

POLICY STATEMENT



ASSOCIATION OF PEDESTRIAN
& BICYCLE PROFESSIONALS

Expertise for Active Transportation



POLICY STATEMENT: VISION ZERO AND SAFE SYSTEM APPROACH

Overview of APBP Policy Statements

The Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP) supports the community of professionals working to create more walkable, bikeable places through facilitating the exchange of professional and technical knowledge and by promoting fundamental positions that are broadly acknowledged and acted upon by APBP members.

APBP Policy Principles:

1. APBP represents the professional expertise and practical experience of its members in transportation policy discussions to advance active, healthy, and sustainable communities.
2. APBP recognizes the impacts of systemic and institutionalized racism, and we recognize our responsibility to identify and address inequities.
3. APBP endorses active transportation as an integral part of transportation systems through all stages of planning, design, funding, and implementation.
4. APBP supports connected, convenient, accessible, and safe streets and pathways in every community and planning with the input of every member of a community.
5. APBP advances a safe system approach that leverages active transportation to create equitable access for everyone in every place.

Position:

APBP believes traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries are preventable and should not be tolerated and that reaching zero traffic fatalities and serious injuries is the goal. That goal is known as “Vision Zero” or “Toward Zero Deaths.” APBP supports “the Safe System Approach” as the method to reach that goal.

The Safe System Approach involves a systematic focus on engineering and operational solutions supported by innovative and proactive policies, data analysis, behavioral countermeasures, capacity building strategies both internally and externally facing, vehicle and fleet safety, and post crash care.

APBP underscores the need to prioritize proven solutions to replace traditional strategies that lack a demonstrated record of achieving target safety outcomes. Refer to the recommendations section below for

successful case examples.

APBP endorses the work of the Vision Zero Network and commends cities that have joined the network. APBP encourages jurisdictions to adopt Vision Zero Policies, create Action Plans, and implement proven measures. Implementation of critical safety improvements should be prioritized in municipal budgets and work plans.

Definitions:

Vision Zero

Vision Zero imagines a future without traffic fatalities and severe injuries, with increased safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all. First implemented in Sweden in the 1990s, Vision Zero has proved successful in many places in Europe and has gained momentum in the US. Vision Zero presents a proactive approach, identifying the steps necessary to meet the goal of zero fatalities and severe injuries and creating the collaborative framework needed to meet the goal.

- Vision Zero points out that traffic fatalities and serious injuries are *preventable* if attention and resources are committed to prioritizing safety in the transportation system;
- Vision Zero efforts are focused on minimizing the *human toll* of crashes, with less emphasis on property-damage-only crashes, largely by addressing speeding traffic and implementing known safety measures to reduce the likelihood and severity of crashes; and
- Vision Zero accepts that individual road users *will make mistakes* and emphasizes the responsibility of policymakers, road designers, law enforcement and other private and public actors to create a system to minimize crashes and their impacts.¹

Vision Zero strategies are multimodal and consistent with “Complete Streets” principles to design roadways to serve all users and modes. Vision Zero policies put a specific focus on preventing fatalities and severe injuries for the most vulnerable roadway users: people walking and biking, as well as children, seniors, and low-income and minority populations, who are injured and killed in traffic at higher rates than the average road user.²

Safe System Approach

While Vision Zero sets forth the goals, the Safe System planning outlines the approach. It is systems-based, holistic, and built on discrete elements: acknowledging serious and fatal crashes are preventable; addressing high-risk locations proactively and systematically; sharing responsibility for traffic risks between system users and designers; and combining different elements to produce a safer roadway system.

Application:

Vision Zero Policies and Action Plans have been adopted in many cities in the United States and Canada. Successful implementation of a Vision Zero Policy begins with the establishment of an Action Plan. This Action Plan lays out clear goals for zero deaths and reducing serious injuries and sets forth strategies, timelines, and priorities for education, policy development, design solutions, and an approach to monitoring progress towards the initially set goal. These plans are shared with the community, bringing diverse stakeholders together, to include lived experiences, to develop a full picture of risk factors, focus areas, and priority projects and ensure a basic right of safety for all people as they move about. Because many places

¹ Too often, traffic safety campaigns have assumed that people who walk and bike can be made safer through educational fliers, helmet giveaways, and reflective vests. While these things can build awareness, there is little evidence that they have measurable impact. Traffic safety is context dependent and is usually improved by designing roadways to achieve lower operating speeds and by reducing or eliminating conflict points among road users, particularly at intersections where severe crashes are most likely to occur.

² http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/data/factsheet_crash.cfm (includes links to various reporting agencies)

have already adopted Vision Zero Policies and created Vision Zero Action Plans, municipalities need not start from scratch; model examples from which to borrow information and ideas can be found through the [Vision Zero Network](#) and in case studies below.

A Vision Zero Action Plan should be a living document and include actionable strategies, such as: prioritizing roadway design and investing in safety treatments, particularly in high-injury areas and communities that have historically been under-served; managing travel speeds by lowering speed limits, using automated speed enforcement, and modifying street design to deter speeding; employing equitable and data-driven enforcement strategies that focus on the most dangerous driving behaviors; and evaluating and reporting on progress toward achieving established goals.

Critically, Vision Zero Action Plans need to establish realistic timelines for safety outcomes. Local revenue mechanisms should be evaluated and established to augment existing funding sources particularly if funding sources are from competitive grant programs, likely leading to insecure revenue cycle to cycle. Thoughtful and systematic prioritization of projects using temporary materials as necessary to meet the goals and timelines of action plans are vital.

Safe streets, sidewalks, and bikeways are vital to communities and increase healthy and equitable mobility for all and Vision Zero strategies have been proven to reduce severe injury traffic crashes. A core Vision Zero strategy is to increase the share of trips made by walking, bicycling, and public transit through investments in safe, connected, and convenient transportation options, because higher levels of active and shared transportation are associated with lower traffic fatality rates and a safer overall transportation system.

In 2016, the National Safety Council formed the Road to Zero Coalition, an umbrella organization including Vision Zero and Toward Zero Deaths leaders. Road to Zero aims to eliminate traffic deaths by 2050, and includes a significant focus on vehicle safety technology.³

Philosophy of Vision Zero and Safe Systems

Taking a Complete Streets and Safe System approach means proactively identifying and correcting roadway design conditions that create foreseeable risks, rather than waiting for crashes, injuries, or fatalities to demonstrate that a street is unsafe. Risky roadway designs often require people to make complex decisions at high speeds, place vulnerable road users in the paths of moving vehicles, provide insufficient visibility or reaction time, and rely too heavily on every person behaving perfectly. Examples include wide, high-speed crossings; unprotected bicycle lanes beside fast-moving traffic; intersections with numerous conflict points; permissive vehicle turns across pedestrian and bicycle paths; excessively wide travel lanes; long crossing distances; inadequate sight lines; and streets whose design encourages speeds that are inappropriate for the surrounding context.

The Safe System approach recognizes that people inevitably make mistakes and that the human body has a limited ability to withstand crash forces. Therefore, safety must be built into the physical design and operation of the roadway. The responsibility cannot rest primarily on asking people to be more careful, wear brighter clothing, or navigate inherently hazardous conditions flawlessly. Roadways should be designed so that common mistakes are less likely to occur and, when they do occur, are unlikely to result in death or serious injury.

Dutch roadway design provides a useful model. It seeks to prevent serious conflicts through clear, predictable, and “self-explaining” streets. Each roadway’s design communicates its intended function and appropriate operating speed. Where motor vehicles travel at higher speeds or in greater volumes, people walking and

³ <https://www.nsc.org/road-safety/get-involved/road-to-zero>

bicycling are physically separated from traffic. Where separation is not feasible, motor-vehicle speeds and volumes are reduced enough to allow users to mix more safely. Intersections are designed to slow turning vehicles, improve visibility, clarify priority, and reduce the number, speed, and complexity of conflict points. Features such as protected bicycle facilities and intersections, raised crossings, pedestrian refuge islands, compact corner radii, curb extensions, narrowed travel lanes, traffic calming, and separated signal phases can create multiple layers of protection.

A proactive Safe System process therefore evaluates not only where crashes have already occurred, but also where roadway geometry, speed, visibility, traffic volume, user behavior, and conflict patterns indicate that a severe crash is foreseeable. It considers the needs of people of all ages and abilities, including children, older adults, people with disabilities, and people who may be unfamiliar with the roadway. By systematically identifying hazardous design conditions and applying proven treatments before tragedy occurs, the Safe System approach creates streets that are intuitive, forgiving, and resilient, streets where a single mistake does not carry a life-or-death consequence.

Recommendations:

APBP recommends jurisdictions adopt Vision Zero Policies and build Vision Zero Action Plans by these *direct actions*:

- Creating a Vision Zero Task Force that includes diverse representatives, including from public health, transportation agencies, policy makers, law enforcement, department of public works, facility managers, emergency services personnel, and community members.
- Gathering and analyzing crash data to help inform the priorities identified in the Action Plan.
- Conducting meaningful community engagement and gathering input from a broad and diverse array of community members, including communities of concern, seniors, people with disabilities, and children.
- Establishing specific and measurable goals and identifying who is responsible for achieving each goal and in what timeframe.
- Emphasizing equity by prioritizing efforts in underserved communities and communities of concern.
- Evaluating existing land uses and outlining planning level recommendations to improve density and multi modal connectivity.
- Monitoring the effectiveness and progress and adjust/revise to ensure that the actions are on track towards achieving the goals.

For jurisdictions not yet ready to adopt formalized Vision Zero policies or comprehensive plans (e.g, smaller communities with limited resources), there are many elements that can be undertaken to support safety for all road users, including those who walk and cycle. Streets designed to safely accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists are typically safer for all roadway users, including motorists, because they reduce speeds, improve visibility, and minimize opportunities for severe crashes.

APBP also recommends these supporting actions:

- Adopting by resolution, NACTO design guidance.
- Prioritizing safety over speed in the planning and design of roadway projects.
- Using designs that are appropriate to the context of the street and its uses, incorporating proven safety countermeasures,
- Reducing speed limits on city and residential streets to 25 miles per hour or less, and putting in place mechanisms to ensure that actual speeds are commensurate with the desired speed.
- Establishing policies and mechanisms for reducing the use of single occupancy vehicles, as this will also lead to safer roadway environments. These might include:
 - Zoning that allows for residents to live, work and play within human scale distance

- Reconsidering (and possibly eliminating) motor vehicle parking minimums in zoning requirements for housing & commercial developments while ensuring that there are good provisions for people to park bicycles. The reduction of required parking in projects should not transfer vehicle parking to on-street where the effect would be to reduce opportunities for key improvements for people walking, bicycling and transit (sidewalks, separated bike lanes, and bus lanes).
- Establishing pricing policies to more accurately reflect the true costs of driving, e.g.,
 - Excise taxes
 - Metered parking fares
 - Reducing on-street parking in favor of more space for walking, cycling, transit, etc.
 - Vehicle miles traveled charges
 - For larger cities, adopting congestion pricing strategies
- Identifying and addressing barriers to safe, independent travel for people of all ages and abilities.
 - This includes providing continuous, accessible sidewalks and safe crossings with features such as curb ramps, refuge islands, high-visibility crosswalks, lighting, and appropriate signals, consistent with the AASHTO Pedestrian Guide, PROWAG, and FHWA guidance.
 - Bicycle facilities should be continuous and selected based on roadway speed, volume, and context, following the 2024 AASHTO Bike Guide. On major or higher-speed roads, this generally means separated bicycle lanes or shared-use paths, with protection continuing through intersections, driveways, and transit stops.

Resources:

City of Milwaukee, and Milwaukee County, WI

What worked for Milwaukee:

- Designing streets to reduce speeding
- Prioritizing multimodal safety
- Using data to prioritize corridors
- Centering public health and equity
- Redesigning streets proactively (not just enforcing)

Since adopting Vision Zero in 2022, Milwaukee has moved into data-driven implementation, aiming to eliminate all traffic deaths and life-changing injuries by 2037. From 2022–2025, traffic deaths and serious injuries fell 26%, driven by coordinated changes to street designs, and cross-department work. A dedicated office coordinates with multiple departments such as public works, health, police, municipal governments and community/advocacy groups treating traffic safety as a public health priority.

Milwaukee County is aligning Vision Zero work with 19 municipalities. Currently, all 19 municipalities have adopted their own safety action plan and identified priority projects. Milwaukee is monitoring progress and maintaining transparency with [a new dashboard](#) of completed projects and the [Traffic Violence Dashboard](#) tracks real-time crashes, helping highlight “Corridors of Concern.”

City of Alexandria, VA

Alexandria's Vision Zero program is notable because it demonstrates how a city can move from policy adoption to implementation through a structured and accountable process. Alexandria's greatest strength is arguably its implementation model and clear pathway from planning to action. The city focused on building a strong Vision Zero implementation program with dedicated funding, annual work plans, partnerships, monitoring systems,

and measurable project delivery proved effective creating a repeatable process for turning policy into action and eventually reaching zero fatalities in 2023.

- Alexandria turned Vision Zero into an ongoing program with annual work plans, dedicated funding, cross-department collaboration, public dashboards, and regular performance tracking, ensuring it remained a long-term citywide initiative rather than a one-time study. This governance structure helped ensure that Vision Zero remained a citywide initiative rather than a one-time study.
- City of Alexandria, VA was not only drive by engineering projects and annual implementation plans but by changing how transportation performance is communicated. They de-emphasized Level of Service (LOS) grades as the main way to evaluate street design by telling the story differently and talking about an “F” LOS rating as not a performance breakdown or system failure, but a matter of a few seconds delay. They simply reflect minor signal delay in plain terms (e.g., seconds of wait time) and review conditions over a broader 15-hour window instead of only the worst peak hour. The goal is a clearer, less alarmist picture of how streets are functioning.
- The emphasis on incremental implementation was critical. The city leveraged quick-build projects, speed management policies, safety-focused corridor improvements, automated enforcement, and public education campaigns while continuously evaluating crash trends. By 2023, the program had matured into a comprehensive safety effort combining engineering, policy, funding, enforcement, and community engagement.
- Speed management became a major component through speed limit reductions, neighborhood slow zones, school-zone speed cameras, and traffic calming initiatives.
- Vision Zero was supported by dedicated funding, including approximately \$200,000 annually in operating funds and up to \$1.3 million annually in capital funding, supplemented with state and federal grants.
- Alexandria partnered with organizations such as Alexandria Families for Safe Streets, regional planning agencies, schools, and advocacy groups to support education and outreach programs.

City of Norfolk, NE

Focuses on transforming its transportation planning framework, embedding Safe System and Complete Streets principles into every future project through new policies, design standards, and equity-based prioritization. Their strength lies in changing how decisions are made across the entire transportation network.

Portland, OR

The State of Oregon provides a clear legal framework that empowers local governments to prioritize context-sensitive street design while maintaining coordination with emergency responders. Under [ORS 368.039](#), local street design standards adopted by a city or county supersede minimum fire apparatus access requirements, provided that the local jurisdiction coordinates with the fire department during the development and implementation of those standards. This authority allows communities to incorporate traffic-calming measures, such as narrower travel lanes, curb extensions, chicanes, and other design features that improve safety for people walking and bicycling without being constrained by default fire code provisions. Reinforcing this policy, OAR 660-012-0810(2)(b) requires local governments to adopt narrow street standards as part of their transportation planning regulations, recognizing that narrower streets can reduce vehicle speeds, shorten pedestrian crossing distances, and create safer, more livable neighborhoods. Together, these provisions demonstrate that Oregon state law explicitly supports locally adopted street design standards that balance emergency access with broader public safety, multimodal transportation, and community livability objectives.

Seattle, WA

Seattle’s arterial traffic-calming program demonstrates how a phased speed-management strategy can build public support for safer streets. The effort started with pilot speed-limit reductions in 2016 and later added physical treatments like speed cushions and corridor redesigns. They monitored changes in driver behavior

across 11 corridors, average vehicle speeds dropped 16%. Seattle is now considering 20 mph limits on arterials with high pedestrian activity or where design changes can sustain slower speeds.

What worked for Seattle:

- Incremental speed limit reductions paired with infrastructure changes are more effective than changes to traffic signs.
- Pilot project and performance monitoring helped build public trust and political support.
- Dedicated funding mechanisms enabled long-term implementation and expansion.
- Street redesign and traffic calming treatments created conditions that reinforced lower operating speeds.
- Data-driven evaluation established a strong safety record that supported more ambitious future policies.

[ITE Safety Pledge - ITE-A Community of Transportation Professionals](#)

City of Cambridge, MA

Although the City of Cambridge officially adopted a Vision Zero Policy in 2016, it had been taking actions consistent with those goals for decades. A formal Action Plan was published in 2021 and included these high-level categories:

- Design and operate safe streets;
- Improve large vehicle, taxi/for-hire vehicle, and TNC safety;
- Ensure equity in all efforts;
- Lead by example;
- Engage the public
- Create partnerships; and
- Use data to direct efforts and measure progress

The City has implemented an extensive array of actions, including (but not limited to):

- Citywide speed limits reduced to 20 MPH on most streets or 25 MPH on major corridors
- Banning Right Turn on Red citywide
- Creating and implementing a Bicycle Network Vision where almost all major corridors have separated bicycle lanes (click link for updated maps). Importantly, the City adopted the Cycling Safety Ordinance, which mandates that the separated bicycle lane projects be installed, and also mandates an ambitious timeline.
- Adopting a policy on truck guards: the Cambridge Truck Safety Ordinance (2020), requires that eligible vehicles (including those under contract to the City), with some exceptions, be outfitted with side guards, convex mirrors, cross-over mirrors, and safety decals.
- Safe Routes to School and Learn to Bike Programs in all public schools at three grade levels
- Traffic calming elements incorporated with every street repaving or reconstruction
- Enhancing signal operations to reduce conflicting movements, including bicycle signal phases and bicycle signal heads, and implementing LPI (leading pedestrian intervals) for pedestrian phases at most locations
- Rigorous counting programs for all users, including required counts of people walking and bicycling for development projects going through a special permit process and a biennial bicycle count program started in 2001 to track numbers of people bicycling, including children and those riding on sidewalks

Cambridge tracks progress in a number of ways, and some of the positive effects of these changes have been shared in the Bicycle Data Reports; from the 2025 Bicycle Data Report:

- The numbers of people bicycling in the city are at the highest ever counted, commensurate with the implementation of the elements noted above. There are 250% more people counted in the biennial count program than in 2004, 283%, more children biking than in 2014, and a lower rate of sidewalk biking (from 15% to 5% since 2004). The numbers along the corridors with separated bicycle lanes are even more dramatic.
- There has been a 41% decrease in the bicycle crash rate from 2004-2024 and a 23% decrease in injury crashes since 2015.

APBP's past webinars on Vision Zero are recorded and available on our association's website¹¹. Many APBP members, especially those in cities that belong to the Vision Zero Network, are involved in helping their cities effectively plan and implement effective Vision Zero programs and can serve as good local resources.

- Vision Zero Network
 - <http://visionzeronetwork.org>
- The SS4A elements (very similar to the Vision Zero Networks)
 - <https://visionzeronetwork.org/core-elements/>
- FHWA toolkit: Vision Zero Toolkit
 - https://highways.dot.gov/sites/fhwa.dot.gov/files/2024-04/Vision%20Zero%20Toolkit%20508_0.pdf
- Recommendations of the Safe System Consortium
 - <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/sites/default/files/2023-03/recommendations-of-the-safe-system-consortium.pdf>
- The Safe Systems Pyramid: A new framework for traffic safety - ScienceDirect
 - <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590198223001525>
- Zero Deaths Resources | FHWA
 - <https://highways.dot.gov/safety/zero-deaths/zero-deaths-resources>
- Resources | US Department of Transportation
 - <https://www.transportation.gov/grants/SS4A/resources>
- Proven Safety Countermeasures | FHWA
 - <https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures>
- National 911 Program
 - <https://www.911.gov/>
- NHTSA's Office of Emergency Medical Services | EMS.gov
 - <https://www.ems.gov/>
- Families for Safe Streets Families for Safe Streets - USA
 - <https://www.familiesforsafestreets.org/>
- Vision Zero for Youth, National Center for Safe Routes to School
 - <https://www.visionzeroforyouth.org/take-action/>
- Emergency Streets
 - <https://www.emergencystreets.org/>
- Toward Zero Deaths
 - <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/tzd/>
- Global Road Safety Partnership
 - [Welcome to GRSP - GRSP | Global Road Safety Partnership \(grsproadsafety.org\)](https://www.grsp.org/)
- [We Know What Works: Lessons from the Frontlines of Vision Zero, April 2026](https://visionzeronetwork.org/lessons-from-the-frontlines-of-vision-zero/)
 - <https://visionzeronetwork.org/lessons-from-the-frontlines-of-vision-zero/>

⁶ <https://login.filesanywhere.com/fs/v.aspx?v=8c696487616374b4a3ab>

⁷ Vision Zero Network Nine Essential Components of a Strong Vision Zero Commitment:

<https://visionzeronetwork.org/9-components-of-a-strong-vision-zero-commitment/>

⁸ Vision Zero Network Guidelines for an Effective Vision Zero Action Plan:

<https://visionzeronetwork.org/roadmapforaction/>

⁹ http://visionzeronetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/MinimumElements_Final.pdf

¹⁰ <https://visionzeronetwork.org/resources/vision-zero-core-elements/>

¹¹ APBP webinars on Vision Zero can be accessed through APBP:

<https://login.filesanywhere.com/fs/v.aspx?v=8c696487616374b4a3ab>

APBP's policy statement development process/member participation

The Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP) relied on widely available information and tools to draft its policy statement on Vision Zero and also sought input from the Vision Zero Network. APBP specifically thanks Vision Zero Network founder and Executive Director Leah Shahum for her assistance in the development of this original statement.

APBP sought comments on a draft policy statement from its Policy Committee members. APBP's Board of Directors approved the initial version of this policy statement on December 1, 2021 and the most recent revision on October 15, 2026. APBP members can suggest changes to any policy statement by contacting the association's executive director, policy committee chair, or board member. For more information, contact: Lauren Santangelo, Executive Director, at lsantangelo@amrms.com.