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Compliance with Must Stop for Pedestrians law very low in Chicagoland
*Survey conducted by the Active Transportation Alliance reveals drivers
stopping for pedestrians only 18 percent of the time at painted crosswalks*

Chicago, Ill., September 8, 2014 — Chicagoland has much work to do when it comes to compliance with the Must Stop for Pedestrians law, which requires people driving to stop whenever a pedestrian has entered a crosswalk.

According to a recent survey performed by the Active Transportation Alliance, drivers stopped only 18 percent of the time when people on foot attempted to cross a street in a traditional painted crosswalk. Compliance was even lower — only 5 percent — at “unmarked crosswalks” — crosswalks with no paint on the road or other safety features. Under the law, a crosswalk is present whenever a sidewalk leads into the street, whether it’s marked or not.

There were more than 4,700 reported pedestrian crashes with 130 fatalities in Illinois in 2012, according to the Illinois Department of Transportation; 84 percent of the crashes and 69 percent of pedestrian fatalities in Illinois occurred in metro Chicago. In the city of Chicago, pedestrian fatalities accounted for one-third of all traffic fatalities in 2012, compared to roughly 14 percent statewide.

The Active Trans survey, which compared marked versus unmarked crosswalks on two lane roadways, comprised 208 trials at 52 locations in the city of Chicago and nearby suburban communities. Compliance with the law was significantly higher — 61 percent — at painted crosswalks with other safety features, like the in-road “stop for pedestrians” signs, brick or stone crosswalks, raised crosswalks, or flashing beacons.

“Many people are unaware of the law and believe that cars only have to stop for pedestrians when there is a ‘stop for pedestrians’ sign at the crosswalk, and these signs led to much higher compliance in

our survey,” said Burke. “But we aren’t going to get ‘must stop’ signs at every crosswalk, so it’s important that the public learn about this law.”

The Must Stop law is intended to help pedestrians — which include people on foot as well as those using wheelchairs or scooters — get across streets safely. It also provides clear direction to motorists on their responsibilities and it gives police well-defined guidelines for regulation and ticketing. The law encourages walking by allowing pedestrians to cross a roadway at any legal crosswalk, which is especially important where controlled crosswalks are far apart, at school crossings, and in retail areas.

The law goes hand-in-hand with the state’s Complete Streets policy for making streets accessible and safe for all users, as well as the city of Chicago’s “Zero in Ten” campaign to eliminate pedestrian fatalities by the year 2020.

“Stepping into a crosswalk in Chicago is an invitation to be run over. Unfortunately, this is especially true for older residents who are more likely to be injured or killed than pedestrians of all other ages,” said Bob Gallo, state director of AARP Illinois. “We are thrilled that the Active Transportation Alliance is shining a light on the poor compliance of the Must Stop for Pedestrians Law in Chicago, and we urge authorities and lawmakers to work with advocacy organizations, residents and motorists to increase education about the law, improve enforcement and make streets safer for all in Chicago and across Illinois.”

In 2009, the Active Transportation Alliance successfully led a campaign to pass the Must Stop for Pedestrians law. Before that, the law only required drivers to yield. Active Trans rallied support from lawmakers, as well as backing from AARP Illinois, Access Living, the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police, the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Illinois State Police.

“Regardless if someone is disabled or non-disabled, and whether someone walks, uses a wheelchair, a scooter, a white cane or a service dog, everyone should be able to cross the street safely,” said Gary Arnold, spokesperson for Access Living. “Illinois did the right thing when it passed the Must Stop law. Now it's time to comply with the law.”

The Active Transportation Alliance wants to see much more awareness of the law. Here are a couple of strategies that can help reach that goal:

Education. A state-wide education campaign would raise awareness about the law among drivers and help them understand why the law is important. Similar to other traffic safety programs like “You Drink You Drive You Lose” and the “Click it or Ticket” seatbelt use campaign, video PSAs, billboards and print ads aimed at drivers all can help communicate this information.

Enforcement. Communities should consider carrying out enforcement campaigns like the ones conducted by the Chicago Police Department in recent years. For these initiatives, an undercover police officer poses as someone on foot attempting to cross at a crosswalk. If the person driving doesn’t stop for the officer, he or she is pulled over by a police officer further down the street. Motorists can face fines for failure to stop for someone using a crosswalk. People riding bikes — most of whom drive cars

as well — are also required to stop for pedestrians and often don't. While bikes are far less likely than cars to seriously injure someone, enforcement should also apply to people on bikes.

“Driving behavior is contagious,” said Burke from Active Trans. “Once a significant percentage of motorists begin to stop for pedestrians, you’ll see it catch on and become the norm like it is in other states.”

Active Trans noted that the accuracy of the survey’s results for the region as a whole is somewhat limited by its scope and design. However, the results clearly show that Chicagoland motorists were significantly more noncompliant with the law than they were compliant.

To read the survey, visit [https://www.activetrans.org/sites/default/files/Must Stop Survey Summary Final 8-14 \(3\).pdf](https://www.activetrans.org/sites/default/files/Must Stop Survey Summary Final 8-14 (3).pdf)

The Active Transportation Alliance is a non-profit, member-based advocacy organization that works to make bicycling, walking and public transit so safe, convenient and fun that we will achieve a significant shift from environmentally harmful, sedentary travel to clean, active travel. The organization builds a movement around active transportation, encourages physical activity, increases safety and builds a world-class transportation network. Formerly the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation, the Active Transportation Alliance is supported by more than 7,000 members and 1,000 volunteers. For more information about the Active Transportation Alliance, visit www.activetrans.org or call 312.427.3325.

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