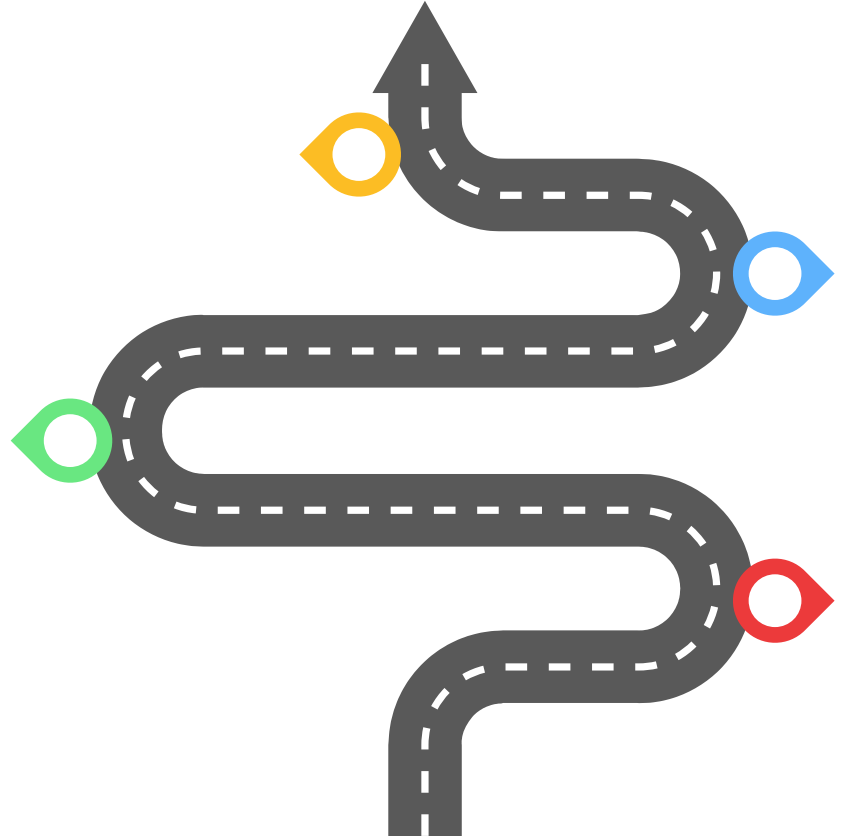


Road Safety in Fairfax County

Selam Demeke, Public Health Youth Ambassador

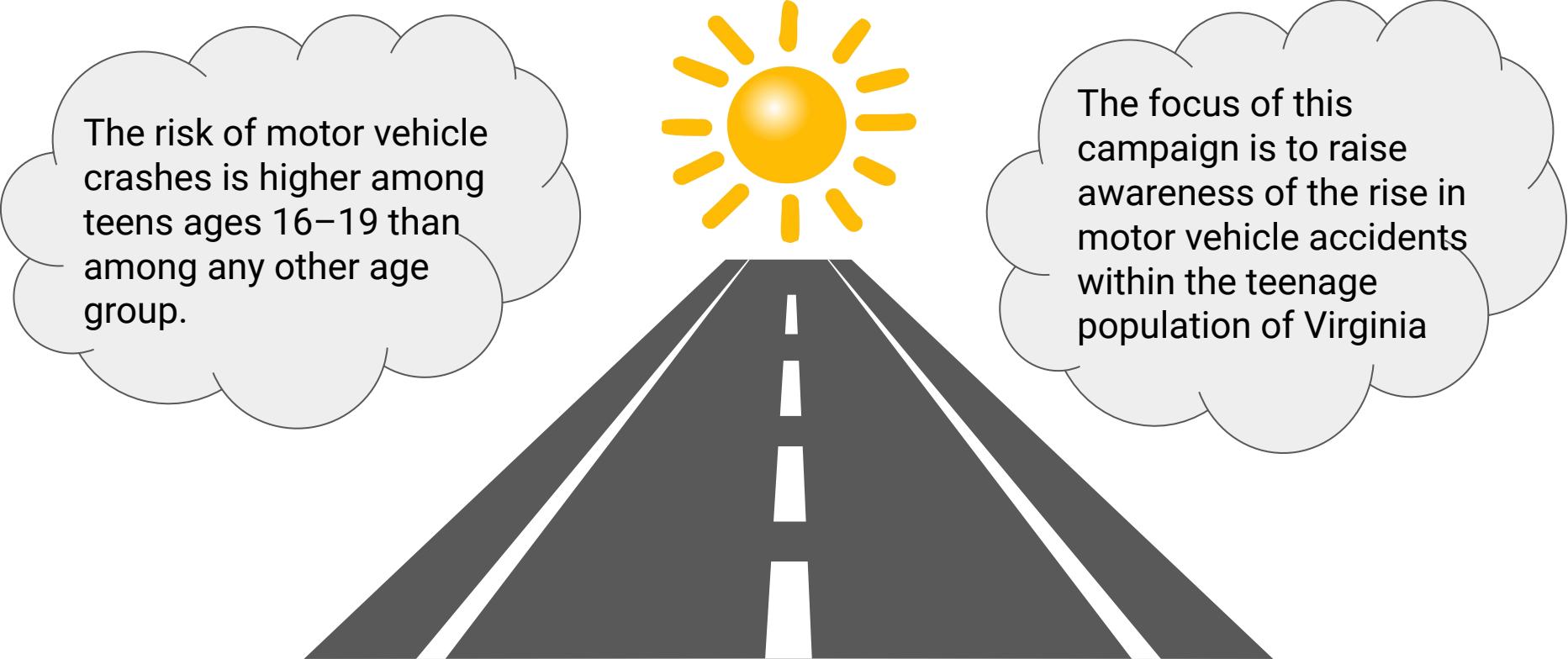


Selam Demeke

(Seh-Lahm Deh-meh-ke)



Issue and Focus

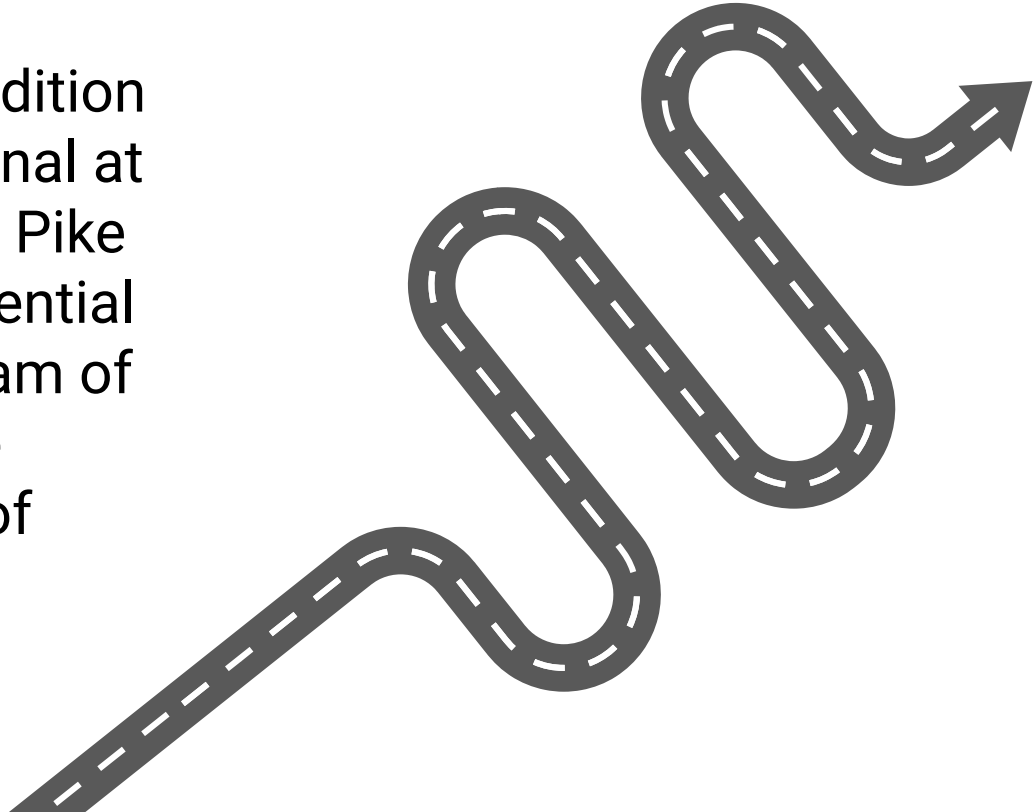


The risk of motor vehicle crashes is higher among teens ages 16–19 than among any other age group.

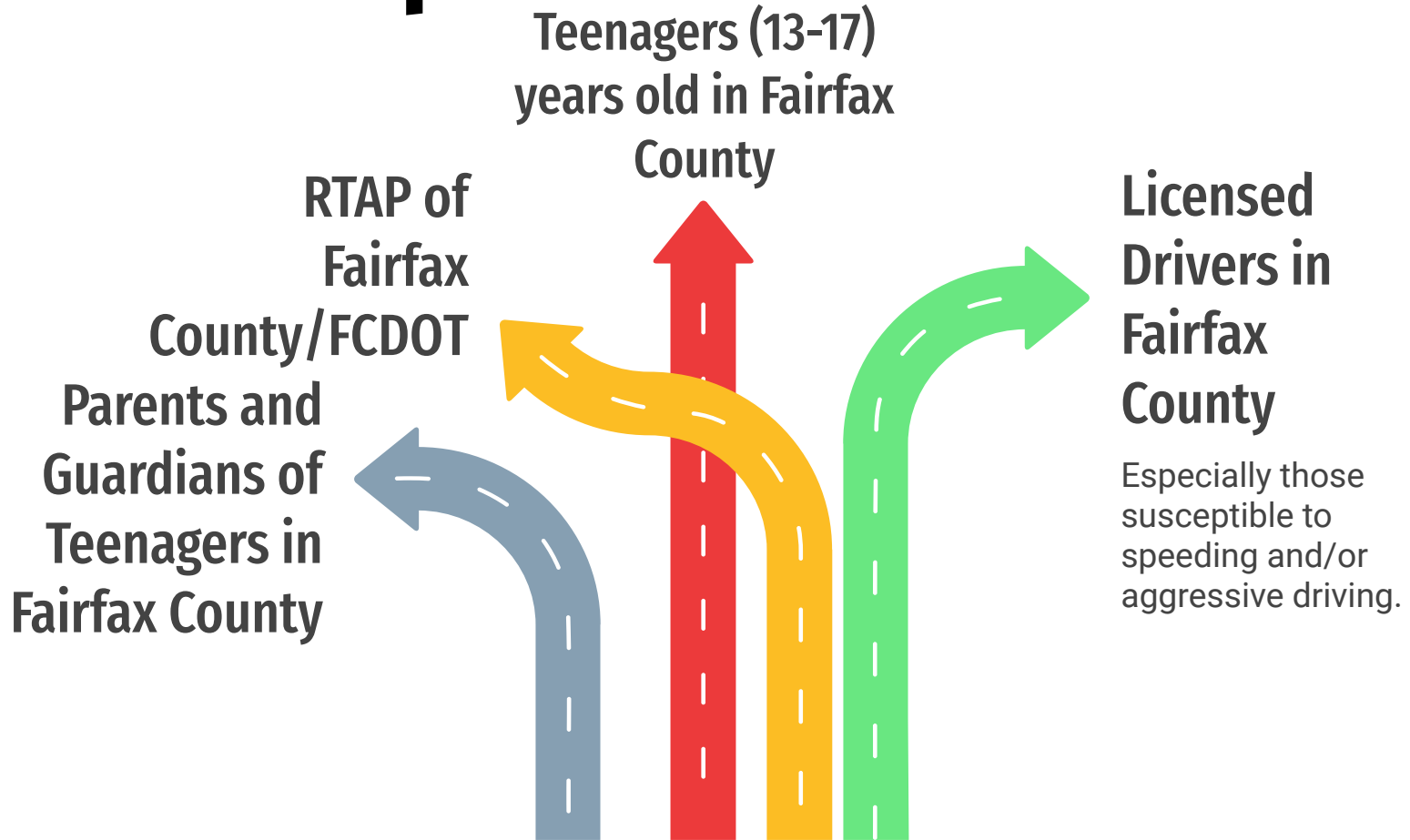
The focus of this campaign is to raise awareness of the rise in motor vehicle accidents within the teenage population of Virginia

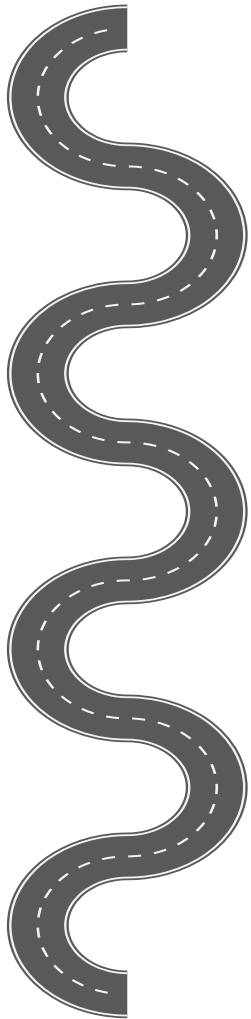
Goal

My goal is to propose the addition of a pedestrian activated signal at the intersection of Columbia Pike and Tyler Street to the Residential Traffic Administration Program of Fairfax County (RTAP) or the Fairfax County Department of Transportation.



Focus Group

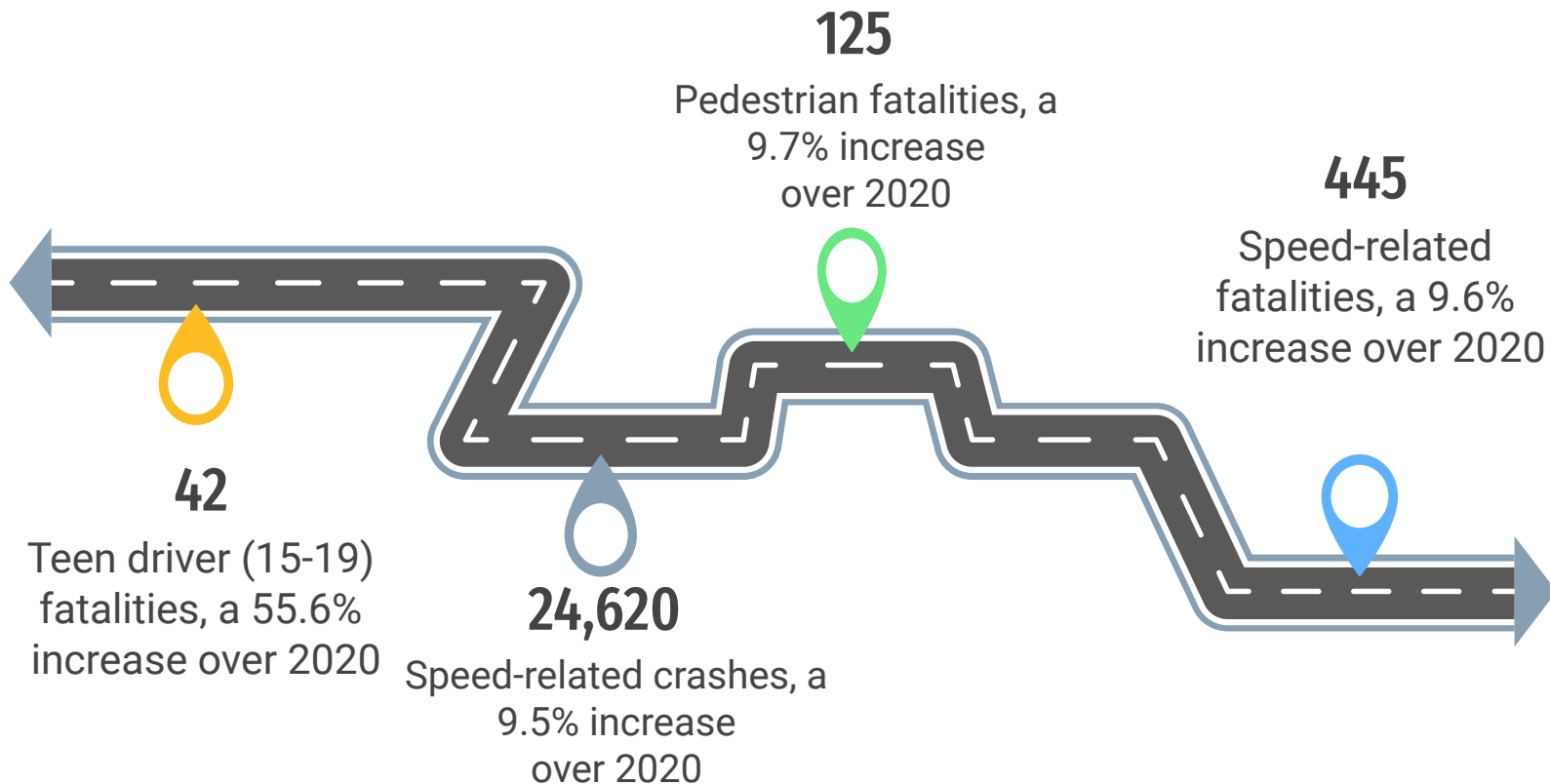




Experiences/Background

- Every year, a mother's child is lost, a younger sister loses their eldest brother, or a student, friend, leader, and peer is taken away from their community. The community, and most of all, the families, are left heart-broken, confused, guilty, and angry.
- It's not uncommon for questions such as "Why did this happen?" or "How can this be prevented so that this doesn't happen to another family?" to arise.
- RTAP is a specific program that works directly with communities to decrease the impacts of traffic and enhance safety in area neighborhoods.

Virginia Statistics



Personal Thoughts

On November 16, 2022, a fellow junior at Justice High School lost her life as she was walking to school, crossing the intersection of Columbia Pike and Tyler Street. Although I did not know her well enough to call her a friend, through the classes I'd had with her, I had the gift of experiencing and witnessing her kindness, laughter, and great potential and determination to become a nurse. She had goals, big and small. A little sister, parents who care and worry for her, and an immeasurable life ahead of her, just as I do.

However, there are millions of teenagers out there whose lives and safety are threatened by dangerous driving habits and lack of necessary traffic signs and/or signals. I don't want anybody else to share the same devastating story as the families of teenage pedestrian/driver fatalities. We must not only envision, but build a better and safer future for all.

Roadblock to Building a Safer Future in Fairfax County

The proposed addition of a traffic signal would have to go through an assessment. The VDOT states:

The department follows federal guidelines that establish minimum conditions under which signal installation should be considered.

These guidelines help identify potential locations for signals, but each location is reviewed before a signal is installed.

Traffic engineers determine if a signal is needed by carefully evaluating:

The number of vehicles and pedestrians that use the intersection

The physical makeup of the intersection

Roadside development

Traffic delays during peak hours

Average vehicle speeds

Future road construction plans

The number and types of accidents that have occurred there

Conferring/Planning for a Proposal

Meeting with adults, community members, and professionals to devise a proposal and strategy to succeed and gain support.

Finalizing Proposal

After receiving feedback and advising from members of my community and professionals, I, alongside an adult advisor, will prepare a final application for the proposed change.

Building a Safer Future

Publicizing/Sharing Campaign Info.

Utilizing various publicity techniques (social media, student organizations, flyers, etc.), I will reach out to members of the community and beyond to spread the campaign.

Submitting Proposal/Application

Submit application for request of addition of a pedestrian activated traffic signal on the intersection of Columbia Pike and Tyler Street to FCDOT

Pros and Cons

PRO

Pedestrian countdown signals have been shown to have a 25% reduction in pedestrian injury collisions.

PRO

Pedestrians will face reduced fear/stress walking and crossing streets, and this may possibly encourage more exercise.

CON

Installing pedestrian signal phasing when the crossings are currently unsignalized can range from \$65,000 to \$250,000.



Partnerships

State organizations I can work with to progress my proposal and make change a reality are the FCDOT and VDOT. A nation-wide advocacy group for building safer streets and public spaces that allow people to safely walk and move is another group I can contact to gain support and a voice in my campaign.



Social Media

Posting information on channels such as Instagram, Tiktok, and Facebook strategically.

School

Publicizing throughout various student-led clubs, leadership organizations, and speaking with teachers.



Spreading the Word/Gaining Support

Friends and Family

Sharing information through word of mouth will spread like wildfire. Strength lies in your community.

Meeting with Professionals

Reaching out to professionals in the area of interest (traffic engineers/managers) and working my way up as I gain support.

Flyers

Creating flyers addressing the campaign to put up authorized (legally) around schools and local neighborhoods.

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