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27 Comments

## Chris Christie Sticks It to Pedestrians for No Discernible Reason

by [Angie Schmitt](#)

In 2014, [170 people were killed while walking](#) on New Jersey streets, accounting for 31 percent of total traffic deaths in the state (about double the national share). In addition, [13 people were killed while biking](#) that year.

To address the problem, lawmakers and advocates in New Jersey have been working on a bill to establish a Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Advisory Council to advise multiple agencies in state government.

The measure sailed through the state legislature, but Governor Chris Christie had other ideas. Cyndi Steiner and Aaron Hyndman at [New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition](#) report that Christie, the same guy who [stopped the ARC transit tunnel](#), issued a "pocket veto" to kill the measure:



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Legislation sponsored by state Senators [Nia Gill](#) and [Diane Allen](#), as well as [Pamela R. Lampitt](#), [Daniel R. Benson](#), [Valerie Valinieri Huttie](#), and [Tim Eustace](#) in the Assembly, to create a Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Advisory Council had won unanimous approval from the Senate (October 2015) and Assembly (January 2016), and with the Governor's signature, would have established a new commission designed to carry on the work of the NJDOT's [Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Council](#) (BPAC). The new Council would have examined issues related to pedestrian and bicycle safety and would advise the governor, legislature, NJ Department of Transportation and other state agencies on solutions that will make New Jersey communities safer and friendlier for bicyclists and pedestrians.

While New Jersey's DOT has had a BPAC for more than 20 years, and in September 2014 introduced a new version that included other stakeholder agencies, this is the first time that the state legislature would have mandated such a commission and codified it by statute, demonstrating the need for such a council not only within DOT but across transportation, planning, and health agencies. As a result, bicycle and pedestrian safety would have now been elevated to the forefront of state-level policymaking. In other words, we thought we had arrived. We were wrong.

With the previous legislative session having come to a close, Governor Christie had the option of signing the bill into law by today's noon deadline, or allowing the bill to expire without action: the so-called "pocket veto." Unlike the standard veto, which carries with it an explanatory statement describing the rationale behind the action, a pocket veto lets the legislation expire with no explanation from the executive, more or less letting it fade away without a trace.

Unfortunately, Governor Christie's decision (or indecision) today was to let this valuable piece of legislation, one seen as so useful and well-constructed that it passed the ENTIRE legislature — Senate AND Assembly — without a single "no" vote, go unsigned. As a result, it's back to square one.

Elsewhere on the Network today: [Greater Greater Washington](#) shares big news from DC — a zoning update to make housing more affordable and the city more walkable won final approval this week. And [Twin Cities Sidewalks](#), reflecting on a bizarre op-ed that endorses aggressive driving, delves into the strange ways getting behind the wheel of a car affects human behavior.