



Safe
Routes
PARTNERSHIP

Welcome!

Making the Most of your State's Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment

Tuesday, June 3, 2025
2 p.m.–3 p.m. ET



Safe Routes Partnership



The mission of the Safe Routes Partnership is to advance safe walking and rolling to and from schools and in everyday life, improving the health and well-being of people of all races, income levels, and abilities, and building healthy, thriving communities for everyone.

What We Do at Safe Routes Partnership

We lock in change by **advancing policies and increasing funding** for active transportation and **healthy, equitable communities** at the federal, state, and local levels.

We support **Safe Routes to School** program development and implementation through partnerships with **local advocates, community leaders, neighborhood residents, and coalition partners.**

We provide **one-on-one consulting and coaching** to organizations and local agencies seeking to advance walking, biking, and **equitable, active communities.**

We **share our** deep expertise and **learn from the field** to provide solutions through webinars, reports, fact sheets, toolkits, and relevant resources that are **accessible to everyone.**





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• Celebrating 20 Years of the
Safe Routes Partnership



linktr.ee/SafeRoutesPartnership





Reminders

Webinar is being recorded

Resources linked in the slide deck

Recording and slides posted after the webinar

Questions in the Q&A box, general comments in the Chat box



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Roadway Safety as a National Problem

- Over 40,000 people are killed on our roadways each year in the United States
- Traffic crashes are the second leading cause of death for youth in the United States
- Traffic crashes disproportionately impact people outside of cars, Indigenous, Black, Latinx, and people with low-incomes

<https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/nhtsa-2023-traffic-fatalities-2024-estimates>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC). WISQARS (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; July 2020. Available at: www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html. Accessed 7 September 2021.



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Photo Credit: Delaney Smith (Billy Penn)
<https://billypenn.com/2024/07/21/vigil-bike-pedestrian-deaths-barbara-friedes/>

Roadway Safety as a National Responsibility

“We think holistically about people and how they use the transportation system. There are more than 330 million people in the United States. As they go about their daily lives, they rely on a vast network of roads, sidewalks, and trails. It is our grand challenge to make this complex, interconnected system work safely for every single person, regardless of who they are or **how they travel.**” (<https://highways.dot.gov/safety>)



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Federal Law and Transportation Safety

Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)

- **Purpose:** “achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads”
- A data-driven program focused on planning for safety improvements, implementing projects, and evaluating the safety impact
- This is not a program that communities apply for; state DOTs determine spending
- Funding can be used on infrastructure and up to 10 percent on non-infrastructure, including Safe Routes to School (including SRTS coordinators!)
- Funding can be used on local roads

Strategic Highway Safety Plans: A Core Component of HSIP

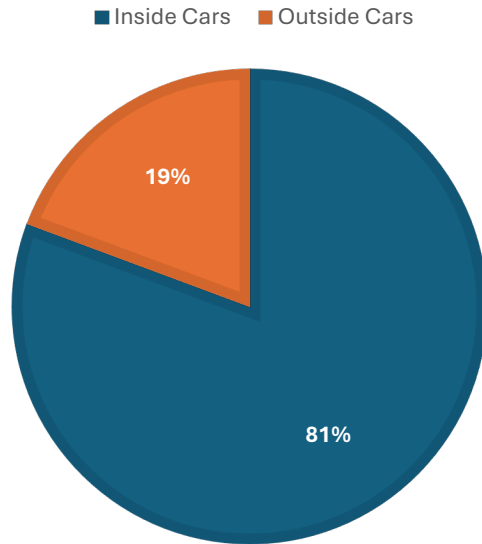
- Identify emphasis areas
- Develop strategies to address
- Implement projects and strategies
- Evaluate safety impact



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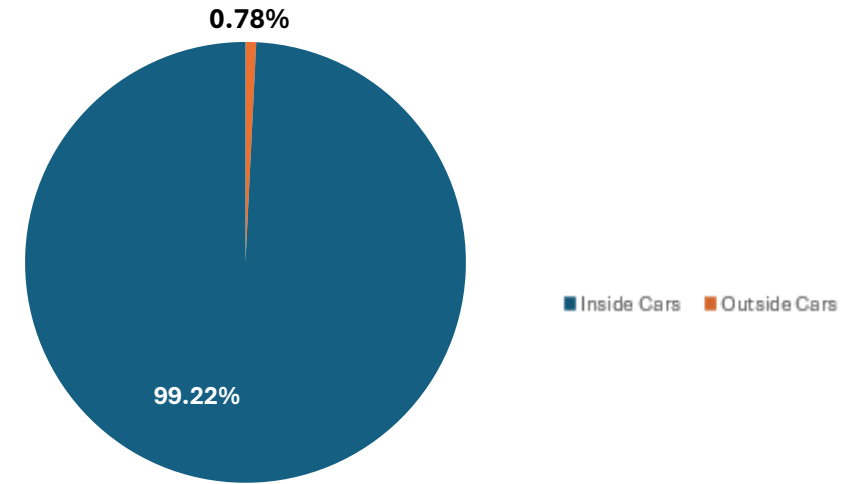
HSIP wasn't spent on keeping vulnerable road users safe

PEOPLE KILLED ON US ROADS IN 2020



<https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/2020-traffic-crash-data-fatalities>

% HSIP FUNDS OBLIGATED ON BIKE PED vs CAR PROJECTS (2014-2019)



<https://data.bikeleague.org/data/states-funding-for-biking-walking/#highway-safety-improvement-program-funding-for-bicyclist-and-pedestrian-safety>



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If HSIP is a data-driven program, why wasn't funding aligning with data on vulnerable road user crashes?

- Lack of planning to illuminate areas of concern
 - Crashes involving VRU follow different patterns (happen along corridors) than crashes involving just cars (cluster in hot spots)
 - Not at level of granularity (local roads) to capture VRU crash patterns
- State-run programs reflect state priorities
 - States can transfer funds out of the program to more appealing projects, which nearly half of states did in 2019
 - Not all states have VRU as emphasis areas
- Lack of incentive to spend money on areas of concern for VRU
- It wasn't required



The Opportunity: Use Federal Law to Require/Incentivize HSIP Spending on VRU Safety

In the 2021 transportation law, we and partners worked with champions in Congress to enhance HSIP to focus on VRU safety

- Increased funding by 24 percent
- Integrated vulnerable road user safety by adding in provisions defining “safety for all road users”
- Added eligibility for traffic calming projects, bike lane and pedestrian separation, Safe Routes to School infrastructure and non-infrastructure (including SRTS coordinator positions)
- Requires states to complete vulnerable road user safety assessments
- Requires states where 15 percent or more of roadway fatalities are of vulnerable road users to spend at least 15 percent of HSIP funds on projects that address vulnerable road user safety



Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment

A regular analysis of crashes involving people outside of cars

What is required by law?

- Analyze all fatalities and serious injuries of VRU
- Identify high risk areas
- List projects and strategies
- Data-driven process
- Consultation with stakeholders
- Completed by November 2023 and then with each subsequent Strategic Highway Safety Plan update

Vulnerable Road User Special Rule *(a topic for another day!)*

States with ≥ 15 percent of roadway fatalities are vulnerable road users must spend at least 15 percent of HSIP on VRU safety

<https://highways.dot.gov/safety/hsip/hsip-special-rules>

Guidance from Federal Highway Administration:

<https://highways.dot.gov/safety/hsip/vru-safety-assessment-guidance>



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Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment

All states completed their first Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessments by November 2023. How did they turn out?

- Mixed reviews from state and local partners
- Less than half of states identified projects, which are needed to get improvements built
- Almost half of states developed High Injury Networks
- Top strategies employed by states to address VRU safety include education and engineering
- Assessments included demographic analyses of people involved in crashes
- Consultation by the numbers:
 - States all consulted with metropolitan planning organizations
 - Most consulted with local governments
 - Fewer than 2/3 of states consulted with advocacy/community groups – let's change that moving forward!

Find your state's Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment here:

<https://highways.dot.gov/safety/hsip/shsp/shsp-resources>



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What's next for Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessments?

- Congress is in the process of writing the next surface transportation law
- This sets policy and funding for the next five+ years
- Along with other partners, Safe Routes Partnership continues to advocate for the continuation of both the Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment and Special Rule
- Stay tuned for advocacy updates and action alerts!



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Pennsylvania Communities Leverage the VRU

The Challenges

- Unsafe crossings and roads for people walking and biking
- Strong local plans that haven't moved forward
- Uncertainty about how to connect with state agencies or access available funding
- Missed opportunities under new federal programs

The Opportunity

- 2023 statewide VRU planning process
- Regional meetings, surveys, stakeholder engagement
- PA qualified for VRU Special Rule =
FY 23 **\$18.8 million to improve safety for non-motorists**



Walk audit in Shenandoah, PA (pop. 4,246)

A resident points to an intersection where a child was tragically killed while crossing



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Ways Communities Could Engage

1. **Participate in DOT engagement** sessions to share local perspectives
2. **Promote the VRU safety survey** to ensure high-risk areas are identified
3. **Advocate for projects already in your plans** (Safe Routes to School, Vision Zero, Local Road Safety Plans)
4. **Call out areas of concern** – even if crash data is limited
5. **Encourage DOT to use HSIP funds** as match to Transportation Alternatives
6. **Prioritize evidence-based solutions** proven to reduce serious injury and fatality for non-motorists



Safe Routes to Parks Pop-Up Event in Bellefonte, PA (pop. 5,930). Residents provide feedback on safety concerns on routes to/from local parks.



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Today's Speakers

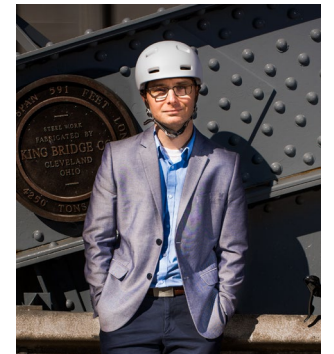
Michael Kelley, Policy Director, BikeWalkKC



Susan Gaeddert, Community Programs Director,
1000 Friends Wisconsin



Jacob VanSickle, Executive Director, Bike Cleveland





What's a VRUSA and how does it help us to create safer streets?

Safe Routes Partnership - June 2025

A closer look at the VRUSA Report

How the report was developed and organized

Collaboration with RE-AMP

- Organization working to decarbonize the Midwest
- Transportation is a major priority
- Provided funding to help develop the report



How the Report was Organized

- Recommendations for FHWA Guidance
- State VRUSA Observations
- State VRU Recommendations



Using the VRUSA for state priorities

- Working to identify dangerous corridors
- Understanding gaps in policy or planning
- Identifying best practices to strengthen individual VRUSAs



What advocates can do in response

Using the VRUSA report to move your state DOT to action

1000 Friends of Wisconsin

...was founded in 1996;

...is a statewide organization specializing in land use planning and transportation policy;

...works at the community level at the intersection of climate, health, land use, and transportation through the lens of the built environment.

Through education, coalitions, policy, planning, and projects, we help Wisconsin communities, governments, and people make land use and transportation decisions that both achieve healthy, thriving, equitable, and climate-friendly and resilient communities and protect our natural environment.



VRUSA in Wisconsin: important stats

- There have been fewer crashes, but more fatalities and serious injuries.
- Three quarters of VRU crashes occur in urban areas.
- More victims are male than female.
- 27.9% of VRU crashes occur on .2% road miles in WI.
- Disadvantaged communities represent 14% of the state's population, but experience 36% of VRU crashes.



Strategic Highway Safety Plan

2023 – 2027

Published by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Craig Thompson, Secretary

David Pabst, Chair

Wisconsin DOT Traffic Safety Council



VRUSA in Wisconsin: consultation

Consultation and engagement as a bright spot:

- Stakeholder consultation
- Surveys to inform the Active Transportation Plan
- Wisconsin Bike Fed survey
- MPO surveys
 - Only 1 MPO (Madison) does counts for bike, ped, motor vehicle, multi-use paths
 - Most MPOs do a sidewalk inventory.
- Interviews with cities (Green Bay, Janesville, Madison, Milwaukee)



Image: Fond du Lac Ave in Milwaukee, July 2024

VRUSA in Wisconsin: key takeaways

Approach: emphasis on recommendations for *education* and *enforcement*, but few specifics for *infrastructure* changes.

Funding: responsibility of paying for and carrying out infrastructure changes is left to local governments and MPOs, who would benefit from more leadership and support from the state, e.g. facilitating SS4A grants.

Engagement: looks good on paper but in reality is not a very open or public process.



Image: a white cane user and several other people conduct a walk audit along an arterial roadway in Kenosha, WI

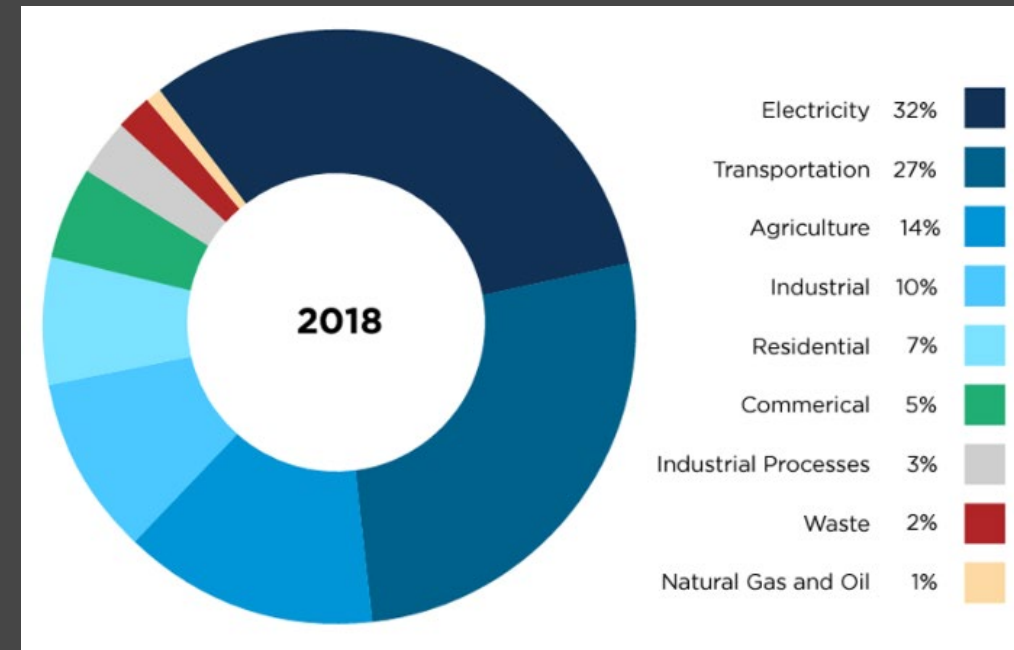
Transportation and Climate in Wisconsin

Creating a built environment that supports safety for VRUs has several co-benefits, including better health outcomes, accessibility for non-drivers, improved equity, and reduced emissions.

Wisconsin will publish first-ever Comprehensive Climate Action Plan by the end of 2025.

Long-term goals:

- Reduction of VMT (vehicle miles traveled) per capita
- Reinstate Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs)
- Reinstate statewide Complete Streets policy



Transportation and Climate in Wisconsin

Opposing highway expansion and advocating for removal is an important part of promoting safety, health, equity, and emissions reduction.

- Rethink I-794 campaign (rethink794.com)
 - Replace 794 with an at-grade boulevard
 - Reconnect downtown with historic Third Ward
 - Generate \$\$ billions in economic activity
- “Fix at Six” and Civil Rights lawsuit to oppose I-94 expansion in Milwaukee





Thank you! susan@1kfriends.org



Bikecleveland.org

BIKE CLEVELAND

ADVOCATING FOR SAFE STREETS





Mission

Bike Cleveland is creating a region that is sustainable, connected, healthy, and vibrant by promoting bicycling and advocating for safe and equitable transportation for all.





Local Chapters



Our Work



Advocacy



Education

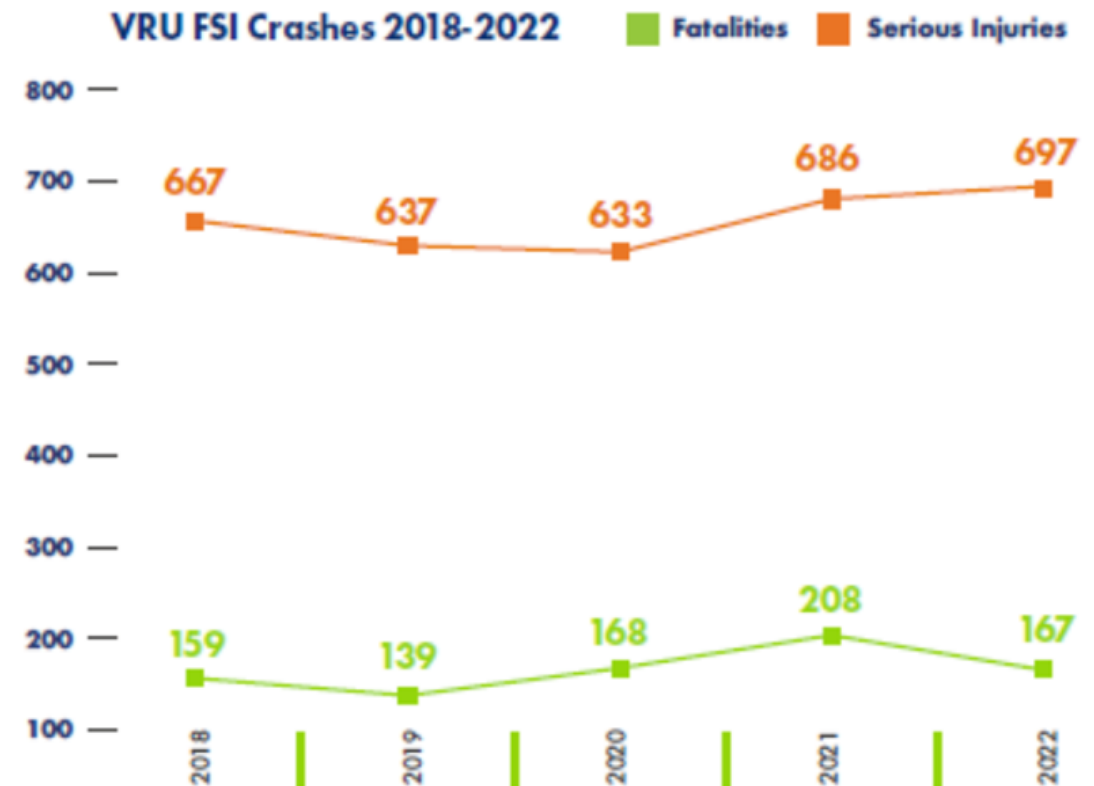


Encouragement



ODOT's VRUSA: Key Stats

- ODOT data shows that over the last five years, there were over 4,100 crashes that killed or seriously injured a VRU.
- That represents 11% of all fatal or serious injury crashes in Ohio.
- Fifty-two percent of all VRU FSI crashes occur on just 8% of Ohio's roadway network.
- ODOT acknowledged that they didn't meet their VRU safety goals for 2021 and 2022.



ODOT's VRUSA: The Good

- **Planning & Policy** – Encourage multimodal planning, update design guidance, and revise policies like Level of Service to prioritize VRU safety.
- **Implementation & Funding** – Increase funding for separated facilities, prioritize high-risk corridors, and assist communities with local match challenges.
- **Equity** – Target support for high-need areas, develop tools to include equity in planning, and expand community engagement.
- **Data** – Improve VRU crash reporting, collect near-miss data, and monitor non-motorized traffic volumes.
- **Education** – Provide training for engineers and law enforcement, run public awareness campaigns, and create educational materials.
- **Collaboration** – Partner with local governments, advocacy groups, and other agencies to support project delivery and best practice sharing



ODOT's VRUSA: The Gaps

- **Safe System Approach:** Mentioned only briefly—lacks a clear, structured SSA section.
- **Stakeholder Consultation:** Lacks transparency—doesn't list specific advocacy orgs consulted.
- **Metrics and Accountability:** No clear progress benchmarks or evaluation plan.
- **Lacks Human-Centered Stories:** Doesn't use personal narratives to humanize the problem.



Using VRUSA for Advocacy

- **Ask your MPO:** Are they aligning with ODOT's findings and action plan?
- **Hold ODOT Accountable:** Follow up on specific action items—ask for updates and timelines.
- **Use their data:** Target your advocacy in high-need areas and corridors identified in the VRUSA.
- **Advocate for SSA:** Demand a real Safe System Approach in planning and design.
- **Use it to push for real change.**
 - Funding in high-risk areas
 - Safer arterial designs
 - SSA adoption in practice



Example: Kinsman Road (ODOT Safety Project)



TRAFFIC

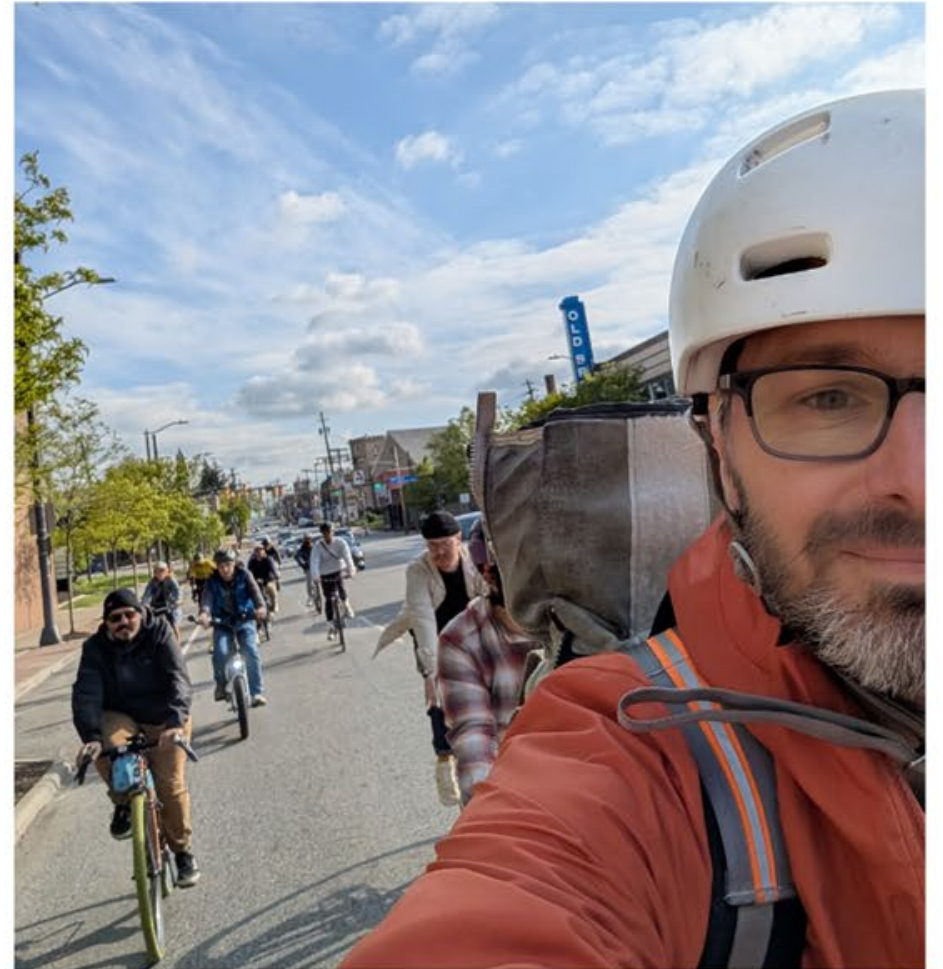
Safety improvement to Kinsman Rd. and E. 93rd Street intersection, one of Ohio's 150 most dangerous, completed in Cleveland

The project added left turn lanes from all four corners of the intersection, completed minor widening work, and upgraded traffic signals.



Thank you!

Jacob VanSickle
Executive Director
Jacob@bikecleveland.org





SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL **SUMMIT 2025**



Our Path Forward

Tuesday, October 28 – Thursday, October 30, 2025
Virtual Summit via Zoom

saferoutespartnership.org/summit



We're Here to Help!



[Safe Routes Learning Center Workshops and Trainings Catalog](#)

- Customizable workshops, trainings, and presentations
- Provided by the Partnership's technical assistance team
- Virtual and in-person
- Email consulting@saferoutespartnership.org

Workshops, Trainings, and Technical Assistance

- Safe Routes to School
- Active Transportation Planning, Policies, and Programming
- Community Engagement
- State Network Support
- Design Your Own





Stay Updated!

The Safe Routes Partnership



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