PATHS Short Story

Roanoke, VA Road Safety Assessment (RSA)

RSA Background Information

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) partnered to provide pedestrian-focused Road Safety Assessment (RSA) for Virginia communities. For Roanoke, the corridor of focus was the Salem Turnpike and Melrose Avenue/Orange Avenue. It ranks in the top 1% statewide for pedestrian crash risk factors in VDOT's Pedestrian Safety Action Plan (PSAP). VDOT based this analysis on a combination of pedestrian-involved crashes (2014-2018), roadway characteristics, sociodemographic information, and proximity to places where people walk.

The collaboration between VDOT and VDH created the Walkability Action Institute (VWAI) and Prioritizing Active Transportation, Health, and Safety in Virginia (PATHS), two efforts that seek to improve pedestrian safety and walkability in the commonwealth. An initial review of roadways with pedestrian safety issues identified numerous corridors for pedestrian RSAs. Both VDOT and VDH are prepared to support participating Virginia communities through a structured and facilitated review of a roadway corridor within their community to improve pedestrian and community safety.

What is an RSA?

A pedestrian RSA is a multidisciplinary review of a roadway that focuses on safety, health equity, and walkability to identify needs and projects that can improve walkability and safety for people of all abilities, ages, and backgrounds. The RSA process involves gathering data prior to the RSA, a day-long meeting with the RSA team, walking the corridor and collecting observations, and analyzing the findings to create an action plan of recommendations.

Figure 1. Lacking sidestreet crossing markings.

Team Members

The Roanoke team consisted of individuals from the the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission, Carilion Clinic, City of Roanoke, Valley Metro, Roanoke County, PedalSafe Roanoke, and a Melrose Community Leader.

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PATHS is part of the cooperative partnership between the Virginia Department of Transportation and Virginia Department of Health that grew out of a grant to develop a State engagement model for active communities.

Prior Concerns on the Corridor

This corridor is a 1.5 mile-long minor arterial, experiencing high daily traffic volumes. While there is a sidewalk along most of the corridor, much of the area is lacking pedestrian-focused lighting, ADA compliance, has narrow segments, and limited crossing opportunities. Additionally, vehicle speed often exceeds the posted speed limit, creating an uncomfortable environment for the pedestrian.

Figure 2. Pedestrian crossing midblock.

Outcomes

At the end of the RSA process, the RSA team provided recommendations that each jurisdiction could then implement. For Roanoke, recommendations included the following:

- Sidewalk maintenance, improvements, and expanding the sidewalk width.
- Improve signage and update speed limit signs for consistency.
- Evaluation of alley access and on-street parking.
- Signal modifications including Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPIs) and pedestrian recall.
- Improved lighting.
- Delineate on-street parking.
- Evaluation of major roadway improvements.

Figure 3. Example of ADA-compliance issues.

Resources

1. PATHS *Priortizing Active Transportation, Health, and Safety*
2. VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH *Local Communities*
3. SMART SCALE
4. VDOT *Virginia Highway Safety Improvement Program (VHSIP)*
5. PEDESTRIAN SAFETY ACTION PLAN