

## N.J. gets \$25M to help reduce traffic deaths

- Updated: Feb. 01, 2023, 5:37 p.m. |
- Published: Feb. 01, 2023, 11:08 a.m.

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The Federal Highway Administration awarded \$25 million in Safe Streets and Road for All grants to 11 New Jersey municipalities and agencies as part of a larger national program intended to reduce increasing traffic deaths.

The grants, announced by U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg Wednesday, fund one construction project for road safety improvements in Vineland and 10 planning grants across the state. Overall, \$800 million in grants were awarded for 510 projects through the new Safe Streets and Roads for All competitive grant program.

The purpose of the grant program is to prevent deaths and serious injuries on the nation's roadways, which reached record levels in the nation and New Jersey in 2021 and approached those levels in 2022 in the state. New Jersey State police put the latest death toll at 699 fatalities in 2022 as of Wednesday.

The number of 2022 state traffic fatalities topped the 2021 death toll, when 697 people were killed in crashes and collisions, the highest since 2007. National numbers for 2022 are still being tabulated.

The Safe Roads for All program grants support the federal DOT's vision of zero roadway deaths and its National Roadway Safety Strategy that was launched in January 2022 to make the nation's roadways safer.

**The lone construction grant in New Jersey is \$20 million for Chestnut Avenue Safety Improvements and Rehabilitation in Vineland. The grant funds improvements on a 2.3-mile corridor of Chestnut Avenue between Route 47 and Main Road.**

Plans call for improvements to separate vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians to reduce crashes. That will be done by converting the four-lane road to a three-lane section with a two way left-turn lane; installing lighting, Americans with Disabilities Act compliant walkways, bicycle lanes; lighting to increase visibility at crosswalks; modernized traffic signals; and rehabilitating sidewalks, USDOT officials said.

“The work required is substantial, which without this grant would place a severe financial burden on Vineland taxpayers,” said Vinland Mayor Anthony Fanucci “Although final details for the project are still being considered, there is no doubt that this investment will improve traffic, biking, and pedestrian safety along this portion of Chestnut Avenue>

That section of road had over 660 accidents in the period between 2012-2016, he said.

USDOT awarded 10 action planning grants to help improve road safety to Dunellen Borough, Atlantic City, Cape May, Paterson and Medford Township. Four counties, Essex, Hudson Monmouth and Union, will receive grants, as will the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority.

The planning grants help communities that don’t have a road safety plan in place to reduce traffic fatalities by developing a comprehensive set of actions, USDOT officials said.

New Jersey’s two senators said the grant program is among the reasons they supported the larger Nov. 2021 federal infrastructure law.

“This investment in street and roadway improvements will mean enhanced safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists across our state,” said U.S Senator Robert Menendez in a statement.

USDOT also launched a data visualization tool that shows crash hotspots that can help agencies target needed resources. That interactive map allows anyone to zero in on a fatal crash on a map.

“We must make our streets safer for all who use them,” said U.S. Senator Cory Booker.

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