Why do Memorial Walks? Seattle averages eight pedestrian fatalities and three bike fatalities each year. Memorial Walks allow victims’ families a chance to mourn, increase general community support for engineered safety improvements (reduced speed, parking restrictions, signals), and push politicians and city staff into action. We gather local community, broader advocacy community, and city officials to regularly and respectfully respond to every pedestrian and biking fatality can bring positive solutions.

• Day 1 Confirm details of the fatality
"Who, what, where, when, why." Note people involved, including eyewitnesses. The "why" covers all factors leading to the fatality. Determine location and specifics of fatality, time of day, weather conditions, the route of the victim. Ask if this location appeared on previous safety studies or plans. All details part of message.

• Day 2 Initiate community outreach
Reach out to local Councils, PTSAs, religious groups, groups the victim may have been connected to, and local community connectors to discuss a Memorial Walk and Meeting on safer streets. Collect email and phone contact info. Ask local community leaders to initiate meeting with City officials. Local leaders should be point of contact for media and should help to publicize the Walk. Remind people that speeding, impaired and distracted drivers are the major cause of fatalities. Invite traffic safety advocacy groups to participate.

• Day 3 Initiate City outreach and continue community dialog
Start the process of scheduling a Meeting immediately prior after the Walk with local city and community leaders. Local leaders can identify best place to gather BEFORE the Walk (coffee shop, landmark) and meeting place after. Locals can ask businesses to donate coffee & donuts. Send out 1st press release with contacts from local community and advocates.

• Day 4 Initiate family involvement and begin public outreach
Find local community member who is in touch with the family & friends of the victim. Ask them to approach family to respectfully ask if they want to participate in the Memorial Walk/Bike or any of the community meetings. Discuss with community leaders and/or family for the most locally and culturally appropriate physical way to remember the victim (e.g. with donations, candles, flowers, or food bank food).

• Day 5 Discuss Memorial Walk/Bike logistics and inform the media
Determine Walk/Bike route with community leaders, family, witnesses. Communicate route to city, police, community leaders. Send out a second press release w specific updates, and follow-up Meeting details.

• Day 6 Invite public to paint signs and continue community and City dialog
It takes a day for paint to dry. Press releases will mention if sign painting is happening at a local venue. Signs might say Safe Healthy Streets; Safe Streets Save Lives; Look Out for Each Other; Family-Friendly Streets

• Day 7 Do the Memorial Walk/Bike with City/Community Leaders Planning Meeting following Volunteer Roles: (one person can do more than one job): Press relations, route stewards, photographers, City staff liaison, family liaison, sign person, local venue liaison, Police liaison. Bring signs, megaphone, physical material: flowers, food bank cans, “I brake for people” stickers. If possible, follow the footsteps or bike route of the victim for several blocks.

• Day 8 Send out a follow-up review and thank-you emails
Thank community leaders, family, press, and City staff. Work with the community on larger actions, such as Community Meeting #2.

work fast! One week may be too quick, but one month is too late to realize advocacy benefits. We forget as a community, city, culture and fail to make changes if we wait too long.

www.seattlegreenways.org/memorialwalksrider
Memorial Walks and Bicycle Rides
are effective advocacy events that require sensitivity to plan.

Here are ideas and common issues we’ve encountered.

• Relate to the family in a sensitive way. Get to know the victim.
• It is REALLY hard to dig out information from hospital and police
because of concerns about privacy, civil litigation, liability.
• Active transpo advocacy groups may not want to participate since they
also offer encouragement programs and fatalities are discouraging.
• Be aware of blaming the victim: no helmet, dark clothing, texting
while walking, jaywalking. Avoid this in interactions with press/public.
• Multiple sets of circumstances: we want a single solution when there
are many - bright sunlight, drunk driver, badly design street.
• The equity issue. People who die in low income places do not inspire
the quick action of deaths in high income areas- it’s universal.
• Cultural issues. Not braking for people, failure to yield. We’re working
on a cultural change of entitlement of people who drive. We highlight risk
and responsibility of people driving a car. Cars are loaded weapons.
• Be aware of language of responsibility: A truck lost control, a car crashed
into a building rather than “a person driving a truck…” Train yourself
and others never to use the word “accident”!

Some of our unresolved questions
Should we memorialize the suicides of people who walk on train tracks?
What about people who don’t die immediately, but stay in the ICU for
months? What about permanently disabling injury incidents?

Traffic is a public health menace.
Biggest threat is not the instance of death, but that people do not use
streets anymore for active living. We avoid walking and biking in places
we perceive of as dangerous.

Walking and biking are not dangerous but we can make them
safer with effective public policy, better engineering, stricter
enforcement and more responsive education.

We want to encourage everyone to live active, healthy lives
on our safe and healthy streets!

www.seattlegreenways.org/memorialwalksrides
Seattle Neighborhood Greenways