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WalkBoston

— Boston, Massachusetts, USA
1990-

Improving walkability through the collaboration between citizens, businesses and government

Key Issue

In the city of Boston, Massachusetts, car accidents were a major social issue. Four transportation planners who worked in Massachusetts argued that this was due to the lack of basic concept of protecting pedestrians in the car-centered traffic society. They established an advocacy group, WalkBoston, for protecting pedestrians in 1990, which was the first organization of its kind in the United States. Over the last 30 years many other similar organizations have been created across the United States. Two of the founders of WalkBoston helped organize a nationwide group called America Walks in 1996. There is now surging public interest in walking safety in the United States, and many cities are working to make their streets safer. Recently in 2018, the World Health Organization (WHO) warned that the global death toll from traffic accidents involving cars had reached 1.35 million and urged attention to this public health crisis.

Project Approach

Creating a walkable city through collaboration between citizens and government

In response to requests from local residents and other parties, WalkBoston carries out on-site surveys in different districts to ascertain the issues, propose remedial measures and conduct different advocacy activities including consultation with government bodies and members of the assembly. The proposals are characterized by a practical approach which includes various measures from a pedestrian protection perspective, such as automobile speed restriction, enhancement of the walking environment on roads and installation of safety lighting. As problems are identified by the local residents, WalkBoston places importance on public participation meeting.



WalkBoston staff check walkways for problems reported by the public. They perform checks of walkability together with staff from administrative authorities and members of the assembly.
Source: WalkBoston



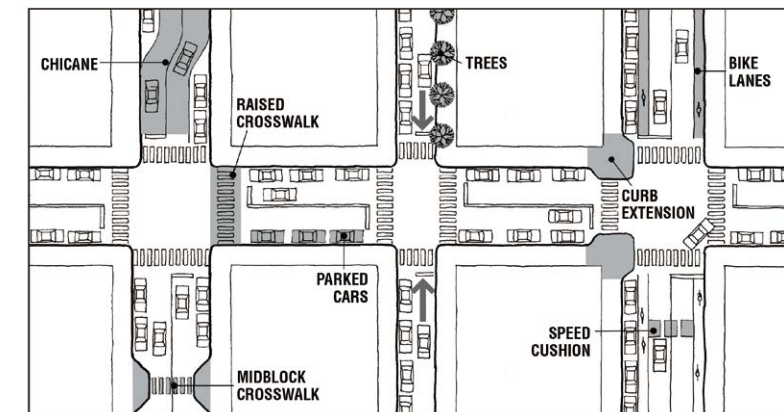
Interactive seminars are held in different locations every week. They involve active exchange of opinions and policy proposals.
Source: WalkBoston

Thorough data analyses and assessments that lead to practical proposals

In identifying the issues, data on road traffic accidents resulting in death are provided by the commonwealth government or local governments, which are then analysed in conjunction to field surveys. Moreover, various walking assessment tools including roadside features, traffic speed/volume, signal control, intersection visibility and pedestrian space are also used. Proposals include reasonable and practical facility planning and design based on short, medium and long term perspective for each issue. This scientific and comprehensive approach has helped to gain trust from the governments and citizens, thereby becoming a driving force in further expansion of the activities.



Data analyses and assessments are not limited to proposals but also result in quick effective improvements (e.g. crosswalks, signs, channelizing lines, etc.) that protect pedestrians.
Source : WalkBoston "simple fixes for walkable street"



Proposal to adopt fixes to reduce vehicle speed are also conducted from medium to long term perspectives, including improvements on intersections and car lanes.
Source : WalkBoston "making streets safe"

Data

Area: 27,337 km2 (Commonwealth of Massachusetts)
Population: Massachusetts: approx. 6,745,000 / Boston: Approx. 656,000 (2014)
Number of cities and towns involved in activities: 125 implementing bodies out of 351 in Massachusetts



To the Next Phase

WalkBoston is utilizing their data, experience and knowledge cultivated up until now to expand its activities not only on reducing traffic accidents but also on community development, deriving fixes that encourage people to walk and stay healthy. For this reason, WalkBoston has broadened their interests in fields including health promotion, walkable community, age-friendly walking and transit connections, and undertaking tasks to address a variety of local and social issues.

