New Jersey seeks to advance safe street design | New Jersey Future \(njfuture.org\)](#)  
[ZERO Roadway Fatalities in Hoboken for the Last Four Years! - The New Jersey Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center \(njbikeped.org\)](#)  
[Biking Safely in Hamilton Township \(lependorf.com\)](#)  
[Hamilton Pedestrian Dies After Being Struck by Two Cars \(Update: Victim Identified\) | Hamilton/Robbinsville, NJ News TAPinto](#)