

SAFETY OVER SPEED

Any serious effort to reduce deaths on our streets and roads requires slower speeds. Federal funding should require approaches and street designs that put safety first.

Reducing deaths on our roads requires slower speeds. Higher speeds can make sense on interstates and limited access highways. The fundamental problem with the design of our roads is that we try to make the streets and roads that go through cities, towns, and villages support highway speeds while also serving all the homes, businesses, and retail along them. The intersections with cross streets, driveways, pedestrian crossings, street parking, and other typical parts of life become dangerous conflict points at high speed.

State highways, which are funded by the federal government, are deadlier than ever before. The United States, in comparison to every other developed nation, is an outlier in terms of the safety of people walking, biking, and rolling. **When our state, local, and federal government is spending this much, it should result in safe streets, not a 40-year high for pedestrian fatalities.**



Unfortunately, funding that is intended to go towards safety projects is often applied to projects that make roads more dangerous. For example, slip lanes can decrease the time cars spend in intersections but put cars in conflict with other road users, exacerbating risks for people walking, biking, and rolling and creating a deadlier environment overall.

Dangerous road design puts everyone at risk, but the people who bear the greatest burden are the same populations that have been historically marginalized from transportation decision-making. Black and Indigenous people [are killed at disproportionately high rates](#) on our roads. Income levels also tightly correlate with pedestrian deaths. [30 percent of deaths](#) occur in census tracts with yearly incomes below \$50,000.

Federal funding should require approaches and designs that put safety first. Current roadway design makes it easy for people driving to travel at high speeds, often in an attempt to save travelers' time. However, there are other, far less risky ways to make travel more convenient that can benefit everyone, including the one-third of Americans who don't drive.

With current road design, when drivers make mistakes, those mistakes can easily turn deadly. This completely removes the responsibility from everyone who creates the road, including the politicians who fund bad road design and the engineers and planners who value speed over safety. Designing for safety would ensure that all people are protected when they travel, even when mistakes inevitably happen.

Our priorities are reflected in the ways we fund, design, operate, measure, and maintain our roads. To tackle this issue, we need to fundamentally change our approach to transportation to prioritize safety over speed.

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