Route 30 Tops List Of Region's Deadliest Roads

Reporting
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JEANNETTE (KDKA) — Christopher's Pizza has called Route 30 home for nearly a quarter of a century and every year more businesses are setting up shop there.

"Irwin's been developed and Sam's Club and Wal-Mart, and new stuff is going up there, traffic's gotten pretty heavy over the years," Pizza shop owner Chris Sylvana said.

More than 45,000 cars pass by his place everyday and that means learning some new habits behind the wheel.

"You just don't stay in the fast lane, because you know sooner or later, someone's going to be turning, and that's where a lot of the accidents happen."

And while most accidents are just fender benders, enough of those turned fatal to make Route 30 in Westmoreland County our region's deadliest road. There were 23 fatal accidents there between 2002-2006, according to a federal database.

Second on the list is Route 51 in Allegheny County, with 19 fatal accidents during that same period.

"You come around, there's stopping, people changing lanes, there's no center barrier, there's usually two lanes going in both directions that are heavily congested, so that plays a part in it," Baldwin Police Chief Christopher Kelly said.

Third on the list is Route 19 in Allegheny County with 17 fatal crashes. Rounding out the top five is Route 8 in Butler County with 16, followed by another 14 for Route 8 in Allegheny County which tied with Route 28 in Allegheny County.

And while causes range from anything to weather to human error, in the case of Route 30, part of it goes back to supply falling behind demand.

"The highway was not designed to handle the traffic it has."

Now whether it's widening the road, or putting a barrier down the middle of it, there are several trains of thoughts on how to fix Route 30. But Smart Growth of Westmoreland County says it has a different idea. While it wants to improve Route 30, it says the only way to make it safer is to get people off it.

"A Westmoreland County community is reliant upon the economic possibilities along Route 30 and if it breaks down because it's congested and no one wants to drive it, no one benefits from that situation," Alexander Graziani, of Smart Growth, said.

His group is mapping out a master plan for Route 30 which includes creating parallel access roads between different points, bypassing Route 30. That's what developers created between the old Greengate Mall and another complex a half mile away. It's one way, Graziani says, of balancing inevitable

development with public safety.

"By limiting or decreasing the rate of demand, over time, hopefully, there are less accidents as well."

KDKA's Jim Lokay has compiled detailed data on all the most heavily-traveled roads in our area - including counties that were not mentioned in his piece.

LINK: Download the 15-page PDF document

To search an online database of fatal accidents, visit http://www-fars.nhtsa.dot.gov.