

**League of Women Voters of Mountain Lakes
Pedestrian Safety Consensus
May 2003**

The League of Women Voters of Mountain Lakes recognizes that our community is one whose road layout and development patterns were established before the dominance of the automobile; as a result, our town is intended to be more pedestrian-oriented than is typical of most modern American communities. The League is concerned, however, that increased congestion on our roads has caused a reduction in pedestrian safety that, in turn, has led to a decline in walking and biking. Increases in the number and size of vehicles on our roads has led to a perception of our roads not being safe for walking and biking. League members recognize this as a loss of quality of life in Mountain Lakes and one that the League would like to see reversed. As a "model community" from its founding days, the League encourages the Borough of Mountain Lakes to seize this situation as an opportunity to innovate solutions for a model pedestrian-friendly community.

The League strongly supports the objectives and proposals of the Circulation Plan of the Mountain Lakes Master Plan, particularly those related to minimizing traffic and enhancing pedestrian safety. The League urges Borough Council to carry out the recommendations of the Circulation Plan, as well as to pursue additional measures to improve the safety of our streets for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Pedestrian Safety Issues

League members identified numerous areas of concern regarding pedestrian safety in Mountain Lakes. Those concerns perceived as most significant are:

- **Vehicular speeding.** A Borough-wide problem, but particularly on the Boulevard, Morris Avenue, Midvale Road, Powerville Road, and Lake Drive.
- **Obstruction of existing sidewalks and the Borough rights-of-way,** including cars parked on sidewalks.
- **Sidewalks in need of maintenance.** Most of the Borough's existing sidewalks are narrow, immediately adjacent to the roadway, and slant toward the road, which creates a problem for someone pushing a stroller or for a child biker. Many also have holes and cracks.

- **Lack of safe crossings** on major roads, such as the Boulevard, particularly outside school hours.
- **Congestion at school drop-off and pick-up.** The traffic flow is at times chaotic; members are especially concerned about the situation at Wildwood School, which has seen a large increase in enrollment in recent years.
- **Inexperienced drivers** frequent the roads in after-school hours.
- **Landscaping trucks** parking on our narrow streets make it difficult for cars to pass.
- **Limited lighting** deters walking at dusk and at night and creates a particular hazard for commuters walking home from the bus and rail.

Possible Pedestrian Safety Solutions

1. Traffic Calming

The League recommends the judicious use of traffic calming measures wherever possible to reduce vehicular speeds on our streets. To reduce speeding and improve existing crosswalks on the Boulevard and other heavily traveled Mountain Lakes roads, the League suggests that the Borough consider chokers, planters and on-demand traffic lights. Striping along wide or straight roadways such as Morris Avenue or Pocono Road would provide an inexpensive way to "narrow" our roads, reducing speeding and providing a safer path for pedestrians. More widespread use of the movable "25 mph" signs would provide another inexpensive option for slowing traffic. The League also supports turning some narrow side streets into "Pedestrian Streets" (speed limit 10 mph) to make them available for walking, biking and children's play. Movable signs and barriers could be used to study optimization of such an arrangement.

2. Safety Around Schools

The League recommends the adoption of programs designed to increase walking, biking and carpooling to school; such programs would reduce traffic congestion at the schools as well as traffic around the Borough. The League encourages the Borough to find ways to reduce the need for high school students to drive, thereby reducing the need for additional parking at the high school as well. The League would like to see a program that requires the students to "earn the privilege" to park at school.

The League strongly recommends that Mountain Lakes initiate a "Safe Routes to School" program including, but not limited to, as many of the following components as practicable:

Education

1. Incorporation of pedestrian and bike safety training into the school curriculum.
2. Development of programs and incentives to educate teen drivers.
3. Launch of a community-wide safety campaign, including education on the benefits of carpooling to school.

Encouragement

1. Creation of an "Eyes On The Street" program, with adult volunteers at prearranged points on the walk to school.
2. Establishment of "Walking School Bus" routes.
3. Use of volunteer "greeters" to ease congestion at Wildwood drop-off.
4. Designation of satellite drop-off locations from which children could walk to school.

Engineering

1. Designation of "Pedestrian Only" streets (speed limit 10 mph) along routes to school.
2. Closing streets around the schools during opening and dismissal times.
3. Improvement of the traffic flow patterns around the schools

Enforcement

1. Review and enforcement of traffic flow patterns at Wildwood, with stronger crossing guard coordination.
2. Establishment of a "Citizen Watch" program so motorists can report traffic offenders.

In addition, the League also suggests that the use of jitney buses be considered. These buses could provide transportation for children from satellite locations to school and could potentially provide bus service after school and during school vacations to sports and activities.

Finally, the League recommends that the school bus schedule be amended to accommodate current Wildwood, Briarcliff and High School dismissal times; the cost of retaining the bus for an after-school 'late' loop, possibly for all Mountain Lakes' students, should be evaluated.

3. General Pedestrian and Bike Safety

In general, the League supports the Borough's policy for limiting sidewalks to areas where they are essential. In lieu of construction of additional sidewalks, the League recommends increasing the use of the Borough right-of-way to create a natural footpath, and of better maintenance of our existing sidewalks and trails. The League encourages the Borough to educate residents about the right-of-way and to enforce trimming of shrubs that obstruct it. The League does recommend that the Borough consider additional sidewalks along Crane and Pocono Roads, as well as one connecting the Boulevard path with Route 46, for the benefit of commuters and others. To improve the perception of safety of our existing sidewalks and add a margin of safety for walkers, the League recommends adding a stripe in the roadway on the sidewalk side of roads wherever practical.

The League also recommends adding pedestrian-activated crossing lights, particularly along the Boulevard. These would be in use only when activated and would facilitate safer crossing of this busy road. In addition, the League encourages the Borough to create a pedestrian route on the market side of Midvale to the village, and to explore

alternatives for a safer intersection at Lackawanna Way and Midvale. The League also urges the Borough to enforce the current parking ordinances and to find a solution for landscaping vehicles, perhaps limiting on-street parking of landscaping trucks to non-school opening and dismissal times.

4. Public Transportation

The League is concerned that Mountain Lakes does not have adequate public transportation and recommends lobbying for better train and bus service. In addition, the League recognizes the need for additional transportation options to surrounding towns and recommends the extension of jitney bus service into Mountain Lakes.

5. Community Advocacy Committee

To implement these recommendations and to develop an overall comprehensive Pedestrian Safety Program, the League recommends the formation of a Community Advocacy Committee with representation from the Borough Council, Board of Education, law enforcement and concerned citizens. The League strongly recommends pursuing the hiring of an incentive-paid grant writer to procure funding for the implementation of recommended improvements and programs.