America Walks Statement on 2016 National Traffic Fatalities

America Walks is alarmed and saddened by grim statistics released earlier this month showing that traffic deaths have spiked for the second year in a row.

A total of 40,200 people – each one a family member, friend, and neighbor – lost their lives in motor vehicle-related crashes in the U.S. in 2016. The figure marks an increase of 6% from 2015 and a staggering 14% from 2014, according to the National Safety Council. NSC noted that 2016 was the first time the annual fatality rate exceeded 40,000 since 2007.

The increase is attributed to a variety of factors, including lower gas prices and an economic recovery that are encouraging people to drive more, the mounting problem of distracted driving, and, in some cases, lenient laws and traffic enforcement.

The data, which are provisional, do not break down fatalities by mode, so it is unclear how many pedestrians were included in these statistics. However, America Walks Executive Director Kate Kraft called the spike “another reminder of the significant work that remains to be done to make our roads safe and appealing for community members of all ages and abilities, and in particular those who move through the public rights of way outside of automobiles, when they are often most vulnerable.”

Kraft said the news illustrates the importance of continuing to advocate for improved roadway safety as a new administration takes shape in Washington, D.C. and that America Walks will continue to work to ensure that newly-appointed U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, Congress and President Trump understand the essential need for investment in infrastructure and policies that benefit people walking, bicycling, and taking transit.