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## Boston ranked as safest for walkers among US cities

Posted by David Stewart

By Eric Moskowitz, Globe Staff

America's safest city for pedestrians? Boston? Tell that to anyone who has ever hopped from island to island at Kenmore, forded four lanes of traffic and two lanes of trolleys on Huntington Avenue, or slammed on the brakes to avoid the legions crossing against the light.

And yet, the Hub came out best today on a ranking from a national advocacy coalition.

Among the 52 metropolitan areas with at least 1 million residents, Florida claimed four of the five worst spots in the "Dangerous by Design 2011" report from Transportation for America, which advocates for more transportation spending, emphasizing walking, biking, and mass transit.

The ranking uses a "Pedestrian Danger Index" that takes into account pedestrian fatalities from 2000 to 2009, the size of the region, and the local popularity of walking.

The Sun Belt proved most dangerous, reflecting the hazards of setting out on foot in sprawling cities built up in an era when planners focused on making roads wider and faster for cars -- and where drivers are less accustomed to pedestrians.

During the last decade, 47,700 walkers nationally were killed in crashes, including 483 in Greater Boston and 724 statewide, according to federal statistics. All of the fatalities are plotted on an interactive map at [t4america.org](http://t4america.org).

Peter Furth, a Northeastern University transportation engineering professor, said Boston has relatively few multilane roads that lack crosswalks and sidewalks. Still, safety features standard in Europe remain rare here, such as "refuge islands" that let pedestrians stop amid traffic.

"Everybody calls Boston America's most European city, and so it's no coincidence that we've got a relatively low fatality rate," said Furth, who is not affiliated with the report. "In German cities, Dutch cities, Swedish cities, the pedestrian fatality rates are still three times less than ours, so we still have lessons to learn."

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