

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Among our recent efforts, none holds as much promise for so many as Boston's adoption of Vision Zero and the issuance of the city's first Action Plan. To WalkBoston and our allies it seemed that 2016 was to be

a pivotal year. And then January happened – 11 pedestrian deaths across the Commonwealth, 4 in Boston alone. Instead of progress, it feels like open season on walkers.

To his credit, Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh met the issue head-on, holding a February 11 press conference with Transportation Commissioner Gina Fiandaca and our own Wendy Landman. The Mayor spoke poignantly about his father's experience being hit by a car, and about the way he and Police Commissioner Bill Evans spent far too many mornings last month reviewing the details of new pedestrian deaths or serious injuries. The Vision Zero Action Plan identified the intersecting causes of pedestrian injuries and fatalities – excessive vehicle speeds, lack of consideration for pedestrians in street and intersection design, and distracted driving due to smartphones. The Plan calls for greater awareness among all users of our streets and for specific interventions like the slow speed zones and corridor improvements to be implemented this year in Dorchester, Jamaica Plain, and along Massachusetts Ave. These are important initial efforts. But January's drumbeat of fatalities and injuries points to a desperate need to follow those pilot efforts with immediate and complete implementation city-wide.

Boston is a growing city of 650,000 people and there is a lot of ground to cover and people to make safer – these actions are long, long past due.

Matt Lawlor

BY BRENDAN KEARNEY

## Walker deaths rise in 2016

In the first month of 2016, cars killed 11 people walking in Massachusetts. Four of these deaths occurred in Boston. February did not start out much better. On February 1, a couple was struck by a person driving an SUV, who then proceeded to drag the middle-aged woman underneath her vehicle for almost three miles from Chinatown to Dorchester.

If this crash rate continues, Massachusetts' yearly pedestrian fatalities will nearly double in 2016. In 2013, 79 pedestrians lost their lives in traffic crashes, 70 in 2014, and preliminary data point to 72 pedestrian fatalities in 2015.

most fatalities occur for walkers after dark

Traffic deaths are unacceptable, and WalkBoston believes that they are also preventable. While national data show a trend toward lower total traffic deaths, there has been a disturbing trend toward an increase in pedestrian deaths. We need to focus on protecting pedestrians, who are suffering disproportionately from speeding traffic and distracted drivers.

Though the underlying cause of each fatal crash this year is not yet known, news articles about these collisions give us some insight:

- Failure to yield: at least four people were killed in a crosswalk while walking with the right of way
- Seven of the people hit and killed were in their 60s or older (68, 60, 78, 89, 84, 66, 66)
- Eight of the crashes occurred after dark, with six crashes between 4:45 and 8pm
- Officials charged at least one driver with an OUI
- The media reported three fatal crashes as hit and runs

Mayor Martin J. Walsh's Vision Zero Task Force has identified the most dangerous high-crash locations and corridors based on crash data from previous years. On January 22, the City of Boston launched a Safety Issues map, which allows users to add locations of concern for people walking, biking, or driving in Boston.

We encourage you to add locations:

[www.visionzeroboston.org/input](http://www.visionzeroboston.org/input)

continued

every 8 minutes someone on foot is hit by a car in the U.S.

# Boston

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BY DOROTHEA HASS

## Steps to successful advocacy: A case study

Anita sits at her window having her morning coffee. As she reflects on the mid-winter light, she hears the screeching of brakes. A driver has barely stopped in time to avoid a middle-aged man in a crosswalk making his way across Kent Street.

Her sense of tranquility is jarred. "I must do something about this," she says to herself. Kent is a two-way street, two-thirds of a mile long, in a neighborhood of two and three family houses. Because there are few intersecting streets, cars move quickly, driving so fast that it's hard to stop for people walking.

**Reach out to your neighbors.** Anita picks up the phone and calls her neighbor Larry, who shares her concern about the danger of crossing Kent Street. They agree to meet that evening and invite a few other neighbors to discuss the problem. Meanwhile, Anita looks for ideas

at [www.walkboston.org](http://www.walkboston.org). The advocacy button at the top of the site takes her to helpful information, including low-cost ways to slow traffic and reporting forms that make it easy for her to identify and note problems with Kent Street. From the website, Anita also learns that WalkBoston offers pedestrian training classes, which can help her and her neighbors understand the steps to successful advocacy. Anita signs up for a lunchtime training session.

At the next neighborhood meeting, Anita shares what she has learned and the concerned neighbors develop a strategy. One neighbor will call Town Hall to bring attention to the problem. Another will reach out to local elected officials, and a third will ask a friend, an engineer, for some advice on what can be done to slow traffic. They agree to meet again the following Thursday. continued

## annual party

**Tues. March 22, 2016, 5-8pm**  
**Microsoft Nerd Center**  
**1 Memorial Drive, Cambridge**  
**Admission: \$25; 617.367.9255;**  
[www.WBzero.eventbrite.com](http://www.WBzero.eventbrite.com)

**Vision Zero=Zero Deaths:** Boston is one of 20 US cities committing to Vision Zero, which aims to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries to ensure safe mobility for all.

**Speaker:** Leah Shahum, leader of the national Vision Zero Network, which supports communities developing strong leadership, policies, and practices toward this goal.

**Golden Shoes:** Charlotte Fleetwood, City of Boston; Maggie Sachs-Mahmood, Codman Academy; Boston Project Ministries, TNT Neighbors United & Codman Sq. Neighborhood Dev. Corp.

## ped 101 training

We just rolled out free, beginner, pedestrian advocacy trainings and we'd love you to come! Our goal is to help you build the skills you need to help you build the skills you need to comfortably speak up for walking in your community. Sessions are small group, guided conversations and take place in our conference room — be sure to sign up in advance. You can bring your lunch, and in the evenings we'll have beer or wine.

This session is helpful if you're interested in learning about: walkability, urbanism and the associated lingo (what's a "tight turning radius"?), making neighborhoods safer for people walking and running, how you can advocate for change in your own community. See our upcoming dates at: [www.ped101.eventbrite.com](http://www.ped101.eventbrite.com).

## Steps to successful advocacy continued

**Gather information and present it to City Hall.** At the next meeting, they find that they've made little progress with town officials or staff members who have little time and no immediate solutions. However, they've learned from the engineer and WalkBoston that simple pedestrian crossing signs, when placed in a crosswalk, slow traffic. And they decide that in the long run, Kent Street needs permanent speed tables installed to prevent speeding.



**Be persistent.** Anita, Larry, and a neighbor call the chairman of the Municipal Transportation Committee and ask to be on the agenda of their next meeting. At the committee meeting, the neighbors request a pedestrian crossing sign and show a couple of photos of the signs. The neighbors also commit to taking responsibility for moving the pedestrian sign during snowstorms so snowplows will not destroy or bury the signs. The committee agrees and directs the Transportation Department to provide three signs for Kent Street.

**Postscript.** After years of citizen advocacy, the town installed three speed tables along Kent Street. The tables have substantially slowed speeding vehicles.

# 3.16 vision zero

Renew or join today!

## Mission

WalkBoston makes walking safer and easier in Massachusetts to encourage better health, a cleaner environment and vibrant communities.

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## Walker deaths rise in 2016 continued

The Vision Zero Task Force's rapid response team visits major crash locations and recommends short- and long-term safety solutions. WalkBoston urges the city to fund the rapid response program sufficiently with capital budget dollars and support longer-term street changes.

Next, this information needs to be used to make the operational, enforcement, behavioral, and built environment changes necessary to stop injuries and deaths on our roads. Safe streets for all modes of travel are critical for Massachusetts' quality of life and economic vitality.

### Pedestrian fatalities in January

James "Jimmy" Collins, age 68, South Hadley  
Wyatt Maskell, age 19, South Yarmouth  
Frank Jeffrey Call, age 56, Worcester  
Piere Simon, age 60, Malden  
Silvia Acosta, age 78, Roslindale  
Qeshon Ivy, age 43, Dorchester  
Jacob Goldberg, age 89, Reading  
Patrick Stratton, age 25, Framingham  
Thomas Chen, age 84, Quincy  
Nicholas Tammaro, age 66, Dorchester  
Name not released, age 66, South Boston

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