MEAN STREETS

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSPORTATION SAFETY??
Road safety is a hot topic with the mayor kicking off the new Vision Zero project, a plan to reduce traffic fatalities to zero. But with bikes, cars, pedestrians, and buses all competing for New York’s streets, how can we avoid fatal accidents? Where do we start?

In the Spring of 2014, Ms. Boroda’s Urban Studies class at the Academy of Urban Planning, along with CUP teaching artist Aaron Reiss set out to explore transportation safety in New York City. They looked at the Myrtle/Wyckoff intersection in Bushwick and saw a lot of unsafe things going on. They wanted to find out how to change things.

The class interviewed representatives of advocacy groups, people on the street, a Community Board representative, and staff from the Department of Transportation (D.O.T.) to find out who is in charge of transportation safety.

We made this booklet to share what we learned!
There are 6 streets feeding into this intersection, one of the most dangerous in the city. These are some problems we found:

- **Failure to Yield**
- **Faded Street Markings**
- **Crossing with No Crosswalk**
- **Hiding Behind the Pillars in Middle of the Street**
- **Not Paying Attention in the Street**
- **Crossing Without a Green Light**

"They should make the U-turn from Myrtle onto Wyckoff illegal. It's too sharp, they can't see who's on the other street."
- Alhayl (resident of 1 year)

"It seems like a pretty silly set up - I never know when to walk. I certainly think it should be changed."
- Rosie (resident of 30 years)
**Solution:** Create and display public service announcements — posters to educate the public about important issues — to let people know how dangerous it is to text and walk or drive.

**Problem:** People don’t pay attention while they are crossing the street.

“Education about how to behave safely is a big piece; it starts in the schools and at home. If we learn how to behave safely we can prevent most accidents and deaths.”

- Nadine Whitted (Community Board 4)

**Problem:** People don’t pay attention while they are crossing the street.

**Solution:** Create and display public service announcements — posters to educate the public about important issues — to let people know how dangerous it is to text and walk or drive.

**Problem:** People don’t pay attention while they are crossing the street.

“Education about how to behave safely is a big piece; it starts in the schools and at home. If we learn how to behave safely we can prevent most accidents and deaths.”

- Nadine Whitted (Community Board 4)

**Problem:** People don’t pay attention while they are crossing the street.

**Solution:** Create and display public service announcements — posters to educate the public about important issues — to let people know how dangerous it is to text and walk or drive.

**Problem:** People don’t pay attention while they are crossing the street.

“Education about how to behave safely is a big piece; it starts in the schools and at home. If we learn how to behave safely we can prevent most accidents and deaths.”

- Nadine Whitted (Community Board 4)
The police can write tickets with high fines to stop bicyclists from running red lights, drivers from speeding, and pedestrians from jaywalking, among many other unsafe activities.

**Problem:** Since it takes so long for the light to change, a lot of people cross the street without a green “walk” light.

**Solution:** Have police increase the amount of tickets and warnings they give to people who cross against the light at Myrtle/Wyckoff.

**Problem:** People cross the street halfway and then stop behind the pillars that hold up the subway tracks.

**Solution:** Build a little island around the pillars. That way, pedestrians have a safe place to wait and drivers know to avoid that part of the street.

Changing the street and what’s on it – like adding a bike lane, taking out a left turn sign, or making curbs and crosswalks bigger – are all engineering.

Flip the page to see the process for actually changing the street!
Once you decide that you want to make a change, this is how you start!

**Call 311**
For basic fixes like faded street markings or a broken stop light, 311 will take your info and let you know when the issue is resolved.

“What if 311 doesn’t work?”

“Get some help from non-profit organizations”
These groups help you gain support from your local Community Board.

**Talk to your Community Board**
Tell them about what you want to change and why. Your local Community Board can help amplify your voice to get the D.O.T. to make changes.

“But what if the Community Board doesn’t agree with me?”

“We need you guys!”

- Nadine Whitted (Community Board 4)

Community Boards are made up of 50 local volunteers, they act as advisors to local government. They cannot make or enforce laws.
People are the most important thing for affecting social change. It’s about mobilizing enough people to believe it’s a serious problem and needs to be addressed. Then we will see change.

Non-profit organizations like Right of Way and Transportation Alternatives work to make transit safer. They are activists who have a lot of knowledge, help, and a wide reach. Contact them directly for help.
- Keegan Stephan (Right of Way)

Keep the pressure on until change is made!

At this point, you are waiting on the D.O.T. Lots of things can slow them down (money, trouble from businesses, etc.) but you can keep going to Community Board meetings, working with non-profit organizations, and voicing your support.

Forward your request to the D.O.T.

Once the D.O.T. has support from your Community Board, they will investigate the issue and then make a plan to address it. That plan will go back to the Community Board for approval. If they agree, the D.O.T. will make that change.

The D.O.T.) are the *doers* in the city government. They are going to build the bike lane, put in the speed bump, and change the speed limit.
- Kim Wiley-Schwartz (NYC D.O.T.)
WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSPORTATION SAFETY?

CUP
Teaching artist: Aaron Reiss
Project lead: Pema Domingo-Barker
Project support: Valeria Mogilevich

ACADEMY OF URBAN PLANNING
Classroom teacher: Yelena Boroda

Thank you to our interviewees: Miller Nuttle, Transportation Alternatives; Keegan Stephan & Michael Mintz, Right of Way; Nadine Whitted, Community Board 4; Kim Wiley-Schwartz, Chris Brunson, and Kessia De Leo, Department of Transportation; and all our interviewees at the Myrtle/Wyckoff intersection

And big thanks to: Mei Ling Chua, Ellen Hailey, Jose Ortiz, Natalie Pardo, Aisha Haynes, Kyleema Norman and Jorge Sandoval

The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) is a nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement particularly among historically underrepresented communities. To learn more about CUP, visit welcometoCUP.org

City Studies is a program of the Center for Urban Pedagogy. CUP partners with public high schools and afterschool programs on project-based curricula that use design and art as tools to research the city.

The Academy of Urban Planning (AUP) is a public school in Bushwick with an urban planning theme-based curriculum. To learn more, about AUP visit aupnyc.org

This project was made possible by the Bay and Paul Foundations, public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

© the Center for Urban Pedagogy, 2014