

A Walk in the Suburbs

Ray Rauth

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In June of 2016 I walked across Connecticut on US 1, the highway that the Tri-State Transportation Campaign judged to be the most dangerous road in Connecticut. I took this walk to discover why the route is so dangerous and I found a road that was not only dangerous, but indifferent to the needs of those who want to use active transportation – walking and biking – as a means of travel.

As a result of our decades-long infatuation with the automobile I also discovered that the state and its towns neglect not only safety but also natural beauty and health.

A. About this Report.

This report contains a summary document, or executive summary, followed by a detailed look at US 1. I usually make an observation on a condition and then comment. I walked from West to East – Greenwich to Stonington. Since I use the first time I see a problem as an opportunity for comment, the report is weighted to the western side of the state. For example, even though sidewalk discontinuities abound throughout the state, once mentioned there is little need to pound the issue to death (although sometimes I do just that.)

Every observation is headed by a Roman numeral; the comments section uses bold-faced italics. I try to tie the comment to a word or phrase within the observation. I sometimes note a specific location for my observation.

These are my observations on our longest road. Unless forced, I did not leave US 1. I did not research beyond what I saw. If I complained about sidewalks in your town I did no research into the town's plans for sidewalks.

My expertise comes from experience; I have been a bicycle and pedestrian advocate for two decades. I have served on the boards of several advocacy organizations including the current Bicycle and Pedestrian Board which was established by the Complete Streets Law. In the past quarter century I have walked or run over 30,000 miles on our roads and have ridden a bicycle 40,000 miles. And a few years ago I walked the state from Long Island Sound to Massachusetts.

B. Summary Document.

The Genesis of the Active Transportation Problem

During most of the twentieth century we built out a transportation system that favored the private motorized vehicle. Individual transportation became, outside of metropolitan areas, almost exclusively the realm of the automobile. The bicycle was considered a toy for children; public transportation was for the poor and, in the suburbs and rural areas, was ignored. Walking was for the eccentric.

Unfortunately this old-fashioned transportation system has resulted in immense costs, extreme sprawl, destruction of local agriculture and open space, incredible highway congestion, and an abandonment of healthy lifestyles. We cannot build our way out of our transportation issues and instead must reverse what has been done and replace a system that no longer works with one that does.

I explored the issue of road safety by walking across Connecticut on US 1 this past June. My initial impetus was that US 1 is the deadliest highway in Connecticut for pedestrians and has been so for the last eight years, according to the Tri-State Transportation Campaign. In this walk I discovered other related issues and issued some recommendations given briefly below. These suggestions apply in general to Connecticut highways and not only to US 1. I divide my overview into four sections – *Safety, Transit, Beauty, and Sprawl*.

Improve safety.

Pedestrian crashes primarily result from three causes: dangerous drivers, pedestrians making bad decisions, unsafe road design or some combination thereof. Enforcement of traffic laws for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists would mitigate the first two causes. (Without enforcement there is no compliance.) Unfortunately traffic fines are revenue for the state; the municipalities receive no portion and thus have a negative incentive to enforce the laws. A walk on our busy roads reveals a stark truth – making the roads safer for pedestrians and cyclists has received shamefully little attention.

- Examples of discontinuous sidewalks abound and are not confined to the Route 1 Corridor. Sidewalks are essential; when they are non-continuous, pedestrians must walk in the street, or worse, are tempted to become motorists and drive negligible distances. The sidewalk network must be completed.
- Promptly remove snow. If not removed people are forced to walk in the street. Transit riders often climb over mounds of snow to get to their stop and street crossings are obscured. Failure to clear the walks shows disregard for citizens (and taxpayers). If a town can rapidly clear snow from millions of square feet of asphalt and concrete it should be able to add another ten per cent or so.
- Warn of discontinuities ahead. “Sidewalk ends, last crosswalk.” Highways routinely do this for cars; we should also provide similar warnings for pedestrians.

- Apply Quick-Fix processes in case of serious crashes. A Quick-Fix team should normally include bike/ped advocates. I have seen situations where the cause of the accident is clear to an experienced cyclist or pedestrian, but is not so clear to non-users of active transportation.
- **TOD** (Transit Oriented Development). These developments should include pedestrian facilities that extend one mile from the transportation node; for bicycles five.
- Provide adequate crosswalks where needed. If the area is congested pedestrians will use crosswalks rather than cross midblock.

Transit Stops.

Since the ratio of automobile passengers to automobiles is close to one, a pedestrian, a cyclist or a transit rider removes an automobile from the road. Too often we view transit riders as being too poor to afford a car and thus unworthy of adequate facilities. Rather than making public transit a desirable means to commute we saddle it with sometimes unbearable difficulties and real danger. Here are some inexpensive suggestions to enhance transit.

- Post schedules at bus stops. While smart phone applications for schedules do exist and are very important not everyone has a smart phone.
- Continue the roll-out of notification signage – i.e. “the X bus will arrive @ 9:99.”
- Provide facilities to encourage/attract pedestrians -- minimally a shelter and a bench. Riders are sometimes trapped in rain, snow and other nasty weather conditions.
- Transit stops should be accessible from both sides of the road. Frequently bus stops can be reached safely from only one side of a street.
- Consider bicycle and pedestrian access at transit stops. How do people get there? It’s logical to develop the immediate area for safe and convenient pedestrian and bike access.
- Commuter rail actively discourages cyclists and pedestrians. Let us provide adequate bicycle parking, properly signed ways to stations, and well maintained sidewalks.
- And a not inexpensive suggestion: Work mightily to provide busways. I can only imagine a rush hour commute on US 1.

Beauty.

Connecticut, off the main routes, is usually beautiful, or if not, filled with character. However, on the main highways, the face we present to the traveler is often an ugly one. Too bad, as one of our state’s primary attractions is her beauty. When you travel a main road, such as US 1, through one of our towns the oldest part is pleasant, walkable and livable. As one travels toward more recently developed sections, the effect is one of chaotic development, massive parking lots, no human connections and is frankly distressful to look at. There is no apparent attempt to integrate these newer sections into the older town or otherwise enhance livability.

- Make beautification a priority. Texas, for example, plants wildflowers along their highways. It is more enticing to stroll along a clean, well maintained walk than an overgrown littered roadside.
- Provide frequent Pocket Parks (such as Sherman Town Green in Fairfield, or in the drawbridge area in Mystic). There are too few of these along US 1, or elsewhere.

- Provide “Wayfinding” suitable for pedestrians and cyclists. On a number of occasions, I encountered situations where US 1 was very dangerous, but alternative routes were difficult to find. It should be easy.
- Put store fronts in front of stores rather than behind parking lots. There are few things uglier than a parking lot – except a parking lot with cars.
- Most towns have Beautification Committees or Garden Clubs. Use them.
- Be creative. Columbus, Indiana, a non-descript factory town in central Indiana, has magnificent architecture (google it). Why is this so? Because ***town leaders planned it to be so.***

Sprawl and Poor Land Use Planning.

Much that is not beautiful might be laid at the metaphorical feet of urban sprawl. And this sprawl, in its turn, is the result of poor land use planning. Sprawl and poor planning directly create our traffic problems. For example, the inability of low wage employees to find housing in areas in which they work causes much of our commutation woes. We create TOD areas without adequately implementing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Our schools too often preclude safe walking and biking or are so remote as to mandate motorized transportation, which, too often, almost exclusively involves the automobile.

Perhaps the DOT should adopt goals to reduce our reliance on the private automobile.

The Complete Streets Law: A Way Forward.

In 2009 the legislature passed a complete streets law. The statute’s mandate is: *“From funds received by the department or any municipality for the construction, restoration, rehabilitation or relocation of highways, roads or streets, a reasonable amount shall be expended to provide facilities for all users, including, but not limited to, bikeways and sidewalks with appropriate curb cuts and ramps.”*

That is a very simple statement and shows us how we can solve a portion of Connecticut’s woes. It is not just active transportation users that benefit from this law but transit as well. The effect is far-reaching and embraces millennials who reportedly choose to live without a complete reliance on the automobile.

It supports the elderly who drive less or not at all. It helps build neighborhoods that build a sense of community. It encourages the development of schools and work places that are integrated into the fabric of a town. It reverses sprawl. It preserves open space and amplifies the beauty that is one of Connecticut’s hallmarks. It reduces our reliance on fossil energy and hence combats global warming.

C. Observations and Comments/Recommendations.

I. About Roundabouts and Pocket Parks.

I started my walk at the western border of Connecticut where US 1 crosses the Byram, the boundary river, at a **roundabout**, or rotary. The traffic splits to cross a pair of bridges. The splits come together to complete a misshapen circle. The center of the circle has two filling stations, a Carvel Ice Cream shop, a Food Mart and a **pocket park** along the river. Although these latter three destinations will attract strollers and children there are no crosswalks, no signals.

About Roundabouts. I didn't encounter any modern roundabouts; however there were several places where the geometry of the road mimicked roundabout behavior. The one in Greenwich and the one in Fairfield both had businesses in the middle of the loop. Business included "kid magnets" such as Carvel's Ice Cream and a MacDonald's restaurant. In both cases there was no "official" pedestrian crossing, rather one had to guess and plunge forward. Cyclists, in my experience, have little to fear from roundabouts, including the Greenwich and Fairfield examples. Just obey the rules of the road and choose your exit. For pedestrians it's not so simple, particularly with multi-lane intersections. The traffic continues to flow and finding a break is not easy. Signaling a roundabout seems to defeat the purpose. I fear the slow afoot (elderly, handicapped) are out of luck. Maybe I'm missing something; my advice to advocates, planners and engineers: Try crossing some actual roundabouts.

Pocket Parks. You don't need a swing set or a swimming pool, just a calm nicely-kept shaded area with benches, maybe a picnic table and a relaxed atmosphere. An excellent example in Fairfield is the green near the gazebo. Sometimes a larger park, such as Westport's Barron's North is fine. Not to provide such amenities disrespects the active transportation user and demeans the town.

II. Transit Stops and Quick Fix.

The start location has been described as "the most dangerous intersection in Greenwich." In fact, at this intersection a nun was killed crossing the street trying to get to a **bus stop**. As far as I know no actions, including a "**quick fix study**" were taken to alleviate the problem. The first selectman's office did not return my call.

Transit Stops. Every transit stop should have a schedule posted and a shelter with a bench. The stop is also a great place for a bike rack. How do people get there? It's logical to develop the immediate area for safe and convenient pedestrian and bike access.

Quick Fix, Why Not? The State DOT has a quick fix policy. The ideal time to trigger a quick fix study is in the immediate aftermath of a crash with consequences – death say, or a hospital visit. A quick fix study in East Haven in which I was part of suggested a few changes which, when implemented, provided a safe and attractive roadway with sidewalks on both sides. Studies which involve active transportation

accidents **must include active transportation advocates**. No one knows these mean streets better than we do.

III. Nasty Intersections.

Along the road in Greenwich and elsewhere side streets, such as Holly or Melrose, enter US 1 at an angle that allows high speed turns onto or off the highway. Cars were certainly taking advantage. In addition, these angled corners also create a **very wide intersection** which increases the time required for a pedestrian to cross the street.

Dangerously wide Intersections. These frequent flaws to our pedestrian system are bears to the walker. A person walking three miles/hour covers 4.4 feet/second. To cross a 120 foot intersection (these are out there! See Keeler and US 1 in Norwalk.) requires 27 seconds. Without a safety island or a splitter that's dangerous. The elderly and handicapped suffer.

IV. Discontinuous Sidewalks.

In Greenwich and almost every town with sidewalks (not Bridgeport & Stratford, with an important exception), frequent **discontinuities** occurred. These were often in locations critical to the pedestrian and which exposed the walker to danger. Of course it is understood that many of these breaks are due to difficulties in construction, negative neighborhood reaction, budget issues, homeowner rebellion and a host of other causes, but that's why we have engineers and political leaders. A discontinuous sidewalk is no more acceptable to the pedestrian than a missing road segment is to the motorist. Pedestrians need a well-designed sidewalk network. With the advent of more demand for active transportation and TOD, sidewalks are crucial to the success of the town.

Sidewalk Discontinuities. Examples abound and are too numerous to cite here. They are everywhere in Coastal Connecticut. It is clear that planners, engineers and the DPW do not put much emphasis on pedestrian facilities as required by Connecticut's *Complete Streets Law*. Simple justice tells us that the needs of walkers are as important as the needs of drivers. The rise of walkability indexes also warns us that the age of the automobile has peaked and that a town ignores the law at the peril of the town's future.

V. Snow Removal.

An egregious disregard for pedestrians was visible in photos sent to me by a Greenwicher. It shows pedestrians – a jogger and people searching for a bus – trudging through several inches of snow and related slop. **The sidewalks had not been cleared.**

Snow Removal, Wilton & Others. Wilton quickly removes the snow from its public ways. They have useful machines, for example, front-end loaders or sidewalk plows. I have seen almost two feet of snow quickly removed from highway bridges as well as all sidewalks. It shows respect for their citizens and the

law. Why Greenwich, Stamford and Westport, for example, fail in this escapes me, but fail they do. Frankly, it shows disregard for their citizens (and taxpayers). If a town can rapidly clear snow from 30 million square feet of asphalt and concrete it should be able to add another ten per cent or so.

VI. Transit Stops – Mode Share.

Also along Route 1 in Greenwich I encountered frequent transit stops. I count 11 in the two miles between the state line and Greenwich Avenue. Excellent. However, of these stops I only observed one, at Greenwich Avenue, that had a bench and a shelter. While many buses may be tracked by GPS and smart phone and their arrival time roughly estimated, an excellent benefit, (providing that riders have a smart phone), nonetheless schedules should be at every bus stop. An advocate I met in Greenwich mentioned that there is no effort to provide bike racks to produce a **multi-modal** travel experience.

Multi-Mode Operation. I placed the first bike on a Stamford bus when bus racks first became available in the state. That was twenty years ago. Now racks abound and I applaud when I see a bus pass with bikes loaded. Metro North now has bike racks on each of their trains. However, look at transit stops and train stations. Metro North stations have bike racks which are often full. However, the ability to walk or bike to transit stops and train stations has been sadly neglected. A little paint and some signage would go a long way. I encourage all planners to check out New Haven's Union Station. They do it.

VII. Street Furniture.

In the initial two-mile stretch of my cross-state walk I noticed the absence of **street furniture** (an absence that continued for the next 118 miles). I was early for my Greenwich appointment and wanted to sit and make a few notes. As there were no benches, that meant searching out a stone wall or just flopping on the grass. I also had a small wad of paper to discard which I carried for two miles because there were no trash receptacles.

Street Furniture. These amenities were mostly missing throughout my walk. There were occasional benches, in Darien for example, and a few bike racks, Fairfield had some nice ones, but they were mostly absent. Part of building a livable community is providing the infrastructure to make it so. It would seem that the slight increase in tax revenue required for a dramatic increase in the public good would, in future years, pay for itself by a concomitant increase in livability, thus increasing the all-important grand list. We should count trees as part of street furniture. Certainly a lovely green canopy providing cool shade is very welcome; the harsh reality of most of US 1 is glaring sun-heated asphalt which makes the nicest weather very hot. My walk was in splendid, cool weather. However I suffered greatly from heat – and not just me – my cell phone temporarily died because of the heat on the sun-blasted sidewalks in Orange.

VIII. “Valley of Ashes.”

While in Greenwich I first noted a phenomenon which I dubbed “The Valley of Ashes,” (from the Fitzgerald novel, *The Great Gatsby*.) Greenwich should be a lovely town, a beautiful town. And in many ways it is. However as soon as I entered a commercial district, one ironically selling cars – expensive cars – I noticed that any claim to **beauty** disappeared. It became just another **ill-planned unattractive commercial strip**. Connecticut grows these like Mississippi grows cotton.

Land Use Planning. Much of Connecticut is drowning in automobiles. And much of the reason we have such dramatically awful traffic is the inability of governments to control development. When you build something such as the Danbury Mall, you have built an incredible traffic generator. When you position schools far remote from the population that they serve with no active transportation then parents drive their kids to school and everyone sits in exhaust plumes. When you build communities in which the housing stock is too expensive for workers, you require the needed workers to travel great and difficult distances. When you build a transit system that is gridlocked, the only reasonable solution for the individual is the private car.

Ugliness or Beauty? The “Valley of Ashes” in Greenwich featured automobiles that many would consider desirable. The brands included BMW, Acura, Bentley/Rolls, Mercedes, Porsche, Audi, Aston Martin, Maybach and Ferrari. There is beauty about a well-designed car – a Ferrari is lovely to look at; there is an excitement about a Rolls. But park dozens of them together, displayed in large asphalt lots, with unattractive landscaping, you have created something with all of the beauty of an Arkansas backstreet used car lot.

I am sure that Greenwich has a Beautification Committee or some such civic organization. If they do, I suspect that it is no more heeded than “Greenwich Safe Cycling,” the town’s decades-old bike/ped organization. I googled “beautification committee Greenwich,” and found an article from the local newspaper which held the sentence: “Some of the early plans include putting in public art, trash bins, benches and shrubs and hanger planters.” I thought “Great!” I looked more closely and found the item had been picked up from a newspaper story in Mandan, North Dakota. **[Lewis & Clark wintered here on the way West]**

If Mandan, ND can do it so can Greenwich and every one of the 169 towns in Connecticut – or am I missing something?

IX. Listen to Your Advocates.

In Stamford I met with a number of **advocates**. One woman, identified as “our pedestrian” volunteered to walk me to the next town. She was a 70 year-old who does not drive. Public transportation and walking are her means of travel. On our walk she made interesting and accurate comments ranging from the safety of intersections, to the disregard of drivers (she emphatically motioned her displeasure with cross-walk creepers – those who ease into the intersection blocking pedestrians), the viability (or lack, thereof) of the relatively new Transitway, the failure to provide pedestrian service at construction zones

and misplacement of and safety issues at bus stops. She left me at the border of Stamford with Darien because the sidewalks were no longer on both sides and there was no way for her **to safely cross** US 1 – i.e. no crosswalk.

Listen to your advocates. My escort knew all of the problems and many of the solutions. The problem for pedestrians in Stamford is that she wasn't running the show. Officials and employees should pay attention. Advocates are out there; they can really, really help their towns. Officials do not have to do what they suggest, but they should actively communicate with, and most importantly, listen to them – ***listen, listen, listen!***

Do roads connect or divide? Roads that a pedestrian cannot safely cross are everywhere. The pedestrian may be unaware of a convenient crosswalk or, more likely, the distance to the next safe crossing is sufficient to cause the walker to “take the risk.” I had vowed to myself to look for safe crossing, but that ended with the first 15 minutes of my walk because there were no safe crossings and the sidewalk was eminently ending. At my start in Greenwich, I suppose I could have walked back to New York State (really) but chose to take the plunge across Route 1. I have a picture of me plunging.

X. If You Can't Walk Across the Street... You Drive?!?

In Darien the pedestrian access was odd. Sidewalks were frequently on one side of the street only, and there were no crosswalks from the Stamford border to Hindley School, a distance of one mile. It's a four lane highway. That means that anyone wanting to cross the street to visit, say, their neighbor, go to a deli, catch a bus, attend a church or other such community activity must cross those four lanes of traffic. Normally it's busy; at rush hour it's impossible. I suspect most people **drive to cross the street**.

Crossing the Street safely, we've made it not difficult but impossible. It's a shame, but true. As I've said elsewhere, the safest way to cross may be to go back to the car and drive across the road. In the REI in Norwalk recently I was told that the nearest CVS was about 200 yards away. And it was, but to get there I had to cross an entrance/exit ramp to I95. I pondered that (I had crossed the ramp on my walk across Connecticut), but I decided it was safer to cross Route 1 instead. After a long wait for the light I had to watch carefully for “right-turning-on-red-without-stopping” traffic and then of course, cross back to the side of the street of the CVS. Pathetic.

Right turn on red. That has turned into right turn on red without ***stopping (or looking)***. I frequently see its cousin – right turn at stop sign without stopping. And that segues into a right turn at stop signs going-as-fast-as-you-can-to-beat-oncoming-traffic!

XI. Streets Can Be Attractive.

Darien also sported a **very pretty** (Post Road) strip. In the downtown area, between the I95 interchange and the Railroad, US 1 becomes a pleasant street in the heart of commercial Darien. Planters hang from attractive street lamps, there are nice benches for the weary traveler, and *stores front directly on the*

sidewalk -- the walker is spared the ugliness of parking lots filled with cars and the danger of crossing ramps. Wonderful.

What's wrong with a beautiful downtown? Nothing. In many cases we have it. Darien and Fairfield have very attractive short stretches of downtown. Certainly Clinton, Branford and Guilford are lovely. The Post Road in Mystic has the remarkable advantage of a drawbridge that opens once an hour, moderating traffic and creating a pleasant and entertaining diversion for the residents and tourists. But newer developed areas, such as the outskirts of Fairfield, the Westport sprawl of strip malls, Norwalk and other "big box ghettos" make an almost deliberate effort to be ugly.

XII. Regular Safety Audits.

After I crossed under the Metro North railroad tracks in Darien (not so difficult; sidewalks of adequate width were on both sides of the road.) I was confronted with the intersection of US 1 and Route 124. For some reason I found that intersection nasty and confusing. It shouldn't be; it's simply a corner of two busy streets. Yet I felt that I was in danger. I wonder if the town officials, police, planners and such ever actually **walk the street to evaluate** them.

Town employee surveys – especially with advocates. Town officials and employees should actually walk the streets and the sidewalks that they build and maintain. Bring along a few advocates for comment, advice and support. Pedestrian and bike access to areas such as the train station in Westport would benefit from the knowledge of how awful they really are for the pedestrian.

XIII. A Counting Exercise – How Many Passengers in a Car?

The answer I got: out of **100 cars only 17 had a passenger**. In review, I was counting during go-to-school hour so I believe most of the passengers were children headed to school. Later I replicated the exercise on a road near where I live (Weston). I counted 100 cars with no passengers and four with children.

Halve the traffic? – Double the passengers! Check it out. Count the number of cars and the number of people being transported in those cars. The average will be very close to one person per car. If we moved say, 1.6 people / trip *we would reduce the traffic volume by almost 40%*. It would seem to be very cost effective to be proactive about increasing the car/passenger ratio.

XIV. Think Outside the (Big) Box.

On the portion of US 1 in Norwalk, the "Big Box Section," not only is ugly, but the customer often cannot **park in one lot and walk** to an adjacent one.

Area parking lots. It is simple common sense to encourage visiting several stores without moving the car. Unfortunately that is rarely the case. It is not just the jumble of stores in Norwalk's big box area, but everywhere in Connecticut, with some pleasant exemptions. For example, in Wilton, one can park in

one place and walk to downtown restaurants, the Post Office, CVS, Coffee shops, the library, grocery stores, take in a movie and get one's nails done.

XV. Once Again, Discontinuous Sidewalks.

Further on in Norwalk, at the intersection with Elmcrest, when the street (Elmcrest) crosses the sidewalk, the walk abruptly disappears and the shoulder does also. It is at a blind corner so the next step is a real surprise. The walk is replaced by a very high, approximately 15 foot, retaining wall. **The nearest crosswalk was about 200 feet behind.** Rather than go back I waited, watched and sped on foot across the four busy lanes US 1. I suspect that a child riding a bicycle on the sidewalk might not figure out the right thing to do and, instead, would go forward riding into traffic on a road with no shoulder.

When a lane ends we notify the motorist; if a sidewalk ends let us notify the pedestrian. While driving on a limited access highway, when a lane is terminated the motorist is warned so he or she can adjust. In our system of discontinuous sidewalks, a warning that the walkway will eminently disappear should be posted at the last crosswalk. The pedestrian thus has a chance to avoid the problem.

XVI. Keep it clean, please.

US 1 in Norwalk ducked beneath Super Seven, a limited access highway. I was pleased to see that the sidewalk continued below the underpass. However, the walk itself was **covered in debris and trash.**

Clean sidewalks, so much more pleasant. We clean the roads; let's clean the walks. The problem of really dirty and trashy sidewalks under overpasses is widespread throughout the state. In addition, there are weeds and brush, including poison ivy, creeping over the walk. Is the issue that the walk is deemed to be the responsibility of the state and not the town? It certainly reduces one's opinion of the both the town and roadway.

XVII. The Streams in Connecticut are Beautiful. Why Hide Them?

Continuing, I crossed the **Norwalk River** and, except that I knew it was there, there was no opportunity to enjoy the stream.

Rivers and water, our treasures. Should they be available to all of us? I do commend Norwalk for promoting walking (see NorWALKER), however I was disappointed to see no signage for the Harbor Loop Trail, a six mile loop around Norwalk Harbor that connects a variety of in-town communities. The beauty of the loop trail is that it celebrates the harbor and Norwalk River. The Norwalk River Valley Trail also does the same and, in my walk, I saw no mention of this. San Antonio's River Walk is an example of the re-vitalization (not gentrification) that opening a river can bring to a town or area. New York City also is beginning to understand the importance of allowing people to enjoy their waterfronts. Our state and towns should do likewise.

XVIII. Roadside Amenities and Bad Sidewalks, Part II.

A bit further in Norwalk, I discovered what could have been a very lovely roadside park, but wasn't. It was bereft of any, even modest, enhancements. At least it was mowed. Further on, there was a nice old church and cemetery and then Stew Leonard's self-proclaimed "world famous" grocery store. Over the next 1.2 miles to Whole Foods in Westport was another "Valley of the Ashes." In Westport, between the Whole Foods and the lovely Saugatuck River the sidewalks were meaningless. They did not exist, or changed sides of the road willy nilly, or were poorly kept. Westport, by the way, although they are slowly making changes, earned my title of **worst sidewalks** in Fairfield County.

Worst and Best US 1 Sidewalks in Connecticut. Let's extend this a little. Westport has the worst Route 1 sidewalks in the state. Shame. I know that they are working on the problem and I hope that they continue to do so. Stratford, with the exception of the disgraceful one half mile or so prior to the Washington Bridge over the Housatonic, has the best. Kudos.

XIX. Annoying Pedestrian Light. Pesky Advocate.

I met an **enthusiastic advocate** in Westport at Compo Center and Trader Joe's. I chose this place to meet because it is arguably the worst intersection on the Post Road in Westport and has been so for the almost 30 years that I have lived in the area. Central to this point is whether the pedestrian button works (or ever did). We think not. Unfortunately the really, really bad intersection in Westport is at the train station. My belief is (and I may be wrong) that the folks responsible for these intersections never *walk* them and hence have no idea of what the pedestrian encounters.

An idea whose time has come.

Work with pedestrian/bike advocates to improve active transportation in your town. It's inexpensive, efficient, promotes the town government to her citizens, and will actually accomplish something. Not to pick on Westport (again), but her US 1 sidewalks are shameful.

XX. When You Have a Fine Older Section of Town Why Screw It Up?

Fairfield held a mix of the best and the worst. I must comment on the magnificent copper beach in front of one of the churches on US 1. The town green is a wonderful example of a welcoming roadside park. The downtown commercial street has attractive neat shops, wide sidewalks and bicycle parking. A number of establishments offer food and drink at outdoor tables; a nice place to rest and talk – which I did with the local bike/ped committee. Lovely. That was the old Fairfield.

The new portion... What's to like? The development east of Beach Road is very unattractive; the MacDonald's traffic circle is impossible to negotiate safely as a pedestrian; the lack of understanding of pedestrian needs around I 95 interchanges 19 and 20 are dangerous and **23 is a bail-out**—don't try to walk it. (This interchange was one of the very few places I did not walk on The Road.)

It's not a world for cars only. Interchanges need a re-thinking. It's easy to see that, when I95 was built, the idea of active transportation was shunned not just by transportation departments, but also by everybody. Hence, when US 1 nears I95, the interchanges destroyed what was there including any active transportation infrastructure. The car-only mentality spilled over into the many strip malls that line US 1 and other major routes in the states. We must design for humans; optimizing our transportation to be only useful for automobiles is extremely destructive.

XXI. A Pleasant Detour.

To bypass exit 23 I followed pleasant side streets populated with modest homes. I arrived at another big box area including a Whole Foods where I enjoyed lunch. The Metro North train station near at hand was billed as a bike and pedestrian friendly station – **TOD**. However, I saw no indication that this was so. There was no visible infrastructure, no signage or directions. I understand that a lot of thought went into the site. How did we miss out so badly?

Transportation Design – the oft Missing Ingredient. When we build TOD let's remember that it won't work without pedestrians and cyclists and therefore must include active transportation design. My detour to Whole Foods really was on very pleasant streets. And it was extremely close to the Fairfield Metro train station. A little bike/ped encouragement would have been wonderful. “You can build the fastest train in the world, but if it doesn't connect to other systems at a local level, including walkways and bicycle paths, it's not going to do a lot of good,” said (Alan) Plattus, who thinks the Stamford station fails to make that connection” (from the *Connecticut Mirror*, 2/13/12). He's right about Stamford and the same words can be used for Fairfield Metro.

Connecticut has an enormous infrastructure of healthy stuff: Organic restaurants and groceries, Gyms, sports stores, bike shops and so on. If we promoted the lifestyle – and active transportation is at the heart of it – that goes with these offerings citizens and commerce would benefit. Where is the catalyst that will cause this happy meeting?

XXII. An old Beauty Still Lives.

Where US 1 crosses into Bridgeport at Mountain Grove Cemetery. It is green with old growth trees, well-maintained, tranquil and **beautifully landscaped**. It was designed in 1849 by PT Barnum; he was buried there. It is the most beautiful cemetery I passed.

Beauty, landscaping, preservation, history all belong and enhance. Some may think it does not pay, but it does.

XXIII. Magic!

The neighborhood between the cemetery and Park Avenue has numerous old houses on substantial lots, some of them nicely maintained, others deteriorating. At the corner of Clinton and US 1 is a house

owned by Colorblends® Bulbs. The dwelling has been restored and houses an artist-in-residence. The yard has been planted with some 25,000 flower bulbs. Colorblends® uses it as a “Display Garden.” **In this case beauty pays in art.**

You never know what you have until you look. Not everyone can walk across the state, but most can walk. The world is full of amazing things if you go slowly enough.

XXIV. Missing Signs.

In Bridgeport the US highway signs designating Route 1 simply disappeared. In fact in **poor communities** across the state the signs for Route 1 are missing. Curious, for Bridgeport earned my award for the best town street signs. They are visible, attractive, although perhaps overdone, and can be read by an individual with less than perfect vision at night.

Poor communities and federal highway signs. Bridgeport, Stratford, New Haven in the “Hill” area, and New London all had very few signs for Route 1. I remember seeing only one from the edge of Bridgeport to Stratford. Why not? Do poor people not need to identify their road?

XXV. Stratford Sidewalks and a Missing River.

In Stratford I encountered a neighborhood with modest homes and a **beautiful sidewalk system**, at least on Route 1. However as soon as we came to the railroad, walking was marginalized and dangerous. The sidewalk disappeared; the way under I95 was not obvious, either on a traditional map, or from Google Maps. Eventually, after studying the system as best as I could I plunged under the I95 highway and, remarkably, came out, alive, on the other side, on Ferry Street, intact. Pedestrian access to the Housatonic River is effectively cut off.

Best Route 1 sidewalks in the State. Stratford earned my award for best sidewalks in the state, that is, until I reached the railroad. Both Stratford and Bridgeport had sidewalks that were far superior to the other towns in Fairfield County.

Reclaim the waterfront. Some of the finer things about Connecticut are Long Island Sound and our beautiful rivers and streams. It’s a shame when we neglect or hinder access to these resource.

XXVI. The View from the Bridge.

I crossed the Housatonic from Stratford to Milford on Washington Bridge. The **view from the bridge** toward long Island is magnificent, not because of what man has done (except leave things alone) but what nature has gifted us with.

Well Enough Is Best Left Alone.

XXVII. Kids Being Kids.

When I entered Milford I found a small park at the riverbank. I rested on a pleasant bench and watched two boys skateboard – unsupervised kids having fun, imagine that. Immediately following the park I found Route 1 to be a pleasant street. I enjoyed lunch at a small restaurant. Thereafter the road precipitously went from good to bad. There was nowhere to pleasantly walk, sidewalks abruptly ended, and there was mile after mile of trashy sprawl featuring vast parking lots and overgrown and crumbling sidewalks. Route 162 intersects US 1 at a “Y.” It was a nightmare to cross and is actually **impossible to cross safely**.

I crossed two interesting streams. One featured several fish spawning (I’ve never seen that before); the other had a turtle languidly dancing in the water. How **wonderful nature can be** if we only allow her to be seen.

Crosswalk? On Milford’s Route 1 there was no crosswalk between West Main and Schoolhouse Road, a distance of one mile. Route 1 was designed to be deadly to pedestrians – and the design works. All arterials that I am familiar with share the same deadly feature of limited crosswalks, often near pedestrian attractions such as delis, coffee shops and office buildings.

The next generation of conservationists will be found – where? The two streams should have been real attractions to kids, but no parent would allow their child to play in the mud and sand, fish, torture frogs and doze and dream in the sun. They can’t get there because of the road. We need to connect with nature much more than we need to connect with Game Stop. Maybe those two kids skateboarding will rise to the challenge.

XXVIII. Buying a Paper.

In Milford I stayed at the Howard Johnsons near the US1/195 interchange. And to planners everywhere, but particularly in Milford, **how am I to walk** from Howard Johnson’s to the CVS to buy a newspaper? It’s possible, but dangerous. While it’s only two blocks I could have driven, but I did not have a car. Many people do not have cars and many more, in the future, will also be car free. Those millennials who chose to be car free will not be in Connecticut.

Do Roads Connect or Divide (again)? Route 1 is loaded with such inadequacies. This is one example. If you look elsewhere on this type of heavily trafficked roadway you will quickly find multiples.

XXIX. A Dawn Walk.

My challenge in resuming my walk from the Milford Howard Johnson’s was the **I95 interchange**, 39B. It’s an old-style classic cloverleaf and easy for the pedestrian to cross – *if there is no traffic*. I started my walk at 6:00 AM on a Saturday, hence had no problem. If it were rush hour or a time when the limitless stores were open along the Milford/Orange/East Haven malls I would have been in danger. An alternate route for pedestrians is not clear; probably Forest Road/Cedarhurst Lane, if you can find it, which adds an unwanted mile to the trip. And such an alternate must be marked to be useful.

Interchanges and Pedestrians. Unfortunately, we are left with a legacy of such interchanges. In many cases, and I assume this is one; the cost to remediate the flawed road is too much. One key is, going forward, we must follow the dictates of complete streets and, never again, engineer such flawed roadways. In the meantime it makes sense to clearly mark alternatives.

XXX. The Boulevard that Isn't.

And a great opportunity lost. Progressing along US 1 I encountered a five-mile collection of retail outlets in Milford, Orange & West Haven. In one area of about two tenths of a mile I counted almost 30 shops, ranging from Boston Market to Whole Foods.

This stretch could have been part of a magnificent boulevard, a lovely linear park, but it isn't. The road is essentially flat, with enough undulations to make it interesting. It is also straight enough to provide an end-to-end vista that could have concluded with a splendid roundabout at the now-dangerous intersection with State Road 122

I visualize a canopy of shade trees along both sides of the route with a shaded center median. As the trees mature they would have provided a beautiful street allee arching over pleasant sidewalks. Amenities on each side of the boulevard could have included cafes, children's areas, and bicycle support kiosks. The many shops and stores on each side still could have been present with the proviso ***that parking should be behind the stores.*** In West Haven we can read ***the future of this strip***; namely empty parking lots, unleased shops, dollar stores, outlets, liquidation warehouses, and semitrailer parking lots.

Plan for a century not for 15 years. All along the Post Road, in newer areas, we see the result of short term planning. We must understand that the world continues after our developments ungracefully grow old and die.

XXXI. Deadman's Corner and a Fine Surprise.

Further along I expected to find another place that I would be forced to leave US 1: In West Haven, near the University of New Haven and just west of the intersection with Route 122. I had dubbed this section "Dead Man's Corner." Here the sidewalk on the north side, the left side for me, simply disappears; it first becomes a narrow goat trail which pinches out, forcing the walker to walk into traffic on a blind curve. I had noted this problem on an earlier exploration and had planned a couple of alternatives. But, by the time I got there, the University and DOT had installed a blessed stretch of sidewalk. I was able to cross at a light by the University and continued, as planned, to the under-construction intersection with 122.

Thank you DOT. Thank you, NHU

XXXII. Union Station, New Haven.

Union Station has covered secure bike parking and a nexus of marked and signed routes for the active transportation user. That is the simple useful basics. Other cities in our area – Boston, New York and Washington, for example, have discovered this recipe.

Advice for the Planner. Are you nonplussed by the *Complete Streets Law* and its requirement to bring active transportation infrastructure to your town or city? Check out what has been done in places like New Haven and, most importantly, talk to advocates in those towns. There are now six Connecticut Communities, besides New Haven, that are deemed to be Bicycle Friendly by the League of American Bicyclist. Simsbury was the first with Farmington, Glastonbury, New Britain, South Windsor and West Hartford joining them. There are bike friendly communities in Alaska and Arizona. They are big cities such as New York and Chicago and small towns with populations less than 1000.

XXXIII. Tomlinson Bridge, Revisited.

In 2010, when I was the chairman during the first full year of the State Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Board, Advocates in New Haven were very upset because the work on the Q Bridge had created a hazardous condition on the east approach of the Tomlinson Bridge. A little-used railroad that shared the bridge structure with Route 1 crossed at such an angle that it created a trap for bicycle wheels. Several cyclists went down and the reported injuries were as severe as a broken pelvis. There was much discussion among the Board, the advocates and the DOT. Eventually, the DOT, with the great help of advocates, found a rubber wedge system which closed the cracks yet still allowed train passage.

On my cross-state walk I crossed that bridge. As I did so I was passed by a cyclist who casually rode across the tracks, no harm done. I smiled and went on – sometimes something works

Listen to your advocates. Had it not been for the Elm City Cyclists, the city advocacy group, I do not believe that the condition would have ever received an appropriate level of attention. Elm City's appeals to the State Bike Ped Board brought attention from the DOT which helped. Advocates can seem annoying and that is when it is most important to listen to them. The best solutions are made as an advocacy-community team.

XXXIV. Once again I Leave US 1.

When I reviewed a map of Route 1 in East Haven it was clear that this was another point where I must depart from the highway. The Route became contiguous with I95; I would have been walking with my back to traffic on the exit ramp. This is another legacy of antiquated cars-only design. It was easy to find an alternate route which took me through downtown East Haven. To walk from downtown New Haven to East Haven is less than four miles; however this option is removed from all but the most intrepid traveler because of bad road design.

As I checked into my motel I found that a woman adventurer –pedestrian had proceeded me. Her destination was Boston. Recently Senator Chris Murphy also walked across the state.

XXXV. Saltonstall Parkway.

Main Street from East Haven connects to the Saltonstall Parkway near the Branford line. Again, it raises the question: Do roads connect or divide. I was out early, pre-rush hour, and was able to cross the road

to **walk facing traffic** on the adequate shoulder, but had I been later in the day I would have been forced to walk with my back to traffic on a very busy road.

The Statute is clear; the Statute is Simple -- Walk on left facing traffic. It is not always easy to do so.

XXXVI. Branford.

This town serves as a transition from the more heavily developed areas to the west. One notable feature is that the ramps at exit 55 are signalized. A pedestrian can cross safely. Compare this to exit 39B where the pedestrian is a crippled pigeon in a shooting gallery. I met **a fellow in Branford** near Starbucks who was on a bike. He was carrying a shopping bag. He told me he goes everywhere on his bike and saves a lot of money thereby. He also had been in several car accidents (while in a car) and had had several serious surgeries because of that.

Car-Free People. I have encountered a number of people who have given up on cars. In fact, living in New York City I had a period of more than a decade where I had no driver's license. It was simply inconvenient to drive. Others have mentioned the dangers of cars, the cost of cars and the joy of being car free. (carefree). One chap, a musician, related that, by not owning a car he was able to buy a piano. A family's lifetime *modest* automobile budget may be more than a million dollars.

XXXVII. Guilford.

Suddenly the highway becomes more rural. There's traffic of course, but the wide shoulders in a country atmosphere provided a pleasant feel. I met with the Chair of the Shoreline Greenway Trail. She explained to me plans to expand the trail to parallel Route One and provide safe access from Eastern Guilford to Madison. She mentioned that she wanted to walk with me, but on consideration thought that **it was too dangerous for her to cross the road.**

Crossing the Road. Simply stated, why should people fear crossing the main street of their town? And this is a ubiquitous issue, not just along US 1, but also on many other congested highways in the state. The answer is simple: People fear crossing because the roads are designed wrong. Here's a simple illustration. How does one walk from the DOT Headquarters building across Route 5 to get a tat at Nautilus Tattoo?

XXXVIII. The Prettiest Town on the Post Road.

I walked through 25 towns. Many had pretty sections usually marred by sprawl developments near the edges of older downtowns. Some unattractive towns had surprisingly lovely features that caught the eye. Of course I saw these towns only from their major accessible highway and did not evaluate the entire town. But I saw the town as most motorists would they drove through the downtown whether a local shopper or someone off the Interstate. We should do a lot better than we do.

That said, the prettiest town was Madison with its limited sprawl, a lovely green and a functional, pleasant downtown business section. Curiously, the new sections, in Madison and all along Route 1, are the ugly places. I assume that is because the new sections are designed around the automobile.

XXXIX. And Where Is the Bridge?

I crossed the Connecticut and Thames Rivers. In both cases US 1 became part of I95. Fortunately, each bridge had a walk/bike way cantilevered from the main span. Good. What was bad is the lack of signage informing one as to where the bridge was. These multi-use bridge crossings are vital. We should point them out.

XL. Not Just US 1.

I left US 1 in Flanders, an area of East Lyme, for state road 161 where I would spend the night at a motel. 161 is a very busy road, with few sidewalks and some narrow goat trails. The greenery was often prodigious poison ivy reaching out to snuggle against one's ankles. The restaurant I wanted to go to for food and the Starbucks for coffee were across 161. The nearest cross walk was about ½ a mile away, at US 1. No pedestrian is likely to walk that far. I certainly did not, but fled across when opportunity presented itself. I was a Jay Runner.

The area under the I95 underpass was, of course, filthy.

Is there a solution?

The problem is ubiquitous. Part of the solution is simple. Provide sidewalks where needed and adequate crosswalks.

XLI. Mystic, a Livable Town.

Mystic is not a town but is part of either Stonington or New London. I love the downtown by the drawbridge. The area has been developed to serve people, not cars.

XLII. Ah, Westerly, RI.

The walk ends. Glad it's over. Sorry it's over. I had a great time. I crossed Connecticut's other boundary river, the Pawcatuck in the morning in time for a nice unhealthy breakfast courtesy of my wife, a splendid woman who supported me every step (approximately 112,320) of my journey.