



Real Possibilities

**AARP Testimony in Support of Proposed S.B. No. 336
AAC the Penalty for Causing Harm to a Vulnerable User of a Public Way
Transportation Committee
March 5, 2014**

Submitted by Nora Duncan, State Director

AARP is a nonpartisan social mission organization with an age 50+ membership of nearly 37 million nationwide, and over 603,000 here in Connecticut. AARP believes that one's possibilities should never be limited by their age and that, in fact, age and experience can expand your possibilities. AARP is a network of people, tools and information and an ally on issues that affect the lives of our members and the age 50+ population as a whole. A major priority for AARP is to expand mobility options that help residents of all ages and abilities participate fully in their local community.

AARP asks members of the Transportation Committee to support S.B.#336, which promotes pedestrian and bicycle safety and enhances penalties for drivers causing harm to "vulnerable users." This proposal lays the ground work for safer roads, especially for older residents who are disproportionately killed in pedestrian fatalities.

Nationally, while adults 65 and older represent less than 13 percent of the population, they represented about 19 percent of the pedestrian fatalities in 2008*. Compared to their younger counterparts, an older pedestrian is 61 percent more likely to die from a crash than a younger pedestrian.

S.B. #336 adds penalties for negligent drivers that harm pedestrians and other vulnerable users. It strikes an appropriate balance between the rights of motor vehicle operators and those of pedestrians; cyclists and other vulnerable users to use public roads by requiring all users to exercise due care. The proposal does not absolve vulnerable users from safely and responsibly using public roads. In fact, the bill requires a showing that the vulnerable user exercised "reasonable care" in their use of the public road, before a fine or penalty can be imposed on a motor vehicle operator.

Oregon was the first state to pass a "vulnerable users" law in 2007. Since then, at least ten states including Connecticut have considered "vulnerable user" legislation. The proposal has attracted bipartisan support in Connecticut and AARP believes vulnerable user legislation will build on Connecticut's 2009 Complete Streets law, 2013 Livable Communities legislation and 2014 proposals related to Aging in Place. The legislation will also promote work done in local communities like New Haven to encourage walking, biking and other non-motorized methods of transportation.

Safety is a major reason why people choose not to walk to local destinations. In 2008, AARP conducted a survey of people age 50 and over and found nearly 47 percent felt they could not safely cross main roads close to their home. S.B. #336 could improve pedestrian safety by deterring negligent behavior that puts vulnerable users at risk of injury or death.

AARP supports public policy that encourages safer streets for all users, regardless of their method of transportation. We look forward to working with you to make Connecticut roadways safer for older pedestrians and other vulnerable users. Thank you.

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Pedestrian Fatalities by Age, 2008						
	Connecticut			United States		
Age	Fatalities	Population	Fatalities per 100,000	Fatalities	Population	Fatalities per 100,000
16-24	3	433,698	0.69	568	38,742,194	1.47
25-49	6	1,199,383	0.50	1,729	106,000,489	1.63
50+	24	1,155,114	2.08	1,866	93,854,500	1.99
65+	13	480,326	2.71	875	38,799,891	2.26

Source: AARP Public Policy Institute analysis of 2008 Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) data.

* Note that the number of fatalities of those aged 50+ includes the number of fatalities of those aged 65+.

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