

THE CQ Researcher

PUBLISHED BY CONGRESSIONAL QUARTERLY INC.

Aggressive Driving

Can road designers and police calm motorists down?

The explosive anger that leads drivers to sometimes deadly road disputes, often termed “road rage,” has dramatized the rise in aggressive driving. Two-thirds of last year’s more than 41,000 auto deaths are blamed on aggressive driving — such as speeding, cutting off other motorists and tailgating. In several states, police are beefing up enforcement, and legislators are calling for tougher penalties. Several cities are installing traffic-calming measures like narrowed streets to slow down drivers. But citizens in much of the nation must battle entrenched state highway bureaucracies, whose road standards make roads as fast as possible for cars — often at the expense of walkers, bicyclists and livable communities.



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Volume 7, No. 28

EDITOR

Sandra Stencil

MANAGING EDITOR

Thomas J. Colin

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Sarah M. Magner
Richard L. Worsnop

STAFF WRITERS

Charles S. Clark
Mary H. Cooper
Kenneth Jost
David Masci

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Vanessa E. Furlong

PUBLISHED BY

Congressional Quarterly Inc.

CHAIRMAN

Andrew Barnes

VICE CHAIRMAN

Andrew P. Corty

PRESIDENT AND PUBLISHER

Robert W. Merry

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

David Rapp

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The CQ Researcher (ISSN 1056-2036). Formerly Editorial Research Reports. Published weekly, except Jan. 3, May 30, Aug. 29, Oct. 31, by Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1414 22nd St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037. Annual subscription rate for libraries, businesses and government is \$340. Additional rates furnished upon request. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The CQ Researcher, 1414 22nd St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037.

COVER: A RED-LIGHT CAMERA IN SAN FRANCISCO CAPTURES A STATION WAGON AFTER IT RAN A RED LIGHT FIVE SECONDS AFTER THE LIGHT TURNED RED AND HIT A CAB AT 30 MPH. (INSURANCE INSTITUTE FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY)

Aggressive Driving

BY SARAH GLAZER

THE ISSUES

It's rush hour in rural Brewster, N.Y., and Manhattan-bound commuters are backed up for three miles on the two-lane road out of town.

State Trooper Alan S. Kurlander sees so much aggressive driving as he cruises the scene that he could write out tickets all morning. Within five minutes, he spots two typical violators — a red Blazer weaving onto the right shoulder and a white Camry crossing the center line — cutting ahead of other drivers.

You can feel the anxiety building as the stalled commuters count the minutes until they can floor it on I-684. Troopers say the 55 mph Interstate has become a “racetrack,” with motorists clocked at speeds over 100 mph.

Harried commuters, many of them escapees from the city, treat their Interstate drive like a subway ride.

“Every day, I see people shaving, putting on nail polish, lipstick, eyeliner and reading the paper while they're driving,” Trooper Darren Daughtry says. He has seen speeds around bucolic Brewster escalate dangerously over the past few years as downstate urbanites have poured in.

Typical excuses for irresponsible driving — “Another guy cut me off,” “I'm late for work” — and a sense of self-righteous entitlement have grown too, troopers say. “Nobody wants to be responsible for their actions,” says Sgt. Michael Gadomski. “Civility is going down the tubes.”

The stories are almost comical, but the consequences are not. In local incidents reminiscent of nationally publicized “road rage” explosions, two female motorists staged a high-speed passing duel, then stopped to continue the fight, one wielding a baseball bat; another motorist who



pulled over to continue a feud was slashed with a knife.

Aggressive driving has suddenly come into the public spotlight as communities across the nation complain about drivers who drive too fast, weave crazily and become enraged when they're passed. Aggressive driving was involved in two-thirds of last year's auto deaths, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates.

At recent House Transportation subcommittee hearings on the phenomenon. Chairman Bud Shuster, R-Pa., said that the solution is wider, straighter roads and more of them. * Traffic has increased by 35 percent since 1987 while construction of new roads has grown only 1 percent, according to the NHTSA.

But subcommittee member Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore., said that building more roads would be the equivalent of “giving a wife-beater more room to swing.” As Portland's commissioner of public works for 10

* Hearings were held July 17 before the Subcommittee on Surface Transportation of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

years, Blumenauer helped initiate programs like “skinny streets,” which narrowed existing streets to slow down traffic in residential areas.

In lower Westchester County's affluent neighborhoods, where Manhattanites seek to escape city hassles, many parents won't let their children walk or bike to school because of dangerous drivers.

When a pedestrian advocate asks civic association audiences how many members walked or biked to school as children, three-quarters typically raise their hands. But when he asks how many of their children walk or bike, the proportion usually drops to a handful.

“We've lost control of our communities and neighborhoods to the motor vehicle,” says Bill Wilkinson, executive director of the Bicycle Federation of America and head of its Campaign to Make America Walkable. “There are places where you can't cross the street without a car.”

Americans are more likely to get killed by a car while walking than they are by a stranger with a gun, concluded a recent report by a coalition of environmental and pedestrian/cycling groups.¹

One reason for the increased danger to pedestrians is that residential areas since World War II have been designed around the car. The study found that the five deadliest places for pedestrians are highway-dominated cities: Fort Lauderdale, Miami, Atlanta, Tampa and Dallas. The safest cities are those where walkers dominate, such as Pittsburgh, Milwaukee, Boston, Rochester, N.Y., and New York City.*

“We see a clear demarcation be-

* The report compared pedestrian fatality rates with the level of pedestrian activity in each city. Because the government does not track the miles walked in each community, the report used U.S. Census data on the percent of people in each community who walk to work as a surrogate for walking activity.

AGGRESSIVE DRIVING

tween older cities and those that grew up around the auto since World War II and now exhibit the auto-dependent sprawl that makes them more dangerous,” says James Corless, a spokesman for the Surface Transportation Policy Project, one of the groups that issued the report.

Pedestrian advocates say it's time to redesign cities and suburbs for walkers. In a sign of revolutionary change, the Institute of Transportation Engineers is expected to adopt guidelines for designing streets in new residential developments the old-fashioned way — with wide sidewalks and narrow roadways.

In Virginia, residents and merchants have mobilized against a state plan to widen Route 50, a busy two-lane highway running through historic Middleburg, in the heart of the hunt country. Instead, they are proposing European-style “traffic calming” measures like raised pedestrian crosswalks, cobblestone surfaces and trees planted on both sides of the road to give motorists the impression of narrowness and slow them down. (*See story, p. 654.*)

But the residents have a tough fight ahead. Powerful highway-user groups, including the American Automobile Association (AAA), are fighting efforts to divert federal highway money to pedestrian and cycling uses. These groups contend that much of the aggressive-driving problem is rooted in frustration over congestion on deteriorating roads and bridges, which have not grown to keep up with the burgeoning traffic. The solution, they maintain, is to widen and

modernize the roads.²

“From a safety perspective, the wider roads of the Interstate system have much lower crash rates than other roads,” says Mark Lee Edwards, AAA managing director for traffic safety. “If you look at some of the factors driving the crash experience, it's narrow lanes, no shoulders, narrow bridges, too steep curves and fixed objects like trees next to the roadside, so when people lose

control allowing the cars of repeat drunken drivers to be confiscated. More recently, Portland has initiated programs to impound cars of motorists driving with a suspended license or without proof of insurance.⁴

“I think a subculture has developed of people who think they can do anything they want with the car,” Blumenauer says, citing repeat drunken drivers and “aggressive and belligerent” commuters who cut through residential neighborhoods at high speeds, endangering children and walkers. “We've had a generation of engineers who enable that behavior,” he adds. “Streets are wider, and speed limits are designed to move traffic rather than deal with the impact the street has on the community.”

Yet most drivers whose aggressive driving lands them in crashes are ordinary people — not

chronic criminals, according to Patricia Waller, director of the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute. Just 6-7 percent of the nation's drivers account for all the crashes in any one year, Waller notes. But even if those drivers were taken off the road, it would make no difference in the number of crashes, because only a small proportion of them are chronic bad drivers. For many it's a first-time crash.

“People are more pressured and have less time — particularly women,” Waller says. “Women are working full time. When you look at non-work trips, men's are to the football game; women's are to the



City of West Palm Beach

Traffic-calming measures in West Palm Beach, Fla., include landscaped mini-traffic circles tended by residents.

control of their vehicle they're colliding with trees — which in a collision kills them.”³

But there's a downside to the lower crash rates, Corless says. “If you look at the six-lane strips that are increasingly replacing old two-lane roads, you can say there are not a lot of fatalities, but also no one walks on them. You're crazy to walk on them. There are no sidewalks, shopping centers are set far back from the road and it's difficult to make public transit work in those places.”

Blumenauer sees a connection between lax penalties for aggressive drivers and cities oriented around the needs of cars. Portland, Ore., was the first city in the nation to enact leg-

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'Calm' Streets Help Revive West Palm Beach

Not much more than three years ago, downtown West Palm Beach was considered too dangerous to visit at night. Its streets were deserted, its shops struggling.

Today, children splash 15 feet from a major intersection in a newly installed fountain. Parents relax on comfortable benches, eating ice cream and watching their kids. Cars driving through downtown must slow down to negotiate crosswalks that have been raised to the level of the curb, permitting pedestrians, parents pushing strollers and wheelchair users to cross easily.

The new vitality is largely the work of the city's dynamic mayor, Nancy Graham, and the planners she brought in to redesign the city. Internationally recognized Canadian civil engineer Ian Lockwood, whom Graham hired as the city's transportation planner, says West Palm Beach's problems were typical of cities designed according to traditional traffic engineering standards.

"If you look at any transportation model for a city, the success of the city is based on how well the car is accommodated," Lockwood says. In West Palm Beach, "The car was fine, but our city was dead 10 years ago. The street became the monopoly of the car to the exclusion of pedestrians."

In cooperation with several noted urban designers, Lockwood hopes to have the entire eastern part of the city "traffic-calmed" in five years using techniques that have been employed successfully in Europe for the past 25 years.

Six-lane U.S. 1, which slices through the city in two broad swaths, one in each direction, will be reduced to two separate two-lane roads. To make "nice slow streets that are very pedestrian friendly," Lockwood says, sidewalks will be widened, landscaping will be added on both sides and shady patios will be created on the sidewalks where people can sit and have a cool drink. "Now we have narrow sidewalks, and no one likes to walk along them," he explains.

The move has won support from initially skeptical business groups because of the success in areas that have already received the Lockwood treatment. Commercial rents have risen from \$5 per square foot to \$25 in downtown areas that have been traffic-calmed. Once half-occupied, commercial buildings now have no vacancies. And downtown is becoming a popular place to live. The city is retrofitting lofts above stores for apartments and combined work-living units. In the next two years, the city expects to have 560 more new homes downtown.

West Palm Beach was founded in 1894 as the servant city for affluent Palm Beach, a quarter-mile away across the Intracoastal Waterway. Today, many waiters, maids and other

service personnel who don't own cars walk to work. Forty-eight percent of the city is low-to-moderate income.

To help attract residents downtown, the city is subsidizing purchases by low-income homeowners as well as providing training in such basics as how to fix appliances. The city is also giving tax breaks to residents renovating historic homes.

Lockwood points to a typical inner-city street where the city recently invested \$8,000 in traffic calming and beautification. It was lined with boarded-up homes and had become a favorite place for truck drivers to dump garbage. Parking a car on the street was considered unwise. The city is narrowing the street from 35 feet to 25 feet, putting in curbside trees and narrowing every approach to the neighborhood school so children can walk to school without encountering speeding traffic. In similar neighborhoods where the city has already made such changes, Lockwood says, garbage dumping no longer occurs, crime has dropped and homeowners take newfound pride in the upkeep of the neighborhood.

Typically, streets that have been traffic-calmed have 50 percent fewer collisions than conventionally designed streets and 80 percent fewer fatalities, according to Lockwood. When traffic is slowed to below 20 mph, stopping distances are shorter, the field of vision is wider and a driver is more likely to see a child running into the street from behind a parked car. The city has not had a single collision on a traffic-calmed street, Lockwood says.

The changes have not been without their opponents. "I get calls from commuters who say, 'Your job is to move cars as fast as possible,'" Lockwood says. "I say, my job is to make the city livable and sustainable. I don't think we should sacrifice quality of life in the inner city for people in the suburbs."

Actually, when traffic calming is done right and the streets become more scenic, everyone should be happy, Lockwood maintains. "Drivers will slow down willingly and naturally, kids can cross safely, people can go shopping in harmony with the traffic and business won't dry up."

As part of the city's campaign against traditional thinking, it has instituted a new transportation vocabulary. The word "improvements," which to traffic engineers usually means new car lanes or other ways to move traffic faster, has been banned in favor of the more neutral term "changes." It's no longer permissible to say a road is being "upgraded" when it's really being widened.

In fact, the city no longer uses the term "accident" because it reduces "the degree of responsibility and severity and invokes sympathy for the person responsible," a city memo states. Now, in West Palm, the term is "crash" or "collision."

Rural Virginians Challenged Highway ‘Improvements’ . . .

The countryside around tony Middleburg, Va., dotted with horse farms and towns rich in Civil War history, has long been a favorite destination for tourists seeking a charming country drive.

So when the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) threatened to “improve” local roads using conventional traffic engineering standards, the community turned into a hotbed of citizen activism.

It started when residents along the Snickersville Turnpike, a rural road that has changed little since the Civil War, complained about potholes and a crumbling road surface. VDOT responded with a plan to straighten out the curves, widen the barely two-lane road and replace a 19th-century stone arch bridge with concrete and steel.

Turnpike residents were alerted to the department’s definition of “improvement” when the state fixed the first section of road. A charming one-lane bridge over a creek was replaced with a concrete culvert that obliterated the view of the creek, and the trees around it were cut down.

The state-funded destruction “appalled” everyone who lived along the road and spurred residents to found the Snickersville Turnpike Association five years ago, according to artist Susan Van Wagoner, vice president of the association. The hardest part was persuading the state to abandon conventional road standards that aim to protect drivers’ safety at high speeds by such methods as removing trees that cars can crash into.

“It was a real struggle,” she says. “It took an awful lot of citizens doing an awful lot of work.”

The association campaigned to throw out an unsympathetic board of supervisors and succeeded in re-electing a new

board that supported its fight. Citizens did observational studies to show that the road could accommodate existing traffic and that it was safe because its narrowness and many curves kept speeds down. “We’ve got farm vehicles, farm animals, deer on the turnpike,” Van Wagoner says. “Safety means going slower on this road.”

To justify its widening plan, Virginia’s Department of Transportation cited the guidebook of standards that governs most road construction in this country — the so-called “Green Book” issued by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO).

“They used AASHTO standards to say this [the existing road] is lower than the standard we can use,” Van Wagoner says. “We said, ‘We have to have flexibility with these standards.’”

In the end, the state relented and came up with a new design that widens the

road only a few feet — from 16 feet at its narrowest point to 19 feet.

“We stopped a project that had gone out for contract bids, which is unheard of,” Van Wagoner says. “They rebuilt it in a way everyone loves — farmers and commuters. And we saved money, so they can do more sections of the road. The project was done for half of the planned cost, and the speed limit was lowered to 35 from 55.”

Virginia’s cookbook approach to roads — typical of most states — may explain why the region’s citizens have recently taken on an even more ambitious campaign as part of their effort to defeat another state road-widening plan. Instead, they want to turn local Route 50 into the first rural road in the nation to use European-style traffic-calming measures.



Snickersville Turnpike Association

The Snickersville Turnpike has changed little since the Civil War.

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grocery store, to do the laundry, pick up the kids. When you’re charged \$1 for every minute you’re late picking up a child at nursery school, you’ll probably speed and be less patient with other drivers.”

As concern mounts over aggressive driving, here are some of the questions being asked:

Is aggressive driving a major safety hazard?

In a recent poll conducted by the Potomac chapter of the AAA, motorists in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area identified aggressive driving as the top threat to highway safety, ahead of drunken driving. Most thought the problem was getting worse. (See “At Issue,” p. 665.)

Even more surprising, one out of two motorists surveyed admitted to aggressive driving themselves in the last year. The sins confessed most frequently were speeding (65 percent), gesturing and exchanging words with another driver (8 percent), slowing down and speeding up to get even with another driver (6 percent) and tailgating (6 percent).

... and Saved Their Charming Country Roads

Route 50 is a busy highway connecting commuters between Washington, D.C., and the rolling foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

It slices through the center of Middleburg and several other historic Virginia towns, but is so fast-moving that residents complain it is often unsafe to cross. Drivers are often halfway through the smaller villages before they are aware they have entered a town.

A coalition of local merchants and residents wants to convert Route 50 into an old-fashioned main street that people could cross safely and that would invite motorists to stop and shop.

The Route 50 Corridor Coalition has put together an ambitious two-volume plan, designed through community meetings with the help of transportation planner Ian Lockwood, of West Palm Beach, Fla.¹

The plan envisions community-designed entranceways to small towns, such as stone walls; parking lanes paved in distinctive materials to make the road appear narrower; placing cobblestone strips across the road to alert motorists to slower speed limits; raising crosswalks to the level of the curb so that motorists must slow down and so pedestrians with strollers can cross more easily; building out sidewalk curbs at intersections so pedestrians have a shorter distance to cross; and lower speed limits through the towns.

The coalition was formed in response to a state plan to build a bypass around Middleburg and widen the highway from two lanes to a multi-lane divided highway.

"Bypasses tend to kill small towns," says Van Wagoner, chair of the coalition's steering committee. "Business people were very concerned about that." The plan has won strong

support from merchants, who see it as a way to attract customers. The department last year abandoned the bypass project for lack of community support.

The coalition's plan has been approved by the Middleburg Town Council, but it has yet to win approval from the state transportation department. The department has so far regarded the unconventional community plan with skepticism on the grounds that Route 50 was designed to carry a large volume of traffic.²



Route 50 Corridor Coalition

A local coalition wants to turn parts of Virginia's Route 50 into an old-fashioned main street.

Currently, residents say, the existing highway makes it hard for pedestrians in the tiny town of Upperville to cross the road safely from a parking area on one side of the road to pick up children from the day-care center across the street. Moreover, a survey of tourists in the area indicated that one reason they came was to drive on country roads. "They said, 'If you put suburbia there, we're not coming'" Van Wagoner reports.

As for cost, she estimates that the 20 miles of traffic-calming measures proposed would be half the price tag of the proposed \$34 million bypass. Most important, she says, it's what the citizens want.

"It's not somebody sitting in Richmond with a standards book deciding everything," she says. "These are the people who use the roads; they're the ones who should be involved in designing it."

¹Route 50 Corridor Coalition, *A Traffic Calming Plan for Virginia's Rural Route 50 Corridor* (1996).

²See Michael Janofsky, "Answer to Gathering Stampede of Autos: Whoa!" *The New York Times*, Jan. 7, 1997, p. A10.

When asked the reasons for their behavior, the most common answer was running late for appointments, followed by anger over another driver's actions.⁵

Despite the widespread perception that aggressive driving is a growing problem, there are no government statistics to back up the assertion. That's partly because there is no

generally accepted definition of aggressive driving, says Brian G. Traynor, chief of traffic law enforcement the NHTSA.

Speaking as a Washington-area commuter, however, Traynor thinks the problem is getting worse. "Years ago, you would only see one person you considered to be a nut every two or three weeks," he says. "Now, you

see two or three every day on the way to work. That's a fairly good indication to me that aggressive driving is increasing. It's hard to define, but you know it when you see it."

Lisa Sheikh, a child welfare expert, started Citizens Against Speeding and Aggressive Driving after she moved to Washington from New York City two years ago. "I was astonished by

AGGRESSIVE DRIVING

the speeding, the red-light running, the very aggressive driving behavior," she says. "I really began to think about the possibility that a lot of crashes are not accidents — they're the result of unlawful driving behavior."

With her interest in children's issues, Sheikh saw aggressive driving as a particularly "raw deal for kids." She discovered that many area parents were complaining they couldn't let their kids into the front yard anymore because drivers were zooming by at 60 mph on streets where the limit was 25 mph.

Sheikh's group is seeking tougher penalties for aggressive drivers, taking Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) as its model. The group contends that local laws treat them too lightly, unless a crash involves alcohol or road dueling. Moreover, she charges, police don't enforce existing traffic laws because they are focused on hard-core crime.

National data appear to support Sheikh's perceptions about lack of enforcement. One of the reasons is that the number of drivers and vehicle miles traveled has risen faster than the availability of officers for routine traffic enforcement, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, a research organization supported by auto insurers.

In October, the mother of a police officer who belongs to Sheikh's group was killed in Maryland in a head-on collision with a young driver going twice the speed limit. "The kid paid a few tickets and walked away," Sheikh says. "People are getting away with murder. If people are using their car as a weapon, I think the answer is taking their car away."

Around the country, several state and local police departments — including those in Maryland, Arizona and New York — have organized enforcement programs aimed specifically at aggressive driving. Maryland State Police started a campaign



City of West Palm Beach

A gazebo slows traffic through an intersection in Seaside, Fla.

against aggressive drivers in 1995 after fatalities surged 35 percent in the first three months over the previous period in 1994.

"The superintendent said, 'Find out why,'" recalls Lt. Michael Fischer. "It wasn't speed or one particular offense. It was a multitude of offenses — inattentiveness, following too closely, improper lane changes, driving on the shoulder, some alcohol offenses."

On Memorial Day weekend in 1995, Maryland troopers began satu-

rating high-accident areas with both marked patrol cars and "covert" vehicles — tractor trailers, dump trucks, lawn-mowing tractors — which radioed aggressive driving behavior to patrol cars. Thousands of citations were issued. In addition, a public information campaign encouraging motorists to report unsafe drivers by "dialing" #77 on their cellular phones has produced hundreds of calls a month to state police. In the first quarter of 1996, fatalities were down 14 percent. They fell another 3 percent in the first quarter of 1997, according to Fischer.

Maryland police can nab drivers for a wide range of violations already on the books, but headquarters also gives them a working definition to use in seeking out the aggressive driver — one who operates a vehicle in "a bold or pushy manner" endangering the lives and property of other motorists.

Few attempts have been made to quantify the extent of aggressive driving. But earlier this year the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, AAA's research arm, released a study counting incidents of violence that have come to be known as "road rage."

The AAA study, drawing on newspaper articles and police reports, counted 10,037 incidents since 1990 in which angry motorists injured, killed or attempted to hurt other motorists. At least 218 people were killed and 12,610 injured in those incidents.

One of the most highly publicized incidents occurred on the George Washington Memorial Parkway in Virginia, just outside Washington, in April 1996. Two dueling male drivers

lost control of their cars at 80 mph, crossed the median and hit two oncoming vehicles. Only one of the four drivers involved in the crash survived. Narkey Terry, a computer technician, was sentenced to 10 years in prison for his role in the incident.

Such incidents increased 51 percent between 1990 and 1995, the AAA study showed. In 37 percent of the cases, a firearm was used; in 35 percent the weapon was the vehicle itself.⁶

The majority of the drivers involved were young, poorly educated males with criminal records, histories of violence and drug or alcohol problems. Many had recently suffered an emotional or professional setback such as a divorce or losing a job or girlfriend.

But hundreds of such incidents involved apparently successful men and women with no known histories of crime who appeared to have suddenly snapped, the report found. In a 1995 case, a Maryland lawyer and former state legislator, Robin Ficker, was driving his two sons to visit his ailing father at the hospital when he bumped into a Jeep in front of him. The driver, Caroline Goldman, said that when she approached his car, Ficker began yelling and struck her in the face, breaking her eyeglasses. Ficker was convicted of battery and malicious destruction of property.

The study also found numerous cases of road violence triggered by "inane" causes. A 23-year-old Indiana University student attacked a campus maintenance worker with a hatchet after the two argued about the student's car being parked in a service drive. In another case, a man was shot and killed "because he was driving too slowly."⁷

Critics say the study is far from a scientific count and merely represents the culling of incidents so extreme and so rare that they have made the front page. Moreover, the dozens of road-rage fatalities counted annually pale in comparison with the

total number of traffic deaths caused each year — over 41,000 in 1996, or more than 100 deaths every day — by more typical bad driving.⁸

"From our standpoint, [road rage] is more of a criminal matter than it is aggressive driving," Sgt. Terence J. McDonnell, program manager in highway safety for the New York State Police, commented on the AAA study.

The new concern about aggressive driving is coming after several years in which automobile death rates in the United States have been declining.

"Over the years, we've become much better drivers — if you look at the fatality rate per 100 million miles driven," Waller says. "The rate in the 1960s was between five and six deaths; three was a barrier people never thought we'd cross; it's well under two at this point."

But the statistics may be more reflective of demographic trends than individual driving behavior. The country's growing urbanization over the last three decades has been an important factor in falling fatality rates, Waller notes. Rural crashes are more likely to be fatal than those in cities because they occur at higher speeds, and medical attention takes longer to arrive.

Yet urban and suburban areas tend to have more frequent crashes and higher rates of injury from crashes than rural areas because the vehicles are more concentrated. Judging from insurance claims, injuries from city crashes have been increasing in recent years.⁹

Running red lights and other traffic signals is the No. 1 cause of urban crashes, which are more likely to cause injuries than any other kind of crash, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. If a recent study is any indication, red-light running has become a surprisingly frequent form of law-breaking. In a morning rush hour study of a busy intersection in Arlington, Va., a

car ran a red light every five minutes. As a group, the lawbreakers were younger, less likely to use safety belts, had poorer driving records and drove smaller and older vehicles than drivers who stopped for red lights.¹⁰

Since 1975, pedestrian deaths have accounted for 13-17 percent of the deaths involving motor vehicles, according to the institute. However, pedestrian deaths as a percentage of the population have gone down 39 percent between 1975 and 1995. Even more dramatic is the decline in pedestrian deaths among children — 70 percent over the same period.

But pedestrian and bicycling advocates suggest fatalities may have declined because people have been forced indoors. "It's not that kids are crossing streets and getting killed," Sheikh says. "What we're hearing is kids can't cross the street by themselves anymore. You always have to be with them." A recent article in the *British Medical Journal* noted that a substantial proportion of the decline in children's deaths from traffic accidents in England appeared to be linked to children walking and cycling less in 1992 than 1985.¹¹

"The prudent person is likely to look out there and say, 'It's not worth my life to turn into the street anymore,'" the bicycle federation's Wilkinson says.

American motorists seem to divide culturally between cautious types who keep to the speed limit and hurried drivers who consider themselves more competent on the road. The recent AAA Potomac poll reporting an upsurge of concern over aggressive driving prompted local editorials calling the concern exaggerated and pointing the finger at timid, slow drivers.

"On the highway, there's always some guy who likes to pretend the 55 mph speed limit is the real speed limit (nobody drives 55 unless there's a trooper about) and hogs the passing

How to Keep Your Anger Off the Road

Psychiatrist John A. Larson, director of the Institute of Stress Medicine in Norwalk, Conn., and author of *Steering Clear of Highway Madness*, conducts seminars for motorists in controlling aggressive driving. He says there are five crucial decision points that make it possible to avoid anger on the road:



5. Don't try to "teach someone a lesson" for bad driving. Leave punishment to the police. Remember that if someone cuts you off, it's not worth it to act provocatively. They could have a gun or a knife.

1. Plan more time for the trip than you think you need. If it's an hour or less, allow 50 percent more time, if its three hours, allow 30 percent more time. "If you plan the travel time really tight, anything that slows you down will make you angry," Larson says.

2. When you see another car going faster than yours, say, "This is a place where I have to let go of competition."

3. Be good to yourself in your car. Have tapes on hand with the type of music you enjoy, keep food and drink in your car for long trips. Think of driving as pleasurable in itself, not just wasted time until you get to your destination.

4. When you see someone you don't like — a reckless teenager, a dawdling grandma, an obnoxious pickup driver or a stuck-up Porsche driver — don't take it out on them. Welcome diversity.

son why communities are so unpleasant for walkers, the culprit unquestionably would be "The Green Book." Put out by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the manual guides traffic engineers in laying out most U.S. roads today.¹⁴

Interstates and other major highways receiving federal funds as part of the 161,000-mile National Highway System must follow the AASHTO standards as a condition of funding. Most states choose to follow the standards when building or improving smaller roads and streets as well. Critics say the standards elevate the needs of traffic flow above other important considerations, like quiet, friendly, walkable streets.

"The Green Book" is supposed to be a set of guidelines, and it says planners should be flexible and use judgment, but everyone [in traffic en-

lane. Passing on the right is, of course, not the ideal thing — but what else are you supposed to do?" wrote automotive columnist Eric Peters.¹²

That attitude drives Sheikh crazy. She points out that drivers are not supposed to exceed the speed limit even when passing. "This is the work we have ahead to make these behaviors socially unacceptable so people won't blame other drivers," she says.

Sgt. McDonnell acknowledges that many drivers seem unaware the left lane is supposed to be the passing lane, and that their slowness can precipitate an accident with a hurried driver. "Accidents that occur from

people trying to go in the right lane to pass tend to be horrible accidents involving tens of cars," he says.

In fact, the insistence on being the passing driver appears to be at the root of many "road rage" incidents. Of 187 highway incidents investigated in summer 1987 in Los Angeles where firearms were brandished, two-thirds involved cars that were passing, merging or entering the highway.¹³

Do government transportation policies favor motorists over pedestrians?

If critics of America's auto dependency were asked for the main rea-

son why communities are so unpleasant for walkers, the culprit unquestionably would be "The Green Book." Put out by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the manual guides traffic engineers in laying out most U.S. roads today.¹⁴

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crime flourishes because pedestrians' needs have been ignored in favor of roads that are too wide, too fast and encourage speeding.

In rural and suburban areas, such design standards are equally destructive, critics say. "Traffic engineers will say, 'This road is a minor arterial and should have a design speed of 50,'" says Wilkinson. "There go your trees, your old bridge. They say they'll make it four lanes. Where are you going to walk, where am I going to ride my bike?"

The genesis of fast-moving roads in residential areas can be traced partly to a historical anomaly, says Frank Spiegel, a traffic consultant in Annandale, Va. Most states are barred by law from posting speed limits below 25 mph. Starting in the 1950s, state legislatures enacted the 25 mph floor to curb small-town speed traps, which frequently posted artificially low speeds to raise revenue through speeding tickets.

In addition, Spiegel says, engineers tend to design roads even faster than they need to be. "If you're a good traffic engineer and someone tells you, 'We're going to post 25 mph,' you say, 'I'm going to leave a factor of safety.' So you design the street [wider] using 30 mph design standards. But, of course, the 30 mph standards also have a factor of safety built into them, which means a motorist would really feel comfortable on a nice day driving 35-40 mph. We apply these standards to neighborhoods where people want to go 25 mph, and then we wonder why people call us to complain about speeding."

Wider, faster streets have become entrenched in many zoning codes and local laws that incorporate "Green Book" standards. To some extent, fear of lawsuits drives the blind adherence to the standards, according to experts.

"Many traffic engineers are afraid if they permit someone to build a smaller street and there's an accident, there would be tort liability," says Spiegel. One of the objections that

traffic engineers often make to narrow roads is that they wouldn't allow rescue vehicles to get through. However, demonstrations in Portland, Ore., and other cities where the streets were narrowed showed that rescue vehicles weren't delayed.

In a sign that this worldview is under challenge from within the profession, a committee of the Institute of Traffic Engineers is recommending design standards for new residential subdivisions that reject conventional suburbia and embrace the "New Urbanism" movement. New towns built on this model — typically traditional-looking communities with sidewalks, front porches and easy walking distances to shops — include Kentlands, near Gaithersburg, Md.; Laguna West, near Sacramento, Calif.; and Seaside, a resort community on Florida's Gulf Coast.

"What we're saying is, 'Let's design the streets from the beginning so you encourage slow traffic,'" explains Spiegel, who chairs the committee. "Let's not design streets 36 feet wide with no parking and expect people to drive down them at 25 mph." Spiegel believes the report will also go a long way toward assuaging traffic engineers' fears of lawsuits. The new guidelines can "go on an engineer's shelf, so he sees, 'Here is something that supports building smaller streets,'" he says.

The committee's recommendations are intended to mimic authentic, old-style urban neighborhoods such as Georgetown in Washington, D.C., and Old Town, in Alexandria, Va. The two historic communities, their narrow streets lined with 18th- and 19th-century townhouses and small shops, are popular spots for strolling. The new guidelines recommend maximum speeds of 20 mph; on-street parking to provide a buffer for walkers from traffic; sidewalks wide enough for strollers to walk companionably two abreast; and squared-off

corners that don't permit wide, sweeping turns at high speed.

Unlike roads in new subdivisions that allow two directions of traffic, the new guidelines encourage streets so narrow that there's only enough room for one lane of traffic, and cars must pull over into the parking lane to accommodate an oncoming vehicle.

"We have 80 years of stark precedent showing people will pull over," Spiegel says, pointing to typical city side-streets. In another diversion from conventional suburbia, the guidelines discourage cul de sacs, or dead ends, because drivers avoid them, which tends to shift traffic to neighboring streets rather than dispersing it.

The committee's proposal is "one of the most heartening and encouraging things we've seen come out of the traditional engineering community in the last few years," Wilkinson says.

Spiegel is optimistic that the institute will adopt the new guidelines before the end of the year. But he says some older traffic engineers have raised safety concerns about the narrower streets and the right-angle corners designed to force turning vehicles to slow down. Spiegel counters, "If you're hit by a car traveling less than 20 mph, you have a pretty good chance of surviving, but if you're hit by a car going 35, you will probably get killed."

The concepts proposed by Spiegel's committee, often described as "traffic calming" when applied to existing cities, are catching on in communities across the country. Seattle, Portland and West Palm Beach, Fla., are among the cities that have embraced the approach.

But pedestrian activists say they often have to fight old ideas and entrenched bureaucracies in state transportation departments. "It's almost like trying to turn a supertanker on a dime," Corless says. "State departments of transportation were set up to do one thing: build big roads.

It's very hard to get DOTs to think about pedestrian safety or bike facilities, yet these agencies have the ultimate authority."

Susan Van Wagoner, an artist and pedestrian activist in Middleburg, Va., can attest to the difficulties. It started when residents along the Snickersville Turnpike, a rural road that has changed little since the Civil War, complained about potholes and a crumbling road surface. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) responded with a plan to straighten out the curves, widen the barely two-lane road and replace a 19th-century stone arch bridge with a concrete and steel one. Van Wagoner and other residents convinced the VDOT to deviate from its usual standards. But not before a one-lane bridge over a creek had been destroyed. (*See story, p. 654.*)

West Palm Beach, built for servants working in affluent Palm Beach, also has laws and zoning codes barring street-life. But with support from Mayor Nancy Graham, all that is changing.

The city has started a long-term plan to bring urban vitality to a downtown that most people were afraid to enter at night only a few years ago.

"In West Palm Beach, a child can wait 20 minutes for a bus two feet from cars, but a tree can't be placed in the same place for safety reasons," Lockwood notes. Typically, zoning codes prohibit tree planting close to the street, because traffic engineers consider trees "obstacles" that can cause fatal car crashes.

"I put trees two feet from the street wherever I can," Lockwood says with a laugh. "Wherever codes or rules get in our way, we change them." The city's codes, for example, barred placing sidewalk cafes next to the street. So "we just changed the rules," Lockwood says. "And we're going to keep changing the rules until we get

the city we want."

Advocates for more walkable cities have long argued that federal spending is unfairly tilted toward automobile traffic. Mass transit should be a crucial component of transportation planning, notes Jeffrey Blum, transportation policy director of Citizen Action, because "You can't have a walkable city without a good transit system to get in and out."

Currently, Blumenauer says, the federal government's contributions to local transportation projects are not based on what reduces pollution or congestion. "If the federal government pays for 80 percent of a road and only half of a transit system, it biases you toward cars," he says.

Blumenauer notes that the U.S. Tax Code allows him to give his employees tax-free parking privileges, but if he subsidizes a bus or rail pass it's taxable. Blumenauer has introduced legislation in Congress that would give equal treatment to people who drive and use mass transit.

Much of the fight over more funding for walking, cycling and mass transit will focus this year on the multibillion-dollar federal bill that funds the nation's highways — the reauthorization of the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, better known as ISTEA.¹⁵

Pedestrian advocates note that only about 1 percent of federal highway safety funds under ISTEA are spent on pedestrian safety, although pedestrians account for about 14 percent of motor vehicle-related deaths. The Surface Transportation Policy Project is pushing for more spending on measures such as traffic-calming islands, traffic circles and street narrowing. But highway users are fighting such moves.

"We're concerned that too much highway money is being won by non-highway interests," says Bill Jackman, a spokesman for AAA, which is fighting the diversion of funds from highway

construction. "The highways and bridges are going down the tubes." AAA Potomac spokesman Lon Anderson blames the increasingly aggressive driving on the congestion in a transportation system "strained to its limits."

"Are they saying we should have not 40,000 miles of Interstate but 300,000?" Blum asks. "In many places, you could argue that you could not put in enough lanes to accommodate all the cars. There isn't enough land to do it." In many cities, he notes, 50 percent of the land area is already given over to the needs of autos, including roads, garages and gas stations.

"If there were no mass transit system in Philadelphia," he says, "you'd have to pave over all of downtown to get everyone into the city." ■

BACKGROUND

Societal Stress

Driving has been associated with aggression at least since chariots raced around the Circus Maximus in ancient Rome amid cheers of spectators. In the modern era, Madison Avenue and car manufacturers have appropriated images of aggressive animals and weapons in marketing cars with names like Jaguar, Wildcat, Charger, Cutlass and Challenger. "Ritualized dueling" has also become embedded in auto culture through hot-rod racing and freeway passing, observes Raymond W. Novaco, a psychologist at the University of California-Irvine, who studies the psychological and physiological effects of traffic stress.¹⁶

The phenomenon of highway violence gained media attention in recent years during a series of shootings

Continued on p. 662

Chronology

1890s *The first traffic accidents are reported.*

May 30, 1896

The first known U.S. auto accident occurs in New York City when a man driving a Duryea Motor Wagon collides with a bicycle rider, whose leg is fractured.

Sept. 13, 1899

New York real estate broker Henry H. Bliss, 68, becomes the nation's first recorded automobile fatality when he is run over by a car while alighting from a trolley.

1900s *Federal government begins coordinating state and local road-building.*

1914

The American Association of State Highway Officials sets highway standards that will determine the fast-moving, car-friendly nature of most American roads for years to come.

1916

President Woodrow Wilson signs the Federal Aid Highway Act, requiring states to match federal highway funds, thus beginning the expansion of the national road network.

1920s-1930s

Zoning laws and New Deal programs help to create the auto suburb, in which residents must drive to accomplish most errands.

1926

Zoning in Cleveland is ruled constitutional by the Supreme Court in *Euclid v. Ambler*.

1933

New Dealers initiate the Home Owners Loan Corporation to refinance foreclosed mortgages and guarantee mortgages, stoking suburban home sales.

1934

The Roosevelt administration admits urban routes to the federal highway program, providing free federal funds for roads while trains receive only loans.

1940s-1960s

The postwar boom in suburban development and massive roadbuilding projects help to cement Americans' dependence on the car.

1947

The first postwar Levittown rises on Long Island, setting the model for car-based suburbs.

1956

The federal Interstate Highway System funded by gas tax receipts is established.

1968

The student revolution in Europe spurs a revolution against the growing dominance of the automobile in Holland, as architecture students place benches and other roadblocks in the streets to slow traffic down. The movement gives rise to "traffic-calming" measures in Europe in the 1970s.

1980s *Violence erupts around the country as drivers dispute road privileges.*

1982

A wave of freeway shootings erupts in Houston, resulting in 12 traffic-related homicides.

1987

Approximately 70 shootings and one stabbing are reported over the summer on Southern California roads. In the fall, another outbreak follows in St. Louis with 22 confirmed shootings.

1989

Media reports of California road violence diminish, but state police statistics show violent incidents actually rose.

1990s *The traffic engineering profession and a growing number of cities investigate traffic-calming. Police in several states start crackdowns on aggressive drivers.*

Memorial Day Weekend 1995

Maryland State Police initiate an enforcement campaign against aggressive drivers.

1997

A committee of the Institute of Transportation Engineers recommends new residential street standards in keeping with traditional walkable neighborhoods; on July 17, a House Transportation subcommittee holds hearings on aggressive driving.

How Holland Calmed Things Down

While the automobile conquered America over the course of several decades, the same transformation occurred so quickly in Holland that it sparked a revolt overnight.

Between 1960 and 1970, the use of cars in Holland increased dramatically. The revolt started in Delft in the late 1960s when residents, fed up with cars speeding through their neighborhoods, tore up the brick pavement one night so that cars were forced to travel in a serpentine pattern at greatly reduced speeds. Architecture students, influenced by the 1968 student revolts sweeping Europe, placed benches and trees in the middle of the streets to slow cars down.

"Everybody remembered our children were playing here five years ago, and now it's dangerous," recalls Boudewijn Bach, a professor in the architecture department at the Technical University of Delft and one of the nation's leading experts on the Dutch invention known as traffic-calming. "People said, 'We want our streets back.'"

Out of this movement arose the neighborhood concept known as the *woonerf*, which means "living yard" or "residential yard." The *woonerf* is a residential neighborhood protected from trucks and other through-traffic with speed humps and signs indicating the entrances and exits to the area. Instead of segregating pedestrians from cars with curbs, the *woonerf* integrates all types of traffic on the road surface but gives pedestrians priority over cars. It uses visual clues such as different kinds of pavement to indicate where cars may be parked.

Trees, play equipment, speed-reduction bumps and bends in the roadway all conspire in a *woonerf* to force cars to reduce their speeds to 12 mph — about the same pace as walking a horse or riding a bicycle, according to Bach. Accidents have been reduced in the *woonerf* by about 50 percent. In addition, the severity of injuries has also declined because of the slow speeds.¹

By 1980, some 260 towns in Holland had some version of a *woonerf*. The *woonerf* concept was adapted by German planners and called "traffic tranquilization," from which the English term "traffic calming" was derived. The first traffic-calming projects began in Germany in 1976, and by the end of the decade it was a widely accepted policy. Traffic calming spread quickly through Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. More recently, it has been introduced into some cities in Canada and the U.S.

The weakening Dutch economy in the late 1970s made the *woonerf* — with its custom paving and many traffic obstacles — too expensive for most cities. Since then, towns have adopted a modified version for residential areas, known as a 30 kmh zone, where cars travel about 20 mph.

In both kinds of areas, the visual cues are such that the driver does not become aggressive, says Bach. "You must show the driver how he has to behave," he says, and the message is, "You are just a guest here." In addition, obstacles in the road translate as dangerous to the car, Bach says, and make the driver more alert for children and other human activity.

In the small university town of Delft, traffic has been slowed to such a degree through traffic calming that it takes as long to complete a typical trip by car as by bike. Bikes are used in about 40 percent of local trips, according to Bach.

After decades of experimentation, Bach has decided that some of the devices most commonly used in the U.S. to slow drivers don't work. Stop signs just cause drivers to speed up excessively between signs to make up the time they think they've lost, creating more pollution and noise as they accelerate. He prefers roundabouts, or traffic circles, which force drivers to slow down gradually as they maneuver around them. He also dislikes sharp speedbumps, which are uncomfortable for bikes as well as cars to cross. He prefers raised plateau-style intersections the width of a crosswalk, which slow drivers down gradually and more comfortably, as well as providing protection for pedestrians.

Bach sees a new danger on the horizon. Now that Dutch traffic engineers have finally learned to design slow-moving streets, architects and urban planners are caught up in a new fashion for wide streets and long vistas. Those kinds of designs speed up cars, Bach says. Ironically, he notes, Dutch and German traffic engineers, who were once blamed for designing fast-moving streets, have become so indoctrinated into the traffic-calming philosophy that they are the ones putting the brakes on today.

¹For a history of traffic calming, see Route 50 Corridor Coalition, *A Traffic Calming Plan for Virginia's Rural Route 50 Corridor*, 1996, pp. 23-24.

on Southern California freeways in the summer of 1987, when newspapers reported approximately 70 shootings and one stabbing.

Many people assumed the incidents were spurred at least in part by

frustration over growing traffic congestion, particularly at rush hour. In fact, Novaco found that the incidents were distributed over all times of day. Most of the incidents involved a conflict over road privilege.

While some people involved in the shootings had histories of violence that could have broken out in any setting, Novaco has suggested that "some of the shootings might have involved ordinary people un-

dergoing periods of stress who lost control of their impulses.”¹⁷

As an example, he cites the 1987 case of former Wall Street investment banker Arthur K. Salomon, who shot and wounded an unarmed college student on a parkway just north of Manhattan. The conflict began over who had the right to pass and escalated to verbal exchanges when both pulled over to the side of the road. It ended with Salomon shooting the young man as he was starting to walk back to his car, saying he had the license number of Salomon’s Mercedes. Salomon, a grandson of one of the founders of Salomon Brothers, pleaded guilty to first-degree assault and was sentenced to 18 months in prison.

Taking Competitiveness on the Road

Psychiatrist John A. Larson, director of the Institute of Stress Medicine in Norwalk, Conn., and author of *Steering Clear of Highway Madness*, believes many incidents of highway anger can be traced to the competitiveness that high-powered professionals carry over from work to the highway.¹⁸ Larson, who conducts seminars on how to control aggressive driving, first started working with heart attack patients whose competitiveness on the highway was one element of stress leading to heart attacks.

“If the prevailing value system and mood of the driver is to win and get there the fastest, that’s going to create a situation where he’s vulnerable to circumstances where he’s going to explode,” Larson says. “It’s one way of understanding why very affluent people do this.”

He adds, “I think one of the things going on in our culture is that these values [of competition] have gained an ascendancy and created a great emphasis on the bottom line — as opposed to personal relationships. The result is that people driving lose

their people skills.”

A popular misconception after the rash of California shootings in 1987 was that it was a one-time phenomenon, since news reporting of the incidents subsided soon afterwards. According to the California Highway Patrol, however, freeway violence actually increased from 1988 to 1989, though media coverage declined.

Even before the California incidents, a wave of freeway shootings had occurred in Houston in 1982, resulting in 12 homicides. In the year following the violent summer of 1987, there were similar outbreaks in St. Louis and Detroit.

Lowered Inhibitions

Novaco suggests that the anonymity and escape potential of wide-open freeways helps to lower motorists’ inhibitions against behaving aggressively. In addition, his research has found that continued exposure to traffic congestion elevates blood pressure, increases negative moods, lowers tolerance for frustration and can lead to more impatient driving habits. His studies have found the most stress among women solo drivers with long commutes — possibly because of the overload of demands from both home and work.

In her 1989 book *Anger: The Misunderstood Emotion*, social psychologist Carol Tavris points to involuntary crowding and the anonymity of the car as elements contributing to “traffic anger.”

“The car is the best possible example of an environment where it’s typically safe to express anger,” she says. “You can yell and shout; no one will yell back at you, and maybe they’ll get out of your way.” That may explain why soccer moms seem just as likely to yell obscenities and

make angry gestures as toughened taxi drivers, she says.

The growing popularity of sport utility vehicles like Suburbans and Jeep-style cars, many marketed to women, only adds to the sense of dominance and the freedom to act angry, she suggests. “I think these are bullying cars, and that’s what’s expected of them. Women are attracted to them because it is a feeling of power to be above everybody else. People become more invisible to you than if you’re in another little car.”

Psychologists also point out that the car is a highly personal territorial space. That may explain why owners of new cars often become enraged by the slightest bump or marring and why tempers flare in traffic jams.

“When people are crowded unwillingly, that’s stressful,” Tavris says. “So is heat, children whining in the back seat. What happens is stress hormones rise, the physical energy rises and if you add provocation you’ll feel intensely angry. Why don’t passengers in the car feel as angry as the driver? They’re not under the same stress.”

Novaco cautions that the irritability most commonly observed in commuters is quite different from the assaultive behavior seen in the highly publicized “road rage” incidents. Nevertheless, there are some interesting parallels among ordinary, irritated drivers. A study in London found that 15 percent of males and 11 percent of females stated that, “At times, I felt that I could gladly kill another driver.” In surveys including university students and other residents of Southern California, more than 40 percent of males and up to 21 percent of females admitted to chasing drivers who offended them, Novaco found.¹⁹

Aggressive driving has also been exacerbated by a clash of driving cultures as people move from different parts of the country, Tavris believes.

“I grew up in L.A. when people

were famous for their politeness," she recalls. "If someone signaled, you let them in your lane. Now freeway manners are a joke because of traffic and people coming to California with different rules. There are cultural rules about driving as there are about walking. When you move to New York, you have to walk faster. If you have an ambling pace, which you could get away with in Hawaii, you'll get clobbered."

Postwar America

America's built environment has contributed to fast, aggressive driving, particularly since World War II, city planners and engineers are concluding. In the postwar period, for example, the state highway officials association required that all street-design standards take into account the need to evacuate before a nuclear strike and to clean up demolished neighborhoods afterwards. A 1940s planning text presented a sprawling one-family housing subdivision as more desirable than a compact European city, which was described as the "best target" in case of war.²⁰

Under such circumstances, it's not surprising that new subdivisions were no longer walkable neighborhoods, observes the recent report from the Institute of Traffic Engineers proposing more pedestrian-friendly guidelines. Because of zoning legislation dating back to the 1920s, most local governments also required that residences be separated from shops and industry, which had traditionally been viewed as dirty and unhealthful. These zoning laws and the creation of suburbs eventually required most residents to drive virtually everywhere for their daily needs.

America's aging population, how-

ever, means more people today need to live in a place where they can walk to shops, doctors and other needs. In cities built around the car, elderly walkers are often the most vulnerable targets for aggressive drivers. While senior citizens made up only 13 percent of the population in 1990, they accounted for 23 percent of pedestrian fatalities. ■

CURRENT SITUATION

Traffic Calming

A new way of thinking about designing roads is starting to invade the traffic engineering establishment. This month the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) plans to issue a report urging states to consider local citizens' concerns about issues like aesthetics and historic preservation. The report "highlights the flexibility that exists" in policies governing the design of state roads, which permits divergence from national design standards, says Harold Peaks, leader of the FHWA group that is producing the report.²¹

At the Institute of Transportation Engineers' last convention, the session on "traffic calming" drew some 500 people, reflecting the burgeoning interest in the field.

"I would say just about every community in the U.S. is starting to look into traffic calming," Lockwood says. But, he adds, "It's going to take a major paradigm shift in thinking in the transportation world. All our legislation and guidelines and standards are rooted in concepts that were born in the golden age of the automobile."

Seattle is one of the cities most often cited for embracing traffic-calming measures. Small traffic circles placed in the middle of neighborhood intersections, sometimes adorned with small gardens, have been the single most effective and popular method for traffic calming, according to city Transportation Department planner Stuart Goldsmith.

"It cuts down accidents up to 90 percent because the traffic has to slow down and bear right," he says. The city has also added curves to existing streets to slow down traffic. On some four-lane streets, the number of lanes is reduced to three to provide more room for bicycles.

Goldsmith attributes the relative lack of controversy over these measures to Seattle's environmental ethic, its large number of bicycle riders and a responsive political system.

"We don't want to turn Seattle into a suburb where the streets are filled with cars, and there are no sidewalks," he says. "Here, a lot of engineers have become sensitive to these issues."

New Police Tactics

Several police departments around the country are experimenting with new approaches to combating aggressive driving. In Maryland later this summer, state police plan to test a combination digital imaging camera and laser clocking gun that locks in the speed of the car while taking a photo of the car. The device is designed to be used in an unmarked car that could be sitting on a highway ramp so that police vehicles don't create backups or try to stop people in dangerous situations. Traffic tickets are mailed to the driver, along with the photo.

In "Smooth Operator," an aware-

Continued on p. 666

At Issue:

Is aggressive driving a major safety problem?

AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION, POTOMAC CHAPTER
Press release, April 1997

area drivers have proclaimed aggressive driving Public Enemy No. 1 for the second year running when it comes to road safety, based upon results of AAA Potomac's 1997 Transportation Poll. Further, nearly 90 percent of motorists surveyed reported that they feel aggressive driving is on the rise on Washington roads. . . .

Forty-four percent of the motorists responding called aggressive driving their top concern, outranking drunken driving (31 percent). Forty-eight percent of the motorists in the District of Columbia and 46 percent in Virginia cite aggressive driving as more troubling than the regional average, 44 percent, with Maryland slightly less (42 percent), the study shows. . . .

In fact, nine out of 10 local motorists report witnessing aggressive driving in the last year. Perhaps even more remarkable, eight out of 10 witnessed aggressive driving within the last month.

Nearly two out of three Northern Virginians admitted to being aggressive drivers last year, while nationwide 56 percent confessed to aggressive driving. The majority of regional drivers said they engaged in speeding (65 percent), while others reported gesturing (8 percent), slowing down and speeding up to get even with another driver (6 percent) and tailgating (6 percent). In the District, 15 percent — nearly double the regional average — reported “gesturing and exchanging unpleasantries with another driver.”

When queried about reasons for being aggressive drivers, approximately 60 percent of responses could be categorized as congestion-provoked, which is not surprising, given our area's congestion — the second worst in the nation. . . .

Those who displayed aggressive driving behavior pointed to running late for appointments (33 percent) and frustration over slow or congested traffic (27 percent) as primary irritants. These findings further illustrate the region's need for increased capacity to ease congestion and frustration on our roads. . . .

Based upon AAA Potomac's poll findings, Smooth Operator, the regional initiative launched recently to combat aggressive driving by increasing high-visibility police enforcement and motorist education, appears to be on target.* Regionally, 60 percent of respondents indicated that more police patrols and driver education would be the best deterrent to aggressive driving. Another segment of the motorists polled (28 percent) called for larger fines and penalties to solve the problem.

* Smooth Operator involves the Maryland and Virginia state police, the Metropolitan Police Department, the U.S. Park Police and several county and local jurisdictions.

THE MONTGOMERY JOURNAL
(MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD.)
Editorial, May 2, 1997

it's time to inject some much-needed perspective into the topic of “aggressive driving” on the Washington area's congested highways. The need for some rationality here was highlighted yesterday by the release of the latest American Automobile Association survey on the subject.

Or, rather, we should say the apocalyptic rhetorical atmosphere created by the AAA in discussing the results of its survey and the confusion that is evident in those results.

“Aggressive driving continues to strike fear in motorists, invading their lives and endangering their safety,” said AAA's Lon Anderson, who went on to describe the “death grip” the phenomenon has on area drivers.

Indeed, according to Anderson, aggressive driving has become so prevalent that it has reached “epidemic proportions” because eight out of 10 drivers surveyed claimed to have seen examples of aggressive driving in the last month, and more than half “confessed their aggressive driving sins.”

In view of such hyperbole, perhaps it is not surprising that for the second year in a row, the AAA survey found motorists ranking aggressive driving ahead of drunken driving as their top fear on the road, this time by a margin of 44 percent to 31 percent.

At the least, that perception is puzzling in view of the fact that nearly half of the 41,000-plus highway fatalities in this country in 1995 . . . involved booze.

Let's not lose sight of the fact that getting drunken drivers off the road should be the No. 1 traffic safety priority of area law enforcement.

It also must be asked, in view of the overwhelming number of respondents “confessing” to sometimes being guilty of aggressive driving, if there is so broad a definition of the phenomenon as to be practically meaningless.

In an interview with *The Journal*, Anderson explained the way his surveyors tried to account for such a possibility, including qualifying the question as one inquiring about “outrageous” examples of aggressive driving.

Still, there is great danger in the broad-brush portrait that seems to be emerging in the aggressive driving dialogue. The danger is that law enforcement against concrete killers like drunken driving will suffer in a politically correct campaign against folks who are simply in a hurry and manage to offend a left-lane dawdler. . . .

Now, AAA reports it is urging police to crack down on the dawdlers... Left-lane blocking is likely the least policed traffic hazard, so it is good to hear AAA is bringing to bear its immense influence on this aspect of improving driving safety. It can't happen too soon.

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ness-building program initiated this spring by state and local police in Washington, Maryland and Virginia, patrol officers targeted drivers who committed two or more offenses often associated with aggressive driving — including speeding, tailgating, shoulder-running, failing to obey traffic signals, changing lanes improperly and driving while intoxicated.²²

In New York state, police are launching a pilot program this summer using helicopter surveillance and unmarked cars to find aggressive drivers. In Arizona, the use of unmarked cars to catch aggressive drivers on Phoenix and Tucson highways has been expanded to downtown Phoenix.

Concern About Higher Speed Limits

The speed limit on highways outside Arizona metropolitan areas is now 75 mph, and police routinely clock speeds over 100, according to Alberto Gutier, director of the Governor's Office of Community and Highway Safety. Some local streets in sprawling Phoenix "may not have a light for three or four miles," he says, "and people may do 70 in a 40 mph zone."

The parade of states raising speed limits since Congress lifted the federal maximum in 1995 is a major cause of dangerous driving, says Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, a coalition of insurance, consumer and health groups. "We think most aggressive drivers are speeding drivers," says spokeswoman Cathy Hickey. Thirty-four states have raised speed limits on rural Interstate highways, 24 of them to 70 mph or above.*

According to the highway safety coalition, 10 of the 34 states that in-

creased speed limits on their highways experienced an increase in fatalities of 5 percent or more in 1996; five of those states had an increase of between 14 percent and 18 percent.

The coalition argues that raising the speed limit sends motorists the wrong signal — that it's safe to speed. Further, it says, police forces are inadequate to the task of enforcement. According to a recent Harris Poll conducted for the organization, 64 percent of those polled are "concerned that higher speed limits will contribute to even more aggressive driving."²³

Laser Cameras and Other New Technologies

The coalition is pushing Congress to dedicate a half-cent per gallon from the federal gasoline tax for safety programs, including funds to help police combat aggressive driving. It supports using cameras and other new technologies in jurisdictions where patrol cars cannot keep up with the growing number of speeders and other violators.

Maryland and Colorado have passed legislation to allow cameras at intersections to catch motorists running red lights. Red-light cameras also are used in localities in California, Arizona, Michigan, New York and Virginia. The cameras take a photo of the car with its license plate, and the motorist is usually ticketed by mail. Adoption has been stymied in some states by concerns about violations of privacy.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety strongly backs automated enforcement techniques like red-light cameras, arguing they permit better enforcement in high-density situations where it is difficult for an officer to catch a red-light runner without endangering other drivers.

"Ninety-seven percent of the people who get tickets pay for them," says Julie A. Rochman, a spokeswoman for the institute. "It's hard to argue when you get a shot of your car in the mail." ■

OUTLOOK

Legislative Initiatives

Legislation to crack down on aggressive driving was introduced in both the Maryland and Virginia legislatures last session. Though none of the bills saw action, state legislators are working on new proposals for next session.

In Maryland, legislators have been revising a proposal to increase the penalties for a driver who commits three violations — such as speeding, following too closely and changing lanes unsafely — during a single incident. In Virginia, a proposal last session would have created a new "aggressive driving" charge carrying up to a year in jail for a driver brandishing a firearm or operating a motor vehicle in a threatening manner or with intent to hurt another person. Republican Virginia House Del. Joe May, who introduced the bill, plans to reintroduce a new version of the proposal next session. The Virginia Department of Transportation adopted another May proposal last session, adding instruction on curbing aggressive driving to its remedial driving course for repeat violators.

Rep. Blumenauer argues that the best way to control dangerous drivers is by taking their cars. He has introduced legislation in Congress to use existing federal anti-drunken-driving grant money to encourage states to adopt auto forfeiture for drunken drivers. In Portland, Ore., which has such a program, drunken-driving deaths have dropped steeply — 42 percent between 1994 and 1995.

"This is a very direct way to disarm the dangerous or reckless driver," Blumenauer says. "But it has not been used the way I would like for the per-

* In 1987, Congress amended the National Maximum Speed Limit law to permit states to increase the maximum speed limit on rural Interstate highways to 65 mph. In 1995, Congress enacted the National Highway System Act, repealing the national maximum speed limit.

sistent dangerous driver who drives without a license.”

The University of Michigan's Waller notes that while law enforcement has focused on bad drivers — most effectively those who drink and drive — it has been less successful in motivating people to become good, courteous drivers.

“I feel we've missed the boat on preparing young drivers,” she says, arguing that most young drivers get their license before they've had sufficient experience on the road. “You don't give a kid 30 hours of piano lessons and tell him to go play in Carnegie Hall.” She favors the approach adopted by Michigan and other states known as “graduated licensing,” in which teenagers must log a minimum number of road hours with a supervising adult before receiving full license privileges.

State troopers say they're also dismayed by the apparent ignorance of drivers — and not just teenagers. “Some of the rules of the road are being lost over time,” observes Sgt. McDonnell. “People are learning to drive by being thrown into the jungle rather than being taught how to do this safely.”

How should the nation deal with aggressive drivers? There are two basic approaches — train and discipline drivers better or design roads to force them to drive less aggressively.

Increasingly, activists say, both approaches must be pursued. Police can't write enough tickets to control aggressive drivers, Blumenauer argues, so it also makes sense to re-engineer the streets to encourage people to drive more slowly.

Together, he says, toughened enforcement and calmed streets reinforce the philosophy “that the car is part of the transportation system that serves people, not that we all adjust our lives to serve the car.” ■

Sarah Glazer is a freelance writer in New York who specializes in health and social policy issues.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, 1440 New York Ave., N.W., Suite 201, Washington, D.C. 20005; (202) 638-5944. The research arm of the American Automobile Association (AAA) has issued reports on aggressive driving.

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, 750 1st Street, N.E., Suite 901, Washington, D.C. 20002; (202) 408-1711. This organization representing consumers and insurance companies tracks state laws related to highway safety and is lobbying for increased federal funding of enforcement programs aimed at aggressive drivers.

Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 1005 N. Glebe Rd., Arlington, Va. 22201-4751; (703) 247-1500. The institute conducts research and provides data on highway safety and seeks to reduce losses from crashes.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Office of Public and Consumer Affairs, 400 7th St., S.W., Room 5232, Washington, D.C. 20590; (202) 366-9550. This branch of the federal Department of Transportation tracks highway safety statistics.

Surface Transportation Policy Project, 1100 17th St., N.W., 10th Floor, Washington, D.C. 20036; (202) 466-2636. This coalition of some 175 environmental and community groups advocates transportation policies like traffic-calming that benefit pedestrians and cyclists.

Notes

¹ *Mean Streets: Pedestrian Safety and Reform of the Nation's Transportation Law*, the Surface Transportation Project and the Environmental Working Group, 1997.

² See “Traffic Congestion,” *The CQ Researcher*, May 6, 1994, pp. 385-408.

³ See “Highway Safety,” *The CQ Researcher*, July 14, 1995, pp. 609-632.

⁴ See “Transportation Policy,” *The CQ Researcher*, July 4, 1997, pp. 577-600.

⁵ “Aggressive Driving Continues to Plague Area Motorists,” *AAA Potomac News*, May 1, 1997.

⁶ Louis Mizell, “Aggressive Driving,” in *Aggressive Driving: Three Studies*, AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, March 1997.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁸ The study drew on reports from 30 newspapers, 16 police departments and insurance company claims. The number of fatalities rose from 41,798 in 1995 to 41,907 in 1996. It was the fourth year in a row there has been an increase, but the fatality rate remained stable during the four-year period at 1.7 per hundred million vehicle miles.

⁹ Richard A. Retting, “Urban Motor Vehicle Crashes and Potential Countermeasures,” *Transportation Quarterly*, summer 1996.

¹⁰ See the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety Web site at www.hwysafety.org, “Q&A: Red Light Cameras.”

¹¹ DiGiuseppi C. Roberts, “Influence of Changing Travel Patterns on Child Death Rates from Injury Trend Analysis,” *British Medical Journal*, March 8, 1997, pp. 710-713.

¹² Eric Peters, “Beware traffic violation creep,” *The Washington Times*, April 29, 1997, p. A19.

¹³ John A. Larson, *Steering Clear of Highway Madness* (1996), p. 76.

¹⁴ American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, *AASHTO Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets* (1990).

¹⁵ “Transportation Policy,” *op. cit.*

¹⁶ Raymond W. Novaco, “Automobile Driving and Aggressive Behavior,” in Martin Wachs and Margaret Crawford, eds, *The Car and The City* (1992), pp. 234-320.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

¹⁸ Novaco, *op. cit.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 245-246.

²⁰ Institute of Transportation Engineers, *Traditional Neighborhood Development Street Design Guidelines* (June 1997), p. 4.

²¹ *Flexibility in Highway Design*, Federal Highway Administration, in press.

²² Eric Lipton et al., “Area Police Team Up for Safer Roads,” *The Washington Post*, March 23, 1997.

²³ Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, *The Highway Safety Deficit: Who Pays and Who Delays?*, May 6, 1997.

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Selected Sources Used

Books

Kay, Jane Holtz, *Asphalt Nation: How the Automobile Took Over America and How We Can Take It Back*, Random House, 1997.

This impassioned book by the architecture and planning critic for *The Nation* magazine chronicles how federal subsidies reshaped the country into its current auto gridlock. Kay discusses solutions, including traffic calming, to create more humane neighborhoods.

Larson, John A., *Steering Clear of Highway Madness: A Driver's Guide to Curbing Stress and Strain*, BookPartners, 1996.

Psychiatrist Larson advises drivers on how to avoid the frustration and anger that often lead to dangerous confrontations and collisions on the road.

Tavris, Carol, *Anger: The Misunderstood Emotion*, Touchstone, 1989.

In this book arguing against the notion that expressing anger is always best for you, social psychologist Tavris devotes a few pages to explaining the growing phenomenon of "traffic anger."

Articles

Bradsher, Keith, "Domination, Submission and the Chevy Suburban," *The New York Times* (East Coast edition), March 23, 1997, "The News of the Week in Review," p. 2.

Bradsher looks at the desire to dominate other drivers as one motive behind the growing popularity of sport utility vehicles. Collisions between sport vehicles and cars kill more Americans than collisions between cars.

Flanagan, Barbara, "The Other Palm Beach Story," *The New York Times*, p. C1.

Flanagan describes the political forces that led to the revitalization of West Palm Beach, using traffic-calming and other approaches.

Janofsky, Michael, "Answer to Gathering Stampede of Autos: Whoa!" *The New York Times*, Jan. 7, 1997, p. A10.

Janofsky describes efforts by residents in Middleburg, Va., and neighboring towns to apply traffic-calming to Route 50, a favorite commuter route to Washington, D.C.

Levine, Art, "How Angry Drivers are Putting You in Danger," *Redbook*, March, 1997, pp. 90-114.

Journalist Levine describes some of the deaths caused by aggressive driving and attempts to combat it.

Lipton, Eric et al., "Area Police Team Up for Safer Roads," *The Washington Post*, March 23, 1997, p. A1.

This article describes the launching of a new program, "Smooth Operator," in which police from Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C., are teaming up to intensify enforcement against aggressive drivers.

Perl, Peter, "The Glass and Steel Menagerie," *The Washington Post Magazine*, July 7, 1996, pp. 8-13, 21-26.

In this in-depth article, Perl asks why drivers in the capital area have such aggressive driving styles and rides with area police to see how they deal with the problem.

Vest, Jason, et al., "Road Rage," *U.S. News & World Report*, June 2, 1997, pp. 24-30.

The authors suggest that a number of trends, including growing road congestion and falling participation in driver education programs, may be contributing to the phenomenon of violence between drivers.

Reports

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, *Aggressive Driving: Three Studies* (March 1997).

This report by the AAA's research arm includes its count of violent road incidents in the United States since 1990 and two British studies examining psychological components of "road rage."

Institute of Transportation Engineers Transportation Planning Council Committee, *Traditional Neighborhood Development Street Design Guidelines* (June 1997).

A report from a committee of the professional society of traffic engineers recommends standards for streets in new residential areas designed on a traditional, walkable model.

Surface Transportation Policy Project and Environmental Working Group, *Mean Streets: Pedestrian Safety and Reform of the Nation's Transportation Law* (1997).

A coalition of environmental and walker/cycling groups issued this report highlighting the 14 percent of road fatalities each year that involve pedestrians and arguing against highway-users' efforts to reduce federal funds favoring walkers.

The Next Step

Additional information from UMI's Newspaper & Periodical Abstracts™ database

Aggressive Driving

Beamon, Todd, "Cabdrivers Face Off in Traffic Dispute; One Person Injured, Car Windows Shattered After Two Men Pick Up Tire Irons," *The Washington Post*, May 23, 1997, p. D1.

A late-morning incident at Scott Circle on Rhode Island Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C., occurred three weeks into a five-month crackdown on aggressive driving by 16 area law enforcement agencies. Police said yesterday's fight began when the driver of one cab cut in front of another, and ended after both men smashed each other's windows with tire irons.

Finn, Peter, and Mike Allen, "Driven to Become Road Warriors: Specialists Study Behavior; Police Plan to Alter It," *The Washington Post*, March 31, 1997, p. B1.

Police say aggressive driving is the drunken driving of the '90s — a common yet deadly phenomenon that can be tamed through unflinching enforcement and focused public attention. Among those who have studied aggressive driving, some believe that like alcoholism it may actually be a sickness.

Johnson, Kevin V., "An 'epidemic' of aggressive driving; Angry motorists, not drunks, now top list of commuters concerns," *USA Today*, May 6, 1997, p. D8.

A new poll by the Potomac chapter of the Automobile Association of America (AAA), serving the Washington, D.C., area, says that 44 percent of area drivers think aggressive driving is the biggest threat to highway safety. Respondents said they were more worried about aggressive driving than about drunken driving. And over half confessed to having been aggressive drivers themselves in the last year.

Masters, Brooke A., "Virginia Driver's Violent Confrontation Leads to 60-Day Jail Sentence," *The Washington Post*, June 4, 1997, p. B1.

When James Drake thought he'd been cut off while driving to work early one morning, he didn't just give the other driver an angry look. Drake, an accountant, followed Veronica Reinhardt into the parking garage at her Reston, Va., workplace, cutting her off several times on the way, and charged out of his pickup truck, according to court documents. Yelling obscenities, Drake beat on the roof and windows of Reinhardt's Honda Accord, tried to pull the door open and kicked it so hard that he did \$479 worth of damage, the documents say. Yesterday, U.S. Magistrate Judge Theresa C. Buchanan cracked down on Drake's aggressive driving, sentencing him to 60 days in jail and ordering him to pay a \$2,500 fine and \$601 in restitution.

Smith, Leef, "Aggressive Driving Blamed in Crash That Killed Two in Prince William," *The Washington Post*, Feb. 27, 1997, p. D4.

An aggressive driver bent on passing cars on a two-lane stretch of Route 28 in Virginia's Prince William County crossed a double yellow line and caused a crash that killed two motorists, police said. A Buick driver, trying to avoid a collision, steered his car onto the shoulder of the road and then overcompensated when he steered back onto the road. The Buick crossed over the center line and struck a Nissan Sentra, killing a passenger in the Buick and the driver of the Nissan. The sedan driver fled, police said.

Wee, Eric L., "Targeting Aggressive Drivers: Pursuing Cases Requires Painstaking Police Work," *The Washington Post*, Feb. 20, 1997, Sec. VAL, p. 1.

The Prince William County attorney's office recently dropped reckless driving charges against Robert Finck, who was involved in a November accident on Interstate 95 that severely injured his 3-year-old daughter, Brenna. Prosecutors said they have found no witnesses to the accident, and other evidence supports Finck's contention that he was the injured party in the confrontation. Prosecutors said they are moving forward with charges against the other driver involved in the accident.

Yant, Abbie, "Seeing red? Think ahead," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 15, 1997, p. A19.

Yant comments on aggressive driving symptoms and consequences, focusing on the problems of running red lights.

Pedestrian Safety

Arnold, David, "Law a step behind jaywalkers," *The Boston Globe*, Feb. 15, 1996, p. 37.

As part of his "pedestrian safety initiative," Democratic Boston Mayor Thomas Menino vowed to enforce the state law that prohibits jaywalking. His intention, he said, was to curb pedestrian fatalities in the city.

Crenshaw, Holly, "Pedestrian safety changes made at Highland-Ponce," *Atlanta Constitution*, Feb. 20, 1997, Sec. XJN, p. 3.

Neighborhood residents say that new safety precautions at Ponce de Leon and North Highland avenues in Atlanta, Ga., should make the area less dangerous for pedestrians but are still urging drivers to exercise caution there. The changes came after two pedestrians were struck by cars while crossing Ponce de Leon last fall, prompting residents of the nine-story Briarcliff Summit apartment building — home to 201 elderly tenants, some of whom are disabled — to seek help in making the area

safer. Miriam M. Parker, a 73-year-old resident, wrote to city officials on behalf of the Briarcliff's tenants, who often cross Ponce de Leon to shop at the drugstore, grocery store and other businesses facing their building.

"Pedestrians at Risk, New Study Warns," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 9, 1997, p. A8.

"Pedestrian safety is an unacknowledged public health problem," said Hank Dittmar, executive director of the Surface Transportation Policy Project, the highway safety advocacy group that produced a study on pedestrian safety with the Environmental Working Group.

Reid, S. A. "Group to make streets safer for pedestrians," *Atlanta Constitution*, June 5, 1997, Sec. XJA, p. 8.

Pedestrian safety has moved up a notch on the city's priority list with the formation of a new task force aimed at making Atlanta, Ga., a less dangerous place to enjoy the world's oldest mode of transportation — walking. The Pedestrian Rights Task Force hopes to do that by promoting a multifaceted approach that members call the four "E's" — education, enforcement, engineering and encouragement. The group, made up of pedestrian activists and city officials, got its start in May with the help of Marvin Arrington, mayoral candidate and City Council president.

Vartabedian, Ralph, "Being a Pedestrian Is Risky Business," *Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 1997, p. E1.

Every year, approximately 900 California pedestrians are killed and more than 18,000 others sustain injuries, according to a new nationwide study on pedestrian deaths. While pedestrian deaths account for 19 percent of all motor vehicle deaths in the state, just 0.7 percent of federal highway spending related to safety in the state was allocated to pedestrian projects. The report, by a large coalition of environmental groups and organized under the Environmental Working Group and Surface Transportation Policy Project, demands a substantial reallocation of spending to improve pedestrian safety.

Police Response

Lipton, Eric, and Patricia Davis, "Area Police Team Up for Safer Roads; Aggressive Drivers Lead Agencies to Break Jurisdictional Barriers," *The Washington Post*, March 23, 1997, p. A1.

Police agencies in Virginia, Maryland and the District are planning to join forces next month for the first coordinated crackdown on aggressive driving in the Washington area, officials said yesterday. The campaign includes the D.C. police department and the Maryland and Virginia state police, as well as several suburban departments.

Masters, Brooke A., "U.S. Authorities to Crack Down on Bad GW Parkway Drivers," *The Washington Post*, March 28, 1997, p. A13.

Dangerous drivers on the George Washington Memorial

Parkway are facing faster prosecution and maybe higher fines under new plans developed by the U.S. Park Police and federal prosecutors. In the near future, motorists charged with drunken or reckless driving will be required to appear in court within a week, rather than waiting six weeks, prosecutors said. That will put offenders under a judge's supervision sooner and mean swifter trials and punishment.

Montgomery, David, "Speeding Toward Action; Md. Legislators Push Unusual Number of Bills Aimed at Increasing Road Safety," *The Washington Post*, March 6, 1997, p. D1.

Amid growing concern about aggressive driving and abundant evidence that many drivers consider stopping at red lights optional, lawmakers are pushing through bills aimed at increasing safety. The chief sponsors of key measures are senators and delegates from the car-clogged Washington suburbs, who say their constituents are demanding action.

Smith, Leef, and Alice Reid, "For Road Warriors, a Sign to Stop; Regional Reckless-Driving Crackdown Finds Aggressive Behavior is the Norm," *The Washington Post*, May 2, 1997, p. B1.

Virginia State Trooper A. Todd Gillis roamed the Capital Beltway in an unmarked cruiser yesterday, looking for people who were driving too aggressively. He found so many that his only problem was deciding which cars to pull over. Gillis ticketed five motorists during the two hours that a reporter rode with him. But the trooper pointed to more than a dozen drivers he could have stopped if he hadn't been busy writing those citations. Gillis, 34, is part of an unprecedented crackdown on aggressive and reckless drivers that was launched this week by Washington-area police. Police departments across the region have dedicated dozens of officers to the effort, which is dubbed "Smooth Operator."

Valentine, Paul W., "Thousands Cited in Aggressive-Driving Crackdown," *The Washington Post*, May 17, 1997, p. C3.

Washington area police said yesterday that they had ticketed almost 12,000 motorists in the first week of a joint crackdown on aggressive drivers who tailgate, run red lights and weave through high-speed traffic. The joint 16-police agency crackdown, called "Smooth Operator," has deployed scores of officers and is one of the first in the nation to target aggressive drivers exclusively.

Vartabedian, Ralph, "The Real Capital of Perilous Driving," *Los Angeles Times*, May 27, 1997, p. E1.

The trend toward aggressive driving has become so alarming that the Clinton administration this month unveiled a \$100,000 effort, called "Smooth Operator," to combat the bad habits of drivers in Washington, D.C. As an added measure, the safety administration has launched a study to try to understand what causes aggressive

driving, which is also popping up in less virulent forms in other regions.

Public Response

Cantor, George, "Some drivers too cruel to be kind," *Detroit News*, March 15, 1997, p. C7.

Cantor discusses aggressive driving in his neighborhood and questions why police have failed to put an end to it.

Monroe, Doug, "Readers lament highway recklessness and the lack of law enforcement," *Atlanta Constitution*, Oct. 7, 1996, p. B2.

Monroe discusses readers' views on several Atlanta-area transportation topics, including concern over reckless driving, lack of law enforcement and irresponsible truck drivers on local highways.

"Montanans talk about speed," *Car & Driver*, June 1997, p. 122.

Montanans Karen Conger, Les Kellem and Alex Ferguson share their views of Montana's "reasonable-and-prudent" daytime speed limit law. Most citizens like the law, but some worry about the speeds drivers are hitting.

Reckless Driving

Boyd, Richard, "120 mph chase dead-ends with multiple charges," *Times-Picayune*, Nov. 27, 1996, p. B4.

A Slidell, La., area man arrested after leading authorities on a car chase said he was "just showing off" and did not see the flashing lights of law enforcement vehicles. Jason Shields was booked on Nov. 22, 1996, with attempted murder of a police officer, resisting arrest by flight, reckless driving, improper lane use, running a red light, running a stop sign and disregarding a police signal.

Warren, Bob, "Three Hurt in LaPlace Accident After Prom," *Times-Picayune*, April 29, 1997, Sec. BR, p. 1.

Three people in a car that was hit, a boy, 17, a girl, 16, and a 22-year-old were taken to River Parishes Hospital in LaPlace, La., where they were treated for bumps and bruises and released. The teens, students at West St. John High School, and the adult, their chaperone, were driving home after a night of prom festivities. The driver of the truck that hit them, Randall D. Legg, 36, of Sorrento, was booked with reckless driving and driving while intoxicated (DWI). When authorities asked him what caused the accident, he replied that he was "too drunk to explain," said Lt. Michael Tregre, a spokesman for the St. John the Baptist Parish Sheriff's Office.

Traffic Calming

Benning, Victoria, "On Route 50, A Move to Calm Traffic; Residents Advocate Methods to Slow Cars," *The Washington Post*, Jan. 16, 1997, Sec. VAL, p. 1.

After 15 months of study, including nearly a dozen community workshops, a group of residents from the Middleburg, Va., area have come up with a proposal they say will ease traffic problems while preserving the area's quaintness and scenic views. The citizens group — the Route 50 Corridor Coalition — has proposed using "traffic-calming" methods such as speed humps, small traffic circles, raised intersections and tree-lined median strips to discourage speeding and cut-through traffic.

Castaneda, Carol J., "Neighborhoods have ways to brake zip-through drivers," *USA Today*, May 2, 1997, p. A24.

From Sarasota, N.Y., to Seattle, Wash., cities are touting "traffic calming" as a way to end the mad rush of cars racing 40 mph and faster down residential streets. As stressed-out commuters and combative drivers roar through the neighborhoods to avoid clogged main roads, residents are taking up the fight.

Howe, Peter J., "Cambridge aims to 'calm' traffic on busy streets," *The Boston Globe*, Feb. 10, 1997, p. A15.

This spring, three projects that are part of a new movement called "traffic calming" will be introduced in Cambridge, Mass. The goal is to make neighborhoods nicer places to live and walk by building modified speed bumps and other obstructions in the street, so that motorists have to drive more slowly.

Janofsky, Michael, "Answer to Gathering Stampede of Autos: Whoa!," *The New York Times*, Jan. 7, 1997, p. A10.

In 1995, Virginia proposed easing congestion on U.S. 50 by building multi-lane bypasses around Middleburg, Aldie and Upperville and widening the highway at the intersections between them. But a group of area residents, fearing suburban sprawl, has proposed an alternative way to deal with transportation issues, "traffic calming."

Pacelle, Mitchell, "Traffic calming: Some urban planners say downtowns need a lot more congestion," *The Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 7, 1996, p. A1.

A small band of traffic engineers including Walter Kulash have set out to shatter urban-planning dogma by applying "traffic calming" to dying downtowns. Racing traffic and the absence of curb-side parking have degraded center-city streets, they argue, chasing away potential customers of street-level stores and restaurants.

Smith, Andrew, "Letter: Speed saves — at 20 mph," *The Guardian*, Dec. 31, 1996, p. 14.

The Transport Research Laboratory finding that 20 mph zones cut accidents involving children by 67 percent makes a powerful case for immediate government action.

Sweeting, Adam, "Traffic calming? They must be joking," *The Guardian*, Sept. 19, 1996, p. 17.

Sweeting comments on his annoyance with the speed bumps being erected on Britain's suburban streets.

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