



# Complete streets improve safety

*In March 2005, Alysia Benson, 46, was killed while walking three-tenths of a mile from a church event to her home in an unincorporated part of the Houston metroplex. The road has no sidewalk or shoulder. Three days later, a 23-year-old man was struck and killed along another busy two-lane road in the area, also without a sidewalk.*

- ▶ Our states, cities, counties and towns have built many miles of streets and roads that are safe and comfortable only for travel by motor vehicle. These roadways often lack sidewalks, have lanes too narrow to share with bicyclists, and feature few, poorly marked, or dangerous pedestrian crossings.
- ▶ Streets without safe places to walk and bicycle put people at risk. Close to 5,000 pedestrians and bicyclists die each year on U.S. roads, and more than 70,000 are injured.<sup>1</sup> While the absolute numbers of bicyclists and pedestrians killed has been in decline, experts attribute this in part to a decline in the number of people bicycling and walking. The Surface Transportation Policy Project found that pedestrian safety declined during the 1990s, and many metropolitan areas became significantly more dangerous for pedestrians.<sup>2</sup>

## How complete streets help:

Complete streets reduce crashes through comprehensive safety improvements. A FHWA review of the effectiveness of a wide variety of measures to improve pedestrian safety found that the practice of simply painting crosswalks on high-speed roads designed for automobile travel does not reduce pedestrian crashes. But measures that design the street with pedestrians in mind – sidewalks, raised medians, better bus stop placement, traffic-calming measures, and treatments for disabled travelers – all improve pedestrian safety.<sup>3</sup>

----- Pedestrian crashes are more than twice as likely in places without sidewalks; streets with sidewalks on both sides are the least hazardous.<sup>4</sup>

----- One study found that designing for pedestrian travel by installing raised medians and redesigning intersections and sidewalks reduced pedestrian risk by 28 percent.<sup>5</sup>

Complete streets also improve safety indirectly, by encouraging non-motorized travel and increasing the number of people bicycling and walking. A recently published international study found that as the number and portion of people bicycling and walking increases, deaths and injuries decline.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Mean Streets 2004*

<sup>2</sup> *Mean Streets 2004*, pg. 13

<sup>3</sup> B.J. Campbell, Charles V. Zegeer, Herman H. Huang, and Michael J. Cynecki. *A Review of Pedestrian Safety Research in the United States and Abroad*, Jan. 2004, Federal Highway Administration, Publication number FHWA-RD-03-042

<sup>4</sup> B.J. Campbell, Charles V. Zegeer, Herman H. Huang, and Michael J. Cynecki. *A Review of Pedestrian Safety Research in the United States and Abroad*, Jan. 2004, Federal Highway Administration, Publication # FHWA-RD-03-042

<sup>5</sup> King, MR, Carnegie, JA, Ewing, R. (2003) *Pedestrian Safety Through a Raised Median and Redesigned Intersections*, Transportation Research Board 1828 pp 56-66

<sup>6</sup> Jacobsen, PL (2003). *Safety in numbers: More walkers and bicyclists, safer walking and biking*. Injury Prevention 9, 205-209