

# MAKING CONNECTICUT'S ROADS SAFER FOR EVERYONE

## Support SB 336: AN ACT CONCERNING THE PENALTY FOR CAUSING HARM TO A VULNERABLE USER OF A PUBLIC WAY

### The Need

Careless drivers injure hundreds of people every year in Connecticut. **130 pedestrians and cyclists were killed between 2010 and 2012 and approximately 1,400 pedestrians and cyclists are injured every year.**

Connecticut has made strides towards creating safer environments for everyone who uses the State's roadways. The 2009 Complete Streets law requires road projects to incorporate infrastructure for all users of the road. **To encourage non-motorized transportation and improve safety, better enforcement tools are also needed.**

Unless there is evidence of drug or alcohol use, or a hit and run, careless drivers are rarely held accountable for their devastating, preventable, actions. Driving that injures or kills is often penalized with little more than a fine. The vulnerable user law recognizes that "vulnerable road users," such as pedestrians, bicyclists, first responders, and highway workers need additional legal protections. It provides enhanced penalties for careless driving resulting in injury or death of a vulnerable road user.



### Bill Overview

The vulnerable user bill does not require any additional revenue from the State for enactment and would:

- Establish a class of vulnerable users of a public way.
- Define vulnerable users of a public way as pedestrians, highway workers, a person using a wheelchair or motorized chair, persons riding or driving an animal, blind persons and their service animals, and persons operating farm tractors, bicycles, scooters, roller or inline skates, and skateboards.
- Establishes a fine of not more than \$1,000 for infliction of serious physical injury or death to a vulnerable user when a person fails to operate due care when using a motor vehicle.

### Bill Myth

While the vulnerable user bill increases fines and penalties for those that operate motor vehicles carelessly, it does not absolve vulnerable users from safely utilizing roadway infrastructure.

**Supporters** AARP Connecticut • Bike and Pedestrian Alliance of Clinton • Bike Walk Connecticut • Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board • Connecticut Chapter, Sierra Club • Connecticut Citizens Transportation Lobby • Connecticut Fund for the Environment • Connecticut Horse Council • Connecticut League of Conservation Voters • Connecticut Livable Streets Campaign • Connecticut PIRG • Elm City Cycling • Farmington Valley Trails Council • Greenwich Safe Cycling • People-Friendly Stamford • Regional Plan Association • Shoreline Bicycle and Pedestrian Coalition • Sound Cyclists Bicycle Club • Transit for Connecticut • Tri-State Transportation Campaign • 1000 Friends of Connecticut • Yale Traffic Safety Committee

## Vulnerable User Laws: Improving Traffic Justice in Other States

Five states – Delaware, Hawaii, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington – have vulnerable user laws that define a set of road users as vulnerable and provide specific processes and penalties for actions directed at those users. The District of Columbia and 17 states address vulnerable road users in some way by prohibiting certain actions — such as harassment or the throwing of objects — or by providing the ability for persons to be charged with greater penalties when their actions result in the injury or death of a vulnerable road user.

In **Oregon**, the passage of the state's vulnerable user law led to increased police enforcement of crashes involving pedestrians and cyclists. In response to the law, local police reformed their practices and now investigate all crashes where a "vulnerable user" is transported by ambulance.

In **New York**, "Hayley and Diego's Law," which requires that careless drivers who injure or kill take a driver re-education course and potentially face a fine and license suspension, has been applied in over 250 cases since 2008.

## Supporters of Safer Public Ways

*AARP Connecticut*  
Nora Duncan, State Director

*Bike and Pedestrian Alliance of Clinton*  
Debbie Lundgren, Chair

*Bike Walk Connecticut*  
Kelly Kennedy, Executive Director

*Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board*  
Neil Pade, Chair

*Connecticut Chapter of the Sierra Club*  
Martin Mador, Legislative Chair

*Connecticut Citizens Transportation Lobby*  
Jill Kelly and Carol Leighton, Co-Chairs

*Connecticut Fund for the Environment*  
Roger Reynolds, Senior Attorney

*Connecticut Horse Council*  
Fred Mastele, President

*Connecticut League of Conservation Voters*  
Lori Brown, Executive Director

*Connecticut Livable Streets Campaign*  
Mark Abraham

*Connecticut Public Interest Research Group*  
Sean Doyle, Program Associate

*Elm City Cycling*  
William Kurtz, Board of Directors

*Farmington Valley Trails Council*  
R. Bruce Donald, President

*Greenwich Safe Cycling*  
Vince DiMarco, Chairman

*People-Friendly Stamford*  
Jerry Silber, Member

*Regional Plan Association*  
Amanda Kennedy, Connecticut Director

*Shoreline Bicycle and Pedestrian Coalition*  
Kathy Connolly

*Simsbury Bike Walk Advisory Committee*  
Ann Marie Potter, Member

*Sound Cyclists Bicycle Club*  
Nancy Rosett

*Transit for Connecticut*  
Karen Burnaska, Coordinator

*Tri-State Transportation Campaign*  
Steven Higashide, Senior Planner

*1000 Friends of Connecticut*  
Susan Merrow, Board Chair

*Yale Traffic Safety Committee*  
Kirsten Bechtel, M.D. (Pediatrician, New Haven)

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



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