



Department Source: Public Works

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: June 21, 2021

Re: Update on the City of Columbia Vision Zero Program

## Executive Summary

Staff has created this report to provide Council an update on the City of Columbia Vision Zero Program.

## Discussion

In December 2016, the Council unanimously passed a Policy Resolution committing Columbia to "Vision Zero". A goal to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries in Columbia by 2030 was included in the resolution. Over the following months, a three-year Action Plan was developed and was presented to Council in May 2017. Updates to Council on the Action Plan were provided in 2018 and 2019. In mid-2019, coordination of the City's Vision Zero Program was transferred from the City Manager's Office to the Public Works Department. Public Works determined a dedicated part-time staff member was needed to coordinate the program successfully.

Unfortunately, while seeking to fill the Vision Zero Coordinator position, issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic delayed the hire. The new Vision Zero Coordinator was able to begin employment in late summer 2020. While City staff was able to continue moving forward with several initiatives, the overall success of the program requires collaborative efforts and leveraging dedicated community resources. The Engineering, Education and Enforcement teams were able to begin meeting regularly in early 2021 with progress being made on several fronts. Some of the highlights are included below, as well as fatality and serious injury crash data for 2020.

The City's program includes three focus areas: Engineering, Education and Enforcement. When the program began, the City established cross-discipline teams to address each area. Due to personnel/team member turnover, the pandemic and other nationwide events, the teams experienced a gap in their meetings and work. As the program was "rebooted", the teams were reconvened. This included updating the team member lists and adding several new team members. All three teams are now meeting monthly.

### Engineering:

- During its previous strategy sessions, the Engineering Team developed a set of six systematic focus areas for engineering-related solutions. Identification of these design parameters was included in the initial Action Plan as a critical Action for the Engineering Team and was completed in March 2019. These focus areas correlate to collision types and/or conditions that contribute to crashes that occur within the City. The list of focus areas is attached. The team is continuing to explore each of these



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areas more in depth to determine and refine how and what type of improvements can best translate into tangible engineering improvements and changes. Public Works Traffic Engineering and Design staff will incorporate the concepts in their day-to-day work moving forward. Staff believes the information can also help guide decisions regarding potential funding for future projects.

- A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) will be issued in the near future to secure a consultant to conduct a Road Safety Assessment (RSA) of the Route B corridor with an emphasis on safety of vulnerable road users. The corridor was identified by the Crash Analysis and Engineering Teams as the first candidate for an RSA based on a number of factors with crash severity and volume being the most prominent.
- An initial neighborhood pedestrian accessibility checklist was selected as part of Engineering Critical Action #1. This checklist is being further refined after soliciting additional input from the City's Disabilities Commission and the MU Chancellor's Committee on Persons with Disabilities. Once completed, this form will be made available to the public in multiple formats so they can provide feedback to the City on how to make their neighborhoods more accessible for pedestrians. The information will be reviewed by Public Works staff to determine how further action can be taken to increase safety and improve access for pedestrians.

## Education:

- Several new team members have been added to the Education Team. This includes additional representatives from Columbia Public Schools (CPS), Safe Kids Columbia, Columbia Parks & Recreation, and Missouri Employers Mutual (MEM).
- The commitment and work by the CPS representatives, along with input by team members, is leading to promising progress on one of the outstanding Critical Action items: creating age-appropriate transportation safety programs in schools.
- City staff is making arrangements to offer the Smart Road User (SRU) program virtually to allow for more participation despite the pandemic and to make the program more accessible. The goal of the SRU is to help participants learn basic driving skills and better understand how to interact with cyclists on city streets. The program also helps participants build the skills needed to opt to cycle instead of drive.
- The addition of Missouri Employer's Mutual (MEM) representatives to the team has presented additional opportunities and resources for promotion of Vision Zero-related workplace transportation safety policies and training to organizations and businesses throughout the community.
- The Education Team has been discussing how it can support the City's Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, as well as educating the community on the importance of a Complete Streets Policy.
- A subcommittee comprised of several Education Team members has been formed to explore education and marketing strategies to increase awareness of the Vision Zero program and to engage the community. Plans are in process to update the City's Vision Zero webpage to make it more engaging and accessible. One component of the plan includes local branding for Columbia's Vision Zero program to encourage more community ownership and buy-in.



## Enforcement:

- Members have also been added to the Enforcement Team to better represent neighborhoods and segments of the community that may be underserved. These include a First Ward Neighborhood Association representative and the owner of a female and minority-owned transportation company.
- There are ongoing discussions about the outstanding action plan item related to innovative and equitable traffic violation prosecution strategies. These discussions have included the need to explore partnerships with providers in the community that already offer traffic offender programs, such as ThinkFirst Missouri.
- The Enforcement Team is also in the process of determining how their work can complement and enhance the ongoing community-wide conversations about traffic enforcement with a focus on safety and preventing serious injury and fatality crashes.

The City's Vision Zero Crash Analysis Team has continued to meet regularly to review and analyze individual crashes and crash trends/data. That data is being used by staff and the individual teams to guide their work.

## 2020 Crash Data:

- Seven fatality crashes on public roadways in Columbia.
- Although fatality crashes statewide trended upward in 2020, Columbia's crashes were lower than the previous two years (thirteen in 2019, eleven in 2018). While this is encouraging, this is still a concerning level of fatality crashes and the only acceptable total is zero.
- Three of the 2020 fatality crashes involved pedestrians. These did not occur at intersections. The teams are focused on examining the contributing circumstances of vulnerable road user crashes and exploring systematic countermeasures.
- Two of the 2020 fatality crashes involved motorcycles. While there is limited data on motorcyclist travel volumes within Columbia, motorcyclists appear to be over-represented in severe and fatal crashes nationwide based on their miles of travel. Many communities appear to be struggling with ways to reduce these types of crashes or the severity of them when they do occur. This will need to continue to be a focus area for the Vision Zero Teams moving forward.
- Four (over half) of the 2020 fatality crashes occurred on Interstate 70. Both US 63 and I-70 are maintained by the Missouri Department of Transportation (MODOT). It will require a collaborative partnership with MODOT to reduce crashes on these roads.
- Two of the 2020 fatality crashes occurred on Route B. Both involved pedestrians, alcohol impairment, and drivers leaving the scene. Both drivers were later apprehended.
- Alcohol is believed to have been involved in four (over half) of the 2020 fatality crashes.

All the Vision Zero teams have reached a consensus to develop a one-year Action Plan rather than a three-year plan as has been done in the past. This will allow flexibility in the program to better respond to changing conditions with the pandemic and social



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justice/equity work occurring in the community. Staff feels a longer-term plan would require a more direct and substantial public engagement process than could reasonably be pursued during the pandemic and subsequent recovery. We intend to evaluate the process for a more extended action plan as the community transitions beyond some of the pandemic-related issues.

Public engagement is crucial to the development and success of the next action plan. Although the pandemic has posed challenges to some forms of community outreach, city staff has been able to find opportunities to continue the conversation with the community. This includes the Vision Zero Coordinator serving as the Education Team Lead, attending Bicycle and Pedestrian Commission meetings, and becoming a member of the Central District Coalition for Roadway Safety. City staff has also sought feedback from other commissions and groups to help guide the Vision Zero work and have added members to the Vision Zero teams to better represent the community. Community feedback will be solicited virtually and as conditions improve and more COVID restrictions are lifted, more in-person outreach will be included.

## Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: None – this report is informational.  
Long-Term Impact: None – this report is informational.

## Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

### Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Public Safety, Secondary Impact: Social Equity, Tertiary Impact: Infrastructure

### Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Mobility, Connectivity, and Accessibility, Secondary Impact: Infrastructure, Tertiary Impact: Livable & Sustainable Communities

## Legislative History

Date	Action
05/15/2017	REP37-17: City of Columbia Vision Zero Action Plan 2017-2020.
12/19/2016	PR178-16: Adopting a "Vision Zero" Policy; setting a goal of eliminating traffic deaths and serious injuries in Columbia by 2030. The vote on PR178-16, as amended, was recorded as follows: VOTING YES: TRAPP, SKALA, THOMAS, NAUSER, PETERS, TREECE, RUFFIN). VOTING NO: NO ONE. Policy resolution declared adopted.



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## Suggested Council Action

This report is for informational purposes only.