

Brief to City of Montreal Public Consultation on Pedestrian Safety
Contactivity Centre
May 21, 2013

Our seniors community centre has 600 members ranging in age from their early 60's to their upper 90's. For the most part they live in NDG, downtown Montreal, Westmount, Verdun and LaSalle. Our members have often expressed concerns about pedestrian safety, which would like to pass along to this committee.

1. Need for Public Awareness Campaign

Every senior, even if they take public transportation or drive a car, is still a pedestrian for part if not all of the time. One has to walk from one's home to the bus stop and from the bus stop to one's destination. One has to cross at intersections and navigate sidewalks in all kinds of weather.

When you as city planners see cyclists on the road, you see an indicator of youthful vigour and sustainable transportation. When we as seniors see a cyclist (especially if they are riding their bikes on the sidewalk, as they sometimes do), we see a potential weapon of individual destruction which could plow us down and cause life-altering injuries. A senior never wins in an altercation with a bike, let alone a car.

As pedestrians, seniors feel there is a need to sensitize both car drivers and cyclists to the need for courtesy and adherence to the rules of the road - for the sake of everyone. This could take the form of posters, TV ads, articles and publicity in the press and should be done at regular intervals.

2. Cross Walks, not Cross Runs

Some seniors are obliged to limit their excursions outdoors, including to grocery stores, because they cannot get anywhere without braving an intersection which puts them at risk. Extra time needs to be provided at key intersections in order to allow older pedestrians, who may have mobility problems or occasionally even use walkers, to cross safely. Often the time allotted is insufficient, and this results in the senior either being stranded at a half-way island, or rushing and hence at risk of tripping and falling. When the timing for crossings is calculated, it must take into account the increasing senior population and their particular need for those crucial few extra seconds to cross a busy street in safety. The regular re-painting of crosswalk indications should also be a priority.

3. Sound alerts for visually-impaired pedestrians

These exist at a few intersections, for example near the Montreal Association for the Blind on Sherbrooke St. West. The visually impaired do go elsewhere in the city besides the M.A.B., and they should be able to do so using auditory cues at traffic intersections. Such devices are commonly used in other Canadian cities and in many cities in Europe.

4. Seasonal Adjustments

Snow removal at bus stops should be prioritized in winter, even ahead of the clearing of the rest of the street. A senior who is waiting for a bus in winter will really try hard to board it when it arrives, but if the snow bank near the stop has not been adequately cleared, this puts them at risk of a fall. Whereas pedestrian safety concerns in general revolve around making sure people are not hit by moving vehicles, for seniors simple falls - without being hit - are a major risk to life and limb, and account for a very high percentage of hospitalizations and even elevated mortality rates within a twelve-month period after such an injury.

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