The internet pedestrian issues chatlist, PEDNET, continues to have discussions of interest to Injury Prevention readers. Reflecting the international character of the internet, comparisons between countries are frequent. Charles Komanoff (kce@igc.org) noted that despite Tokyo, London, and Paris having populations within 10% of those of New York City, Tokyo and Paris have half as many pedestrians. New York, and London has two thirds as many. Komanoff noted that New York may be pedestrian friendly by dint of land use, but it isn’t in terms of endangerment created by aggressive drivers, pedestrian oriented road design and traffic laws, and law enforcement.

Pedestrian advocates spent much ‘bandwidth’ in the last quarter discussing the role of traffic law. One thread focused on the differences between how countries define ‘walking across a street’. European participants were surprised to learn that in many parts of the US, a person may cross major streets only at intersections. (What pedestrians should be allowed to cross mid-block has also been discussed in the medical literature.) Robert Bump (robbump@du.albany.ny.us) pointed out that, theoretically, a mid-block crossing should be less likely to result in a conflict with a motor vehicle. He noted that at intersections, pedestrians are potentially endangered by motorists turning left and right, in addition to cross traffic. North American pedestrians face an additional danger from right-turn-on-red laws. In contrast, a mid-block crossing has just one potential conflict from each direction of traffic.

Bump also compared the restrictions on movements of pedestrians with restrictions on movements of motor vehicles. Motorists do the equivalent of mid-block crossings when they enter or exit driveways. Bump questions the fairness of allowing these maneuvers by cars while outlawing their equivalent by pedestrians.

Support for the notion that mid-block crossing could be safer comes from statistics showing pedestrians are more dangerous at intersections. (What pedestrians should be allowed to cross mid-block has also been discussed in the medical literature.) Robert Bump (robbump@du.albany.ny.us) pointed out that, theoretically, a mid-block crossing should be less likely to result in a conflict with a motor vehicle. He noted that at intersections, pedestrians are potentially endangered by motorists turning left and right, in addition to cross traffic. North American pedestrians face an additional danger from right-turn-on-red laws. In contrast, a mid-block crossing has just one potential conflict from each direction of traffic.

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