

RESOLUTION
CALL FOR NJDOT TO REPLACE “ACCIDENT” WITH “CRASH”

WHEREAS, New Jersey has been identified a bicycle and pedestrian “Focus State” by the FHWA since 2005 due to bicyclist and pedestrian fatalities being nearly twice the national average, as a percentage of all road fatalities.

WHEREAS, changing the way we think about events and the words we use will affect the way we behave. Our goal is to eliminate the word "accident" from the realm of unintentional injury, on the highway and across the nation;

WHEREAS, most motor vehicle crashes and injuries are predictable, preventable events. Continued use of the word "accident" promotes the concept that these events are outside of human influence or control. In fact, they are predictable results of specific actions;

WHEREAS, the Oxford Dictionary defines “accident” as “an unfortunate incident that happens unexpectedly and unintentionally.” However, we can identify their causes and take action to avoid them. These are not "acts of God", but predictable results of the laws of physics;

WHEREAS, use of the word "accident" works against bringing the appropriate resources to bear on this enormous problem. It allows the idea that the resulting injuries are an unexpected part of life;

WHEREAS, the term "crash" is neutral. Crashes can be either accidental or preventable. Use of the term “crash” does not presume guilt or culpability and is void of judgment.

WHEREAS, in 1997, the U.S. Department of Transportation, including the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) replaced "accident" with “crash” in the agencies' vocabulary.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE BICYCLE PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COUNCIL OF THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

THAT: The New Jersey Department of Transportation is urged to replace the term “accident” with “crash” in all public signage, messaging, all communications including but not limited to NJDOT website, VMS, engineering/planning/safety reports/studies/analysis, press releases, verbal communications, campaigns, and educational materials (where not statutorily required otherwise).

THAT: NJDOT will encourage all partners including consultants, the media, and all those who work in the public realm to adopt this vocabulary.

The foregoing Resolution was offered by Janna Chernetz, who moved its adoption and seconded by Cyndi Steiner, and being put to a vote, the vote was:

Elise Bremer-Nei, NJDOT Bicycle & Pedestrian Programs

Mike Viscardi, New Jersey Transit

Gary Poedubicky, NJ Law & Public Safety

JoAnne Sutton, NJ Motor Vehicle Commission (Advisory Member)

Brandee Chapman, NJ Department of Environmental Protection Trails Council (Did not vote)

Unfilled, NJ Department of Health

Caroline Trueman, Federal Highway Administration (not present)

Cassidy Boulan, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

Keith Hamas, North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority

Alan Huff, South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization

Cyndi Steiner, NJ Bike & Walk Coalition

Janna Chernetz, Tri-State Transportation Campaign

Doug Gilbert, NJ Travel Independence Program

Charles Brown, Committee Chair; NJ Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center, Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center, Rutgers University (non-voting member)

The Chair thereupon declared the Resolution duly passed and adopted on this 22nd day of September 2016.