

A photograph of a snow-covered path, likely a pedestrian or bicycle trail, with trees and a fence on either side. The path is covered in a thick layer of snow, and there are footprints visible. The trees are also covered in snow, and the sky is overcast. The overall scene is a winter landscape.

## BMTS Article Digest January – February 2024

BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee Members:

The following is a compilation of articles that may be of interest to BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee members. This and past digests can also be accessed from the Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee page at <http://bmtsonline.com/about/committees>.

*Sights you get to enjoy while walking!*

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See the **Two Rivers Greenway Pedestrian & Bicycle Monthly Counting Reports** at <http://bmtsonline.com/data/bikeped-counts>.



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### WIZARD OF ID PARKER & HART





**THE LEAGUE**  
OF AMERICAN BICYCLISTS  
since 1880

<https://bikeleague.org/should-vehicles-help-drivers-not-speed/>

# SHOULD VEHICLES HELP DRIVERS NOT SPEED?

December 14, 2023/[Ken McLeod](#)

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recently made headlines for [recommending](#) that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) should require all new vehicles to have intelligent speed assistance systems as a standard. This recommendation was made in response to a fatal crash where a driver drove a 2018 Dodge Challenger at 103 mph through a red light and hit a Toyota Sienna minivan. The crash killed nine people, including all seven occupants of the minivan, and the driver and passenger in the Dodge Challenger.

While the driver of the Dodge Challenger was intoxicated by cocaine and phencyclidine (also known as PCP), the NTSB found that the driver's speeding behavior could have been mitigated by Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA). The driver was a repeat speeder, with a history of speeding offenses, who sought a vehicle [marketed](#) on its capacity to speed and which had no technology to help a driver follow the speed limit.



In a [Safe System Approach](#), redundancy and layers of protection are key ways that the public sector mitigates the harms caused by individual behavior such as driving while intoxicated or distracted. The NTSB found that ISA would have provided a layer of protection and redundancy in this crash and others that involve high rates of speed.

In the League of American Bicyclists' Slow Roads Save Lives campaign we have asked drivers to [make a pledge embracing slower roads](#), and to "[drive] with an intention of speed limit compliance at all times and recognizing that I control the speed of my vehicle."

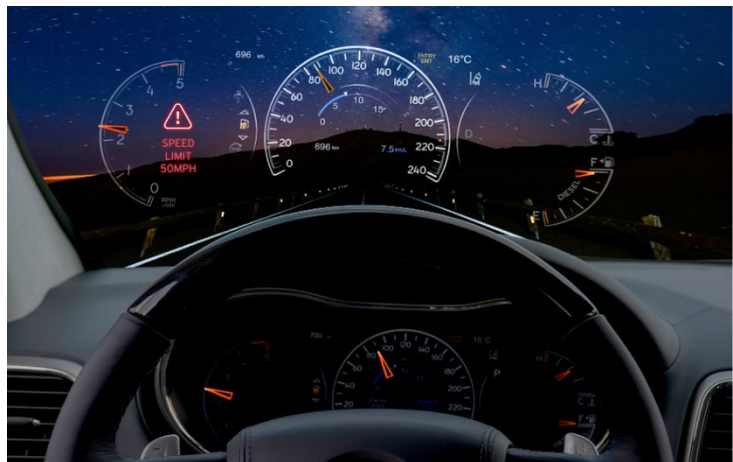
Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA) is a technology that helps individual drivers follow through on their intention of speed limit compliance. ISA works by providing information to a driver about the current speed limit and the driver's compliance with the current speed limit. Information is conveyed in one or more of the following ways:

- A visual cue may indicate compliance or noncompliance — just as many vehicles will provide a visual cue that a driver is driving in a more or less [eco-friendly manner](#).
- An audible cue may indicate non-compliance — just as vehicles are [currently required](#) to do for seatbelt use by drivers.
- A haptic cue may indicate non-compliance — meaning the accelerator pedal will become [harder to press](#), providing a physical cue that the driver is going too fast.
- A speed control function may indicate non-compliance — just as an e-bike has a speed control function that limits electric power delivery above the legal speed based on the e-bike’s classification, this control function would limit power delivery above the speed limit or a threshold above the speed limit. Many vehicles are currently electronically limited to speeds of 155 mph based on a German “[gentlemen’s agreement](#)” to limit speeds on the autobahn, which famously lacks a speed limit in many segments.

ISA helps drivers not speed by providing them contextual information. If there is a “speed trap” due to a sudden change in speed limit, then ISA will be aware of the speed limit change and provide the driver a cue to slow down.

ISA never issues tickets, never imposes fines and fees, and never initiates a traffic stop that can escalate into traffic violence.

Last year, ISA became standard equipment in all new vehicles sold in the [European Union](#). Under their standard, “[t]he driver is always in control and can easily override the ISA system.” The estimated [cost](#) of ISA as standard equipment is between about \$50-250 per vehicle.



In the United States, ISA is currently available in some [vehicles](#) and as part of some optional [packages](#), but data is limited on its uptake. The NTSB recommended standardization as a method of ensuring adoption, but also reiterated its 2018 [recommendation](#) of incentivizing adoption through publicizing the existence of ISA through NHTSA’s New Car Assessment Program.

ISA is a tool that helps drivers not speed. The NTSB has said we should make it standard so more people can use it. The League agrees and looks forward to a fact-based discussion about how drivers can be supported in their intention to follow the law through technology. About 30% of traffic deaths each year involve speeding and ISA would provide drivers a tool so that they don’t contribute to that statistic.

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LOCAL

# Woman, 72, died after being hit by car in Oakdale Commons. Here's the latest case update



**Jeff Murray**

Binghamton Press & Sun Bulletin

A Binghamton man initially charged with murder for a fatal hit-and-run car-pedestrian crash last year has pleaded guilty to manslaughter and other charges.

Rajee Al-Mashni was originally indicted on charges of second-degree murder, second-degree manslaughter, second-degree vehicular manslaughter and leaving the scene of an accident, along with 13 other related charges.

The charges stemmed from the March 2023 death of 72-year-old Elizabeth Atkinson, of Johnson City, outside the Oakdale Commons shopping center.

In Broome County Court on Jan. 11, Al-Mashni pleaded guilty to second-degree manslaughter, driving with ability impaired by combined influence of drugs and alcohol, and second-degree attempted assault.

Al-Mashni also entered a guilty plea to second-degree attempted assault stemming from a June 27, 2022 motor vehicle accident at the corner of Leroy and Chapin streets in the City of Binghamton which left several people seriously injured.

Around 4:20 p.m. March 6, 2023, Johnson City police officers responded to Oakdale Commons to check on the welfare of man who witnesses said was intoxicated and had entered as many as two vehicles in the parking lot, police said.

When they approached the suspect, later identified as Al-Mashni, he reportedly fled the scene, driving south at a high rate of speed.

Seconds later, Al-Mashni's vehicle struck Atkinson as she was leaving a store at the mall, police said.

After Al-Mashni pulled out of the parking lot, officers pursued him over several village streets before his car became disabled and he fled on foot before being taken into custody, according to police.

Atkinson was taken to UHS Wilson Hospital, where she later died.

"This was a senseless tragedy caused by selfish choices," Broome County District Attorney Paul Battisti said following the plea. "Impaired driving continues to plague our streets, and far too many families like Ms. Atkinson's are mourning the loss of loved ones who have been killed by reckless drivers."

Al-Mashni is scheduled to be sentenced April 9 in Broome County Court.

He faces an indeterminate term of five to 15 years in state prison for the plea in Atkinson's death, and an additional one to three years on the attempted assault charge related to the 2022 crash, Battisti said.

The sentences would likely be served consecutively, he said.



Preliminary work has started for the next phase of the rail trail system in the town of Vestal.

Town engineer Vernon Myers said a 3,500-foot expansion of the existing trail is to be built this year.



Bicyclists using the Vestal Rail Trail on January 18, 2024. (Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News)

The walking and biking path will be extended behind the Town Square Mall from its current trailhead at African Road to the Vestal Road-Sycamore Road intersection. This is the third phase of the trail system.

Myers said town highway department workers have started clearing trees near the intersection ahead of the

planned construction of the new trail segment. He said the project is expected to cost about \$2.6 million.

Town of Vestal highway department equipment near Vestal and Sycamore roads on January 18, 2024. (Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News)

A rail trail parking lot will be located at the on the southeast corner of Vestal Road and African Road. The new trail segment will connect with Harold Moore Park, which is located between the Susquehanna River and Vestal Road.

A right-turn lane is to be installed for eastbound traffic on Vestal Road turning onto Sycamore Road.



Some of the trees that have been removed west of Sycamore Road in preparation for the upcoming rail trail extension project. (Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News)

The town is expected to seek bids for the rail trail extension in the spring with construction planned during the summer. Myers said the construction work is expected to take four or five months to complete.

The first phase of the Vestal Rail Trail was built between North Main Street and African Road. It runs 2.1 miles. The second phase is between Main Street and Castle Gardens Road. That segment is 1.75 miles long.



FLASHBACK: A section of the Vestal Rail Trail West under construction on April 14, 2013. (Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News)

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## Why do we have right-on-red, and is it time to get rid of it?

By Nathaniel Meyersohn, CNN

**New York CNN —**

In America, traveling through red lights on right turns has become a rule of the road. Frequently, you get honked at if you don't speed through fast enough.

But the widespread driving practice is now coming under scrutiny, and facing government curbs, for being too dangerous.

Years ago, right-on-red was mostly limited to California and a few other western states. Woody Allen famously declared in "Annie Hall" that he'd never live in Los Angeles because the city's "only cultural advantage is that you can make a right turn on a red light."

Right-on-red spread across the country in the 1970s in response to the Arab oil embargo against the United States and oil rationing. States introduced it as a gas-savings measure: The theory was that it would reduce idling at red lights.





In this Dec. 23, 1973, file photo, cars line up in two directions at a gas station in New York City. Right-on-red was a gas-savings tool during the 1970s oil crisis. Marty Lederhandler/AP

Congress sped up states' adoption of right-on-red laws with a provision in the 1975 Energy Policy and Conservation Act. It tied states' eligibility for federal energy assistance to allowing right-on-red "to the maximum extent practicable

consistent with safety."

By 1972, 13 states allowed RTOR, according to a [legislative history](#) of the practice in Connecticut. By the end of the decade, nearly every state in the country had it. (Although not New York City — and the patchwork of municipalities which do or don't allow it only adds to the behind-the-wheel confusion.)

### Dangerous roads

But cities are souring on right-on-red.

[Atlanta](#), [Denver](#), [Indianapolis](#), [Washington, DC](#), [Raleigh](#), North Carolina, and other major cities have recently proposed or passed laws banning it in parts of their busy downtowns or citywide. They believe it will protect people walking and biking amid the highest number of [pedestrian fatalities](#) in more than 40 years.

A pedestrian stops at a corner in Denver in 2022. Denver and other cities are considering banning right-on-red. Hyoung Chang/MediaNews Group/The Denver Post/Getty Images

Right turns on red "introduce extra movements into the intersection," said Eric Dumbaugh, a professor in the department of urban and regional planning at Florida Atlantic University who studies traffic safety.



This leads to drivers crashing into pedestrians who see a green light and think it's safe to cross, trucks hitting bikers because they can't see bicyclists making a right turn, and rear-end collisions.

A city-commissioned survey in Indianapolis, where pedestrian fatalities hit a record in 2022, found that, over a five-year period, about [57% of car crashes](#) involving pedestrians happened because drivers failed to yield to people in all intersections.

In San Francisco, turn on red crashes account for less than 1% of all injury crashes, but 20% of pedestrian or bicycle-related [crashes](#).

“Our proposed ban on turning at red lights aims to prioritize the well-being of pedestrians at intersections,” Atlanta City Councilman Jason Dozier, who introduced a ban in parts of the city, [said](#) last week on X introducing the proposal.

Nationwide, drivers killed at least 7,500 pedestrians in 2022, according to the latest data from the Governors Highway Safety Association. That's the highest number since 1981. (Some states include bicyclists in their pedestrian fatality data, while others don't.)

There are reasons for this: faster driving speeds, distracted driving, a lack of pedestrian-friendly road infrastructure and increasingly heavier and high-riding trucks and SUVs.

There has been little national research in recent years on the effect of right-on-red turns on pedestrian safety.



Cities want to make downtowns safer for pedestrians and bikers. Bill Clark/CQ-Roll Call, Inc/Getty Images

Research on police-reported crash data from six states where RTOR laws were adopted from 1974 to 1977, as well as data from three states where the law was unchanged, found that crashes increased by more than 20% in states that allowed RTOR.

The study, [conducted in 1982](#), found larger increases in pedestrian crashes in urban areas, for child pedestrians, and for elderly pedestrians after RTOR was adopted.

Banning right on red is not a “panacea for pedestrian safety problems,” Dumbaugh said, but could help prevent pedestrian and car accidents in busy intersections.

“It’s part of a comprehensive safety solution,” he said. Right turns on red are “something that the United States does that most other countries don’t do.”

These efforts face fierce pushback, however, from some drivers, driver advocacy groups and lawmakers who argue bans will make roads worse for drivers and cities worse for everyone. Right-on-red helps aid speed and ease of traffic movement. And halving speed limits would also curb injuries, but that’s been abandoned as not in the greater good.

The Atlanta anti-ROTR proposal faces [opposition from some city lawmakers](#) who worry it will lead to congestion during major events in the city and also hurt hotels. People don’t want to vacation in cities with major traffic jams. Other lawmakers in Atlanta worry that it will increase traffic stops and over-policing and ticketing of Black and other minority drivers. Studies have found that Black drivers are [likelier to be stopped and pulled over](#) by police.

In Indiana, a Republican state senator introduced legislation to retroactively void Indianapolis’s right-on-red ban, terming it [“stupid” and part of a “war on cars.”](#)

Advocates, however, say that right-on-red bans are an important measure in a larger push to prioritize pedestrian safety over cars and make cities more walkable and bike-friendly. Lawmakers who have promoted reforms say they are a step to create safer and more accessible downtowns.

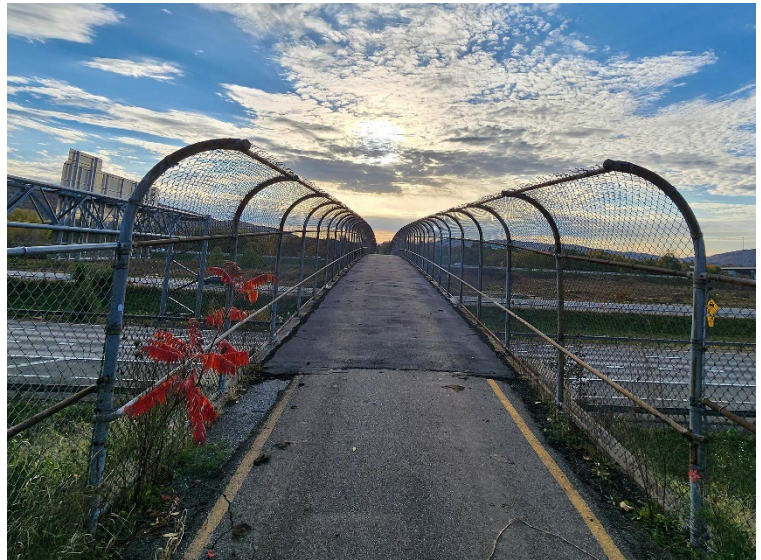
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Demolition crews removed a pedestrian bridge over Interstate 81 north of Binghamton in November the project remains incomplete.

The walkway between Old Front Street and Bevier Street in the town of Dickinson was in use for more than a half-century.

A view of the I-81 pedestrian bridge north of Binghamton on October 24, 2023. (Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News)



Residents of the Sunrise Terrace neighborhood used the narrow span to walk to Otsiningo Park and to Binghamton's North Side.

Although the bridge is gone, some people in the town of Dickinson have wondered why no protective fencing has been installed along I-81 where the walkway was located.



A path that led from Old Front Street to a pedestrian bridge over Interstate 81 in the town of Dickinson. (Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News)

Town supervisor Michael Marinaccio said officials are concerned about the situation. He said the state Department of Transportation was contacted shortly after the bridge demolition work was completed.

Marinaccio said he's been assured that the contractor

eventually will install fencing on both ends of the pathways that had led to the crossing over the highway. He said that should make things "a little safer."

A view of I-81 from the site of the recently removed pedestrian walkway in the town of Dickinson. (Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News)

DOT spokesperson Scott Cook confirmed that plans do call for fencing to put in as part of the walkway removal project. That work is expected to occur in the spring.

Cold Spring Construction Company of western New York was paid \$534,000 for the project. The walkway, which opened in 1968, cost \$312,000 to build.

