

STEVEN GLICKMAN
Chair

CHRISTOPHER AMATO
Vice Chair

KEVIN SCHMIDT
Treasurer



LAMONT G. MCCLURE, JR.
Chair, Coordinating Committee

BRENDAN COTTER
Chair, Technical Committee

BECKY A. BRADLEY, AICP
Executive Director, LVPC
Secretary, LVTS



A Call to Action on Pedestrian Safety

With aggressive driving on the rise and pedestrians at risk, Lehigh Valley leaders are pulling together and enlisting an army of the willing to help make the region safer and more accessible to walkers, rollers and transit users.

The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission is teaming up with the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley and AARP to conduct a walk audit program in which dozens of volunteers, and community and government leaders will fan out across the region to “audit” dangerous, troublesome and busy areas used by pedestrians, bicyclists, wheelchair users or transit riders.

Those audits will then be used to devise improvements that can be worked into future LVPC transportation plans funded through the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation or Federal Highway Administration.

Community leaders kicked off the program April 25, during a ceremony at Catasauqua Park.

“The Walk Audit program allows us to gather information that can better inform transportation investments and improve the Lehigh Valley’s pedestrian and [Americans with Disabilities Act] accessibility,” said Becky Bradley, Executive Director of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission. “This will significantly advance the goals of *FutureLV: The Regional Plan and Walk/RollLV: Active Transportation Plan* as well as support a safer and more equitable transportation system.”

The LVPC has identified 50 priority locations based on criteria that includes fatalities, injuries, high use or proximity to a school, church or senior center. The program includes a Geographic Information Systems tool that shows the priority locations, but also invites anyone in the region to audit their own areas of concern so that can be added to the map. Ultimately, the goal is to have hundreds of locations audited. Volunteers are able to use a 10-sheet auditing system devised by AARP. The GIS tool, audit sheets, and instructions can be found at <https://agefriendlylehighvalleyregionalplan.org/walk-audit/>

“Our goal is to have an active community fully connected by pedestrian networks, allowing all residents to have equitable access to services and resources or an alternative mode of transportation,” said Carmen Bell, United Way Sr. Director of Healthy Aging.

Pedestrian and bicycle fatalities have been on the rise across the nation, and public safety officials say that a bump in aggressive driving that began during the COVID-19 Pandemic continues today. Valleywide, from 2017-2021, 35 pedestrians have been killed and another 458 have been injured by vehicles. Over that period, four bicyclists have been killed and another 143 injured by vehicles, but advocates say the injury number for pedestrians and cyclists are almost certainly much higher because many don’t report their accidents to police.

The kick-off included more than 40 community and government leaders from across the region, including Lehigh County Executive Phillips Armstrong, Northampton County Executive Lamont McClure, Allentown Mayor Matt Tuerk, Catasauqua Mayor Barbara Schlegel, AARP Pennsylvania Director Bill Johnston-Walsh and Kellie VonStein, AARP Pennsylvania State Associate State Director of Outreach and Advocacy in the Lehigh Valley

“I’m a walker, and I’m also a senior citizen at 73 and I agree that what we’re doing here is one of the most important things we can do in the Lehigh Valley,” Armstrong said.

“We must have accessibility for our senior citizens, for our people who don’t have access to transportation. We’ve got to make it easier.”

Tuerk left the kick-off and performed a walk audit in Allentown the same day near the Harrison-Morton Middle School.

“We can’t do this alone. We must all work together to make our neighborhoods safer for pedestrians, and that comes from making investments, enforcing laws and educating our public,” Tuerk said.

Data from the walk audit will be used by the LVPC as it develops its Transportation Safety Plan, four-year Transportation Improvement Program and \$3.6 billion Long-Range Transportation Plan of projects to be funded over the next 25 years.

It can also be used by communities as they draft new enforcement policies.

“Walk audits are about more than just sidewalks and crosswalks – they’re about creating communities where people can move around safely and with ease,” said Kellie VonStein. “By focusing on walkability, the Lehigh Valley is investing in the health, safety and well-being of its residents.”