

Toronto's first traffic fatality of the year follows a tragically familiar pattern

Deadly design? Where accident happened, Lawrence Avenue has six lanes in both directions, acts as a highway, despite being in a busy residential area.



Toronto's first traffic fatality of the year followed a tragically familiar pattern: a pedestrian, elderly, hit by a car driver, on an arterial road, and in Scarborough.

The 78-year-old male, whom police have not identified, as is customary with victims of traffic collisions, was walking southbound on Brockley Drive

in the evening hours Thursday.

As he crossed the intersection at Lawrence Avenue East, an eastbound driver struck and knocked him down. He was later pronounced deceased at the hospital.

It's not clear whether speed was a factor in the collision.

The driver fled the scene of the collision.

Police have described the vehicle as a dark-coloured sedan, which will likely have some damage at the front bumper and headlight areas.

"It is an offence under both the Criminal Code and Ontario Highway Traffic Act to leave the scene of an accident in which you were involved," said police spokesperson Laura Brabant.

Investigating officers are appealing to local residents, business owners in the area or other drivers who may have security or dash camera recordings of the fatal incident to share them with police.

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By midday, Friday police were reporting that another [pedestrian was in hospital with life-threatening injuries](#), after being struck by a driver. The collision also took place in Scarborough, at Steeles Avenue and Middlefield Road.

Road fatalities have been on the rise for several years, despite the city's efforts to address the issue through its Vision Zero program.

And while traffic volumes decreased significantly over the past two years due to pandemic restrictions, the carnage on the roads seems to have continued unabated.

Last year, Toronto recorded a total of 63 traffic deaths, up from 46 in 2020 and 64 in 2019. Each year, pedestrians are the most vulnerable on the roads. Toronto lost 29 people who were walking in 2021, 23 in 2020 and 39 in 2019.

Over the years, Scarborough has accounted for a [disproportionately high number](#) of pedestrian collisions and deaths. One of the most high-profile case last year was the death of 17-year-old [Nadia Mozumder](#), who was killed during the daylight in October while crossing the intersection of Danforth and Birchmount.

While driver behaviour is a critical factor in combating road fatalities, traffic safety advocates say the prevalence of badly designed streets is to blame, too.

“Scarborough has long stretches of road without proper pedestrian infrastructure, so pedestrians need to walk unrealistic distances to cross busy multi-lane roads,” said Jonathan Schmidt, a resident of Scarborough and long-time road-safety advocate.

He said punitive measures, such as ticketing drivers and installing photo radars on the roads, are not enough on their own; while drivers must be responsible and operate their vehicles in a way that avoids causing injury and death to other road users, roads should be engineered and designed in ways that force drivers to reduce speed and make fewer mistakes while behind the wheels.

“We are only in the first week of 2022 and the city has already failed to live up to this commitment” of reducing traffic deaths and injuries to zero, he said.

At the intersection where this fatality took place, Lawrence Avenue has six lanes in both directions, making it feel and look like a highway for many drivers despite being in a busy residential area with retail and schools, said

Marvin Macaraig, another road safety advocate and health promoter with Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services.

Arterial roads such as Lawrence Avenue at this stretch make up about 21 per cent of all city roadways, but they account for 83 per cent of collisions resulting in fatalities or serious injuries, according to Vision Zero 2.0 plan as updated in 2019.

“The number of serious injuries and fatalities on Scarborough’s arterial roads will likely continue until we are able to make major changes in our arterial road network,” said Macaraig.