



A "Complete Streets" program in New York would provide bike lanes such as this one on Oakwood Road in Huntsville, Ala.

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## Make roads safer

### Assembly should drop changes it made in "Complete Streets" bill

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A high number of pedestrians and bicyclists are being struck by automobiles while navigating dangerous crossings both in Erie County and throughout New York State, and the AARP is trying to push through practical legislation at the state level that will lay the groundwork for common-sense infrastructure on projects going forward.

All that is now needed is some common sense from the Assembly.

"Complete Streets" legislation (S. 5711-B), sponsored by Senate Transportation Chairman Martin Malave Dilan, D-Brooklyn, recently passed the Senate with overwhelming bipartisan support, 57-4. The bill would provide an innovative and comprehensive approach to the way the state designs its roads. The approach would accommodate vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, people with disabilities and public transportation users ... in other words, the entire public.

Here's where the issue takes a wrong turn.

A companion bill in the Assembly was amended by its sponsor, David Gantt of Rochester, who heads the Assembly Transportation Committee, to eliminate the majority of the roads covered in New York State. This is an unacceptable outcome to AARP and many other groups that support the "Complete Streets" legislation. Under the amendment, the bill pertains only to roads overseen by the Department of Transportation, thus eliminating the majority of roads in the state of New York.

This is unacceptable and is contrary to the Senate bill, which calls for straightforward accommodations, including bike lanes, lane striping, paved shoulders, "share the road" signs, crosswalks, control signals, curb cuts and ramps.

The majority of pedestrian fatalities and injuries occur on town, city and county roads, frequently used by older residents and people with disabilities. The five-county report compared Albany, Broome, Erie, Monroe and Onondaga counties and found that older New Yorkers are disproportionately represented in

bicycle and pedestrian fatality statistics. The report identified the 49 most dangerous roadways in five of the most populous upstate New York counties, and Erie County does not fare well.

The purpose of the bill is to design roads that enable safe access for all users: bicyclists, those utilizing public transportation, motorists and people of all ages and abilities. As in just about all matters, this, too, has opposition.

Gantt and the County Highway Superintendents Association claim that the Senate version of the legislation is an "unfunded mandate." That accusation is off the mark. Legislation language contained in an exception section clearly states that when a municipality or state is designing or redesigning a road and determines accommodations for pedestrians are too costly, or unnecessary, none has to be made, but the reason why it is not being done has to be stated to the public, along with how the decision was reached.

Transportation planners and engineers will have to begin to address the needs of the older population, and state lawmakers ... many of whom fit into the baby boomer category ... will have to pass laws making it possible.