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INSIDE



Arts & Entertainment

We take a look at Elaine Newton's Summer Reading List 2019. **C1** ▶



Out and about

Grand opening of Seed & Bean Café, downtown Fort Myers. **A34** ▶



House chat

Let the homebuyer beware — of talking too much. **A30** ▶



Real Estate

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THE NUMBERS

35.4

■ Percentage pedestrian deaths have increased in the U.S. from 2008-2017

5,433

■ Pedestrian deaths in the U.S. from 2008-2017

401,499

■ Reported crashes involving a cyclist or pedestrian in the U.S. in 2018, which caused 696 pedestrian fatalities.

MEAN STREETS



Florida remains most dangerous state in our nation for pedestrians

BY EVAN WILLIAMS • EWILLIAMS@FLORIDAWEEKLY.COM

FLORIDA REMAINS AT THE TOP OF THE list when it comes to crashes per capita between cyclists or people on foot and cars in which, many point out, the car always “wins.” The

SEE STREETS, A12 ▶

ERIC RADDATZ ILLUSTRATION / FLORIDA WEEKLY

Kitten season a good reminder to spay or neuter pets

SPECIAL TO FLORIDA WEEKLY

In Southwest Florida, there is rainy season and dry season, but there is also another season recognized by area animal shelters — kitten season.

Kitten season is a literal season in Southwest Florida and it is happening right now with the delivery of hundreds of litters, mostly by feral cats that have their kittens in

the wild, under houses, in abandoned cars or simply in the bushes in front of someone's house.

SEE KITTENS, A18 ▶

COURTESY PHOTO

A large group of kittens will be old enough for adoption from the Gulf Coast Humane Society in the coming weeks.



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OPINION A4
HEALTHY LIVING A24
BEHIND THE WHEEL A28
BUSINESS A30

INVESTING A31
REAL ESTATE B1
ARTS C1
CALENDAR C6-9

PUZZLES C14
MOVIE REVIEW C19
WINE C22
DINING REVIEW C23



“We’re really happy that we’ve been able to decrease injury by about 75 percent in our county and (we plan to) continue on that path.”

— Dr. Gillian Hotz, Ph.D., a behavioral neuroscientist who helped develop WalkSafe and a similar BikeSafe program for middle schools and parks.



A bicyclist on U.S. 1 in Boca Raton.

PALM BEACH TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AGENCY

STREETS

From page 1

state’s most populous areas consistently bear the dubious distinctions of being among the most dangerous places to ride or walk in the United States, including the Cape Coral-Fort Myers, North Port-Sarasota-Bradenton, and Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach metro areas.

But there is also evidence that Florida has become friendlier to pedestrians. Over the last decade, there has been a shift toward Complete Streets policies at the state level and in counties and cities, in which roadways are designed or retrofitted for all modes of transportation.

“We’re really trying to push everyone to get on board with Complete Streets to get a connected network,” said Valerie Neilson, deputy director of multimodal development for the Palm Beach Transportation Planning Agency.



NEILSON

For the Palm Beach TPA, that means prioritizing high density areas with vulnerable users close to major destinations or transit hubs such as schools, she said.

While the population and number of walkers, cyclists and cars on Florida roads has steadily increased, total bike/ped crashes has declined in the last five

THREE-FOOT RULE
The driver of a vehicle overtaking a bicycle or other nonmotorized vehicle must pass the bicycle or other nonmotorized vehicle at a safe distance of not less than 3 feet between the vehicle and the bicycle or other nonmotorized vehicle.
— Source: Section 316.083, Florida Statutes

years through 2018. While total fatalities increased statewide last year, some counties saw modest declines or stayed nearly the same.

Pedestrian advocates and official planners also are increasingly adopting programs to lessen the likelihood of crashes. Educating drivers and pedestrians on personal safety starting in grade school and on through adulthood, as well roadway engineering, have been shown to be among the most effective solutions.

In Miami-Dade County, an educational program in elementary schools called WalkSafe led to a decrease in the number of children age 0 to 14 admitted to Nicklaus Children’s Hospital and Jackson Ryder Trauma Center between 2003 and 2017.

“We’re really happy that we’ve been able to decrease injury by about 75 percent in our county and (we plan to) continue on that path,” said Dr. Gillian Hotz, Ph.D., a behavioral neuroscientist who



STREETS ALIVE OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA
Students and staff at Florida Gulf Coast University audit local intersections and recommend safety improvements for the nonprofit Streets Alive of Southwest Florida.

helped develop WalkSafe and a similar BikeSafe program for middle schools and parks.

Ms. Neilson in West Palm Beach believes WalkSafe should be a statewide program.

“I think as a state we should enforce (the program) in all schools,” she said.

Diana Giraldo, president and co-founder of the nonprofit Streets Alive of Southwest Florida, is working with Florida Gulf Coast University students, along with the city of Bonita Springs, and the Lee County Department of Transportation, to audit and identify needed improvements

at places such as the new Bonita Springs High School.

On a Tuesday in late May she and students took counts of the students leaving on foot and by bike at the Shangrila Road crossing, where there is no light, crosswalk markings or signage such as a speed limit or school zone sign. Ms. Giraldo clocked one truck going 53 miles per hour in this 35 mile per hour zone.

Watching a group of kids pour out of the parking lot and cross the street, she grimaced. It brings back memories of her bicycle crash with a car in 2016. She’s not able to ride again, she said, because

BICYCLE REGULATIONS

In Florida, a bicycle is legally defined as a vehicle. Bicyclists have the same rights to the roadway and must obey the same traffic laws as the operators of other vehicles.



When riding on sidewalks or in crosswalks, a bicyclist has the same rights and duties as a pedestrian.

A bicyclist riding on sidewalks or in crosswalks must yield the right of way to pedestrians and must give an audible signal before passing.

A bicycle operated between sunset and sunrise must be equipped with a lamp on the front exhibiting a white light visible from 500 feet to the front and a red reflector and a lamp on the rear exhibiting a red light visible from 600 feet to the rear.

A bicyclist who is not traveling at the same speed of other traffic must ride as close as practical to the right hand curb or edge of roadway. A bicyclist may leave the right-most portion of the road in one of the following situations: when passing, making a left turn, to avoid hazards, or when a lane is too narrow for a bicycle and a car to share it safely.

Riding single file is required except on bike paths or parts of roadways set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles, or when two people riding side-by-side within one lane will not impede traffic flow.

— Source: Section 316.2065, Florida Statutes

a brain injury causes her to lose her balance.

“When I see the lack of empathy from people driving, that’s one of the hardest things,” she said.

Educational programs are only part of the solution.

“While education is a noble effort, we are designed to be car oriented,” she said. “Old designs or many of the current developing areas still encourage cars for the most part... Education and advocacy will fall short unless it is eventually accompanied with infrastructure changes.”

There is a combination of factors that

PEDESTRIAN REGULATIONS

When a sidewalk is available, pedestrians are not allowed to walk on the roadway.

Where sidewalks are not provided, pedestrians shall walk on the shoulder on the left side of the roadway, facing traffic.

When traffic signals are not present or not operational, the driver of a vehicle must yield the right of way, slowing or stopping if necessary, to pedestrians crossing within a crosswalk.



Pedestrians crossing the roadway at any point other than within a marked or unmarked crosswalk must yield the right of way to the vehicles upon the roadway.

Pavement markings are not required for crosswalks at intersections. Imaginary lines connecting the sidewalks on opposite sides of an intersection define an unmarked crosswalk. Pedestrians in unmarked crosswalks have all the rights of pedestrians in marked crosswalks.

No pedestrian shall walk upon a limited access facility (freeway or interstate highway) or a ramp connecting a limited access facility to any other street or highway.

— Source: Sections 316.130 and 316.091, Florida Statutes

keep Florida high on lists such as Smart Growth America’s 2019 Pedestrian Danger Index. The Governors Highway Safety Association’s examination of crashes between 2008 and 2017, which showed that pedestrian fatalities across the country increased by 35 percent during that time, also named Florida as one of the worst offenders.

Some of the things that make the state among the most attractive for pedestrians, such as the weather, also makes it the worst, said Guillermo Canedo, a communications specialist for the Florida Department of Transportation in South Florida.

“There’s great weather year round,” Mr. Canedo said. “There’s flat terrain. Roads are straight, generally wide and long — which is good and bad. Bad in the sense that it kind of entices motorists to travel at higher speeds.

“We have national and international tourists who visit our state who may be unfamiliar with our roads and our rules of the road. We have different driving cultures. So even though you might put out traffic safety features on the road, not everyone is going to obey them.

“We have more bicyclists on the roads now than ever before. It’s become an increasingly popular sport and form of transportation and way to commute, like I do myself.

“We have a high number of elderly motorists. As you grow older your reaction times slow and your visibility lessens.

“We have densely populated cities, so more cars and more bikes in the same places, and more and more we have distracted drivers, motorists who are texting, not paying attention to their environment. And we’re seeing more electric scooters, so all of those things impact the pedestrian landscape here.”

For his part, Naples Cyclery owner and cyclist Peter Marsh finds youthful pedestrians can be as problematic as older drivers.

“I’m way more freaked out from a 17-year-old chick on Snapchat than a 74-year-old grandmother going to get freakin’ bread,” he said.

The CDC says the risk of vehicle crashes is higher among teens than any other age group.

However, a Collier County Metropolitan Planning Organization analysis of crash data from 2013 to 2015, though a much smaller sample, found that neither teen drivers or those age 65 and over are involved in a disproportionate number of crashes. Teens make up about 5 percent of the Collier County population and were involved in about 5 percent of crashes while the older drivers make up about 30 percent of the population and were involved in 32 percent of crashes.

Smartphones are another major cause of crashes, the GHSA report says, pointing out that the number of phones in the U.S. quintupled between 2008 and 2017.

But Collier MPO’s report found that aggressive driving was a contributing factor in 37 percent of crashes and failure to yield in 31 percent, while both impaired or intoxicated driving and distracted driving were both factors in only about 10 percent of crashes.

Another report cited by the Collier MPO showed pedestrian’s top errors were failure to yield when crossing the road and dashing or darting out; while drivers’ top errors were failure to yield when crossing the road and backing up into someone.

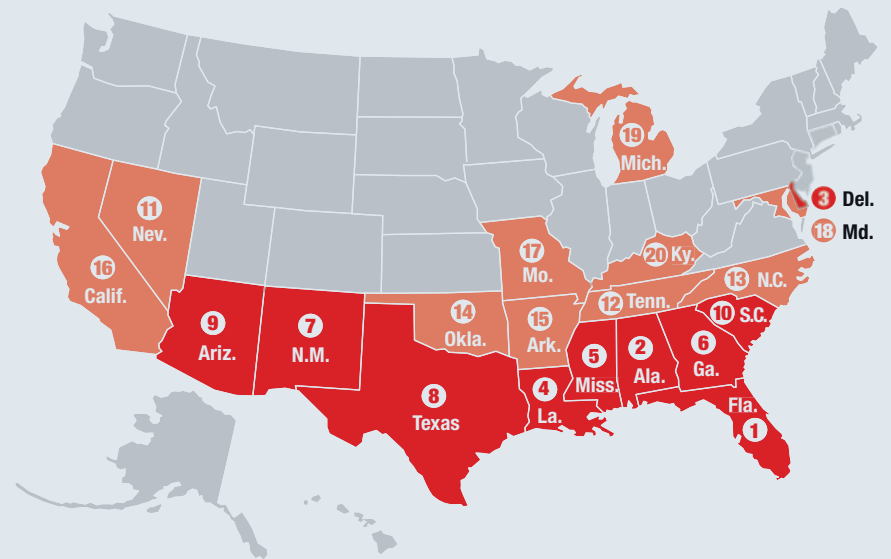
It’s easy to quibble about blame between these varied and sometimes seemingly contradictory findings. Experts point to all of the above as problems. Personal behavior and roadway engineering that could reduce crashes is a complex

in the know

The deadly south

Florida is the least pedestrian-friendly state in the country according to the “2019 Dangerous by Design” study done by Smart Growth America and the National Complete Streets Coalition. According to the study, eight of the ten most dangerous areas for pedestrians are in Florida. Metropolitan areas are ranked by the “Pedestrian Danger Index,” or PDI, which is calculated using the number of people struck and killed by drivers while walking, the number of people that live in that state or metro area and the number of people who walk to work.

Top 20 most dangerous states for pedestrians: 2008-2017



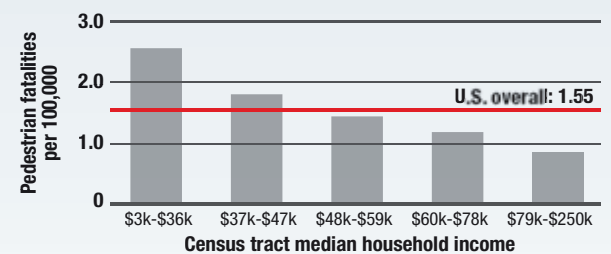
Most dangerous metropolitan areas for pedestrians

RANK	METROPOLITAN AREA	PEDESTRIAN DEATHS (2008-2017)	ANNUAL FATALITIES PER 100,000	2019 PDI*
1	Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford	656	2.82	313
2	Deltona-Daytona Beach-Ormond Beach	212	3.45	265
3	Palm Bay-Melbourne-Titusville	165	2.94	245
4	North Port-Sarasota-Bradenton	194	2.58	235
5	Lakeland-Winter Haven	162	2.54	231
6	Jacksonville	419	2.94	226
7	Bakersfield, Calif.	247	2.83	218
8	Cape Coral-Fort Myers	148	2.17	217
9	Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater	900	3.07	205
10	Jackson, Miss.	111	1.92	192
11	Memphis, Tenn.-MS-AR	297	2.21	184
12	Baton Rouge, La.	182	2.21	158
13	Birmingham-Hoover, Ala.	179	1.57	157
14	Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach	1,549	2.61	154
15	Greenville-Anderson-Mauldin, S.C.	197	2.29	153

* Rounded to nearest whole number

Pedestrian fatalities by neighborhood income

The “2019 Dangerous by Design” study found that pedestrians die at much higher rates in lower-income communities compared to higher-income ones.



SOURCE: SMART GROWTH AMERICA AND THE NATIONAL COMPLETE STREETS COALITION

SCOTT SLEEPER / FLORIDA WEEKLY

issue that needs to be addressed by individual area, said Collier MPO Executive Director Anne McLaughlin, and that those areas are more or less the busiest areas, as one would expect.

“There’s no one off-the-shelf solution for bike pedestrian safety. You really have to analyze why a particular location is exhibiting a lot of crashes,” she said. “And there is a relationship between high usage, where a lot of people are walking and riding, and a high number of crashes are (happening). So there’s an element of simple exposure.”

In the area near where Mr. Marsh lives across from Golden Gate City he often sees people apparently headed to or from work after dusk without lights or helmets. The GHSA report found that



COURTESY PHOTO

Diana Giraldo, founder of the nonprofit Streets of Alive of Southwest Florida, clocks a car going 64 in a 45 mile per hour zone by Bonita Springs High School on Imperial Parkway.

SEE STREETS, A14 ▶

“You’ve got to remember people miscalculate speed and distance ... It’s very hard to judge. A vehicle going 45 mph is going 66 feet per second.”

— Jay Anderson, a traffic safety advocate and former EMS captain who founded the nonprofit Stay Alive... Just Drive in Lee County

STREETS

From page 13

between 2008 and 2017, 75 percent of fatal crashes in the U.S. occurred after dark. The situation along Palm Beach Boulevard in Fort Myers, a high-crash corridor, also includes a lower-income community where people often depend on walking or riding as transportation.

Smart Growth's report points out the problem as well.

"Older adults, people of color, and people walking in low-income communities bear a higher share of harm," it reads,



EVAN WILLIAMS / FLORIDA WEEKLY

A car stops at a green light to let people cross the street on Fort Myers Breach.

often because of poor road design.

Along Palm Beach Boulevard, crosswalks or sometimes spaced so far apart that people would have to walk a mile out of their way to use one. No one would want to do that, so they cross elsewhere.

"You've got to remember people miscalculate speed and distance," said Jay Anderson, a traffic safety advocate and former EMS captain who founded the nonprofit Stay Alive... Just Drive in Lee County. "It's very hard to judge. A vehicle going 45 mph is going 66 feet per second."

Even the most experienced riders can have a lapse in common sense.

"Implementing some really common sense tactics I think go a really long way for most folks," Mr. Marsh said. "One gentleman comes to mind is good friend of ours. He was training for an Ironman race and he was in that mindset where he had to get miles in. It was almost like at any cost these training rides had to be complete. He was on Immokalee or Oil Well when it was foggy out or something. (He) got smoked by something."

Fortunately that rider recovered.

Punta Gorda resident and longtime cyclist Court Nederveld still puts in about 8,000 miles per year on his bicycle, he said. He's a member of Charlotte County MPO's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee and past president of the Peace River Riders Bicycle Club. He's seen major improvements over the last 15

years and argues that bicycling is essentially a safe activity for those who know and follow the rules.

Mr. Anderson of Stay Alive... Just Drive agrees. That goes for both drivers and cyclists, he adds:

"If people would obey the traffic laws think what a different it would make. That's the solution to the problem as simple and corny as it sounds."

Mr. Marsh addressed some of the strides pedestrian and bicycle advocates have made and where improvement is needed.

"The number of people riding bikes has just exploded" in the last 15 years, he said. "And that alone is a driving force for the modifications we need to the transportation system. So I give that a big bonus right there..."

"We've seen the state of Florida do an almost 180 degree turn to work towards Complete Streets. (But) there's a tremendous pushback from some local municipalities and counties."

And he has seen more improvements for recreational cyclists than those who use it as a means of transportation.

"That's where we need to really focus



ANDERSON

Average number of pedestrians who survive a crash with a car based on miles per hour

- >> 20 MPH: 9 in 10
- >> 30 MPH: 5 in 10
- >> 40 MPH: 1 in 10

— Source: Seattle.gov. Vision Zero/ Collier MPO

is turning bicycle riding into a transportation mode in addition to recreation," he said.

In October 2018 the Charlotte MPO adopted a Bicycle Pedestrian Master Plan for the first time. Executive Director Gary Harrell said that could help draw funding for improvements. But filling in those missing links to make all roads, which were originally designed just for cars, amenable to pedestrians and cyclists will be a steep challenge.

From post-World War II for decades onward, Florida's road system was built for cars. And it may take years to see the results in fewer crashes from retrofitting roads with paint, signage, and more expensive improvements.

"The harder part it comes in several categories where we deal with the inventory of what we have and some roadways do have bicycle paths," Mr. Harrell said. "Some of them have bicycle lanes, some of them just have wide shoulders, and many of them have no shoulders." ■

Total crashes involving bicyclists and pedestrians, and total fatalities, 2014 to 2019, by state and county

>> Florida

- 2014: 15,934 and 744
- 2015: 16,224 and 785
- 2016: 15,778 and 804
- 2017: 16,106 and 791
- 2018: 15,860 and 843
- 2019 (as of June 4): 6,753 and 354

>> Lee

- 2014: 463, 26
- 2015: 489, 21
- 2016: 487, 26
- 2017: 495, 21
- 2018: 473, 27
- 2019 (as of June 4): 232, 14

— Source: FIRES (Florida's Integrated Report Exchange System)

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