

City of Columbia Pre-Council Meeting

Monday, January 12, 2026

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance Timeline

- On 12/16/24 Report 80-24 was presented which provided a large amount of information regarding pedestrians and medians
- On 03/17/25 City Council approved a contract with CBB to conduct a Street and Intersection Pedestrian Safety Study

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance Timeline

- On 6/16/25 a Pre-Council Work Session was held to share the preliminary results of the study
- On 11/17/25 a draft ordinance was presented and discussed
 - Following public discussion Council requested staff post the draft ordinance to BeHeard and request input from the following boards and commissions:
 - Human Rights Commission
 - Public Transit Advisory Commission (PTAC)
 - Disabilities Commission
 - Bike & Pedestrian Commission

PTAC Summary

- Neutral with no major transit impacts anticipated
 - Ordinance won't affect bus operations or routing
 - Suggests prioritizing infrastructure investments near bus stops
 - Offers to advise on priority locations based on the Bus Stop Evaluation Matrix and safety studies

Bicycle and Pedestrian Commission Response

- Opposed (voted 7-0 against, as written)
 - In the opinion of the commission, this ordinance:
 - Shifts responsibility to vulnerable road users
 - Does not address mitigating vehicle speed, volume, and road design
 - Limits pedestrian access to “major parts of Columbia”
 - The commission recommends the installation of pedestrian safety devices (HAWK crossings) every ¼ mile and at roundabouts, build sidewalks on both sides of major roadways, add speed humps at signals to slip lanes, and to initiate a speed reduction program
 - Staff Response: Each of these design features can and should be considered on a project by project basis. Actual implementation depends on many factors.
 - The commission provides no stance on the “distribution conduct” section

Disabilities Commission Response

- Concerned; recommends education if adopted
 - Prohibitions on roadway presence may force people with disabilities into precarious situations (e.g. due to missing or closed sidewalks, obstacles, inaccessible ramps)
 - Note: More on existing City ordinances that cover this forthcoming
 - Suggests public education period and/or signage before enforcement to inform residents

Commission on Human Rights Response

- Opposed; encourages a no vote
 - In the opinion of the commission the ordinance violates Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 13: freedom of movement; Article 24: right to rest)
 - Could increase law enforcement contact with low income individuals
 - Assumes it would essentially function as ban on panhandling

Be Heard Analysis

- 154 Total Comments
- 81 In Favor
- 66 Oppose
- 7 Ambiguous

Be Heard Analysis Common Themes In Favor

- Safety for all users
- Common sense measure
- Reduces distractions and risks
- Supports community goals
- Action needed (near misses)

Be Heard Analysis Common Themes Opposed

- Criminalizes poverty/homelessness
- Not supported by data/study
- Concerns regarding the violation of 1st amendment rights
- Better to focus on infrastructure
- Disproportionate impact on vulnerable people
- Misguided/masked intent

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance Opposition Themes

- Theme: Criminalizes poverty/homelessness
 - Ordinance is about preventing preventable deaths
 - Ordinance applies universally to all individuals
 - Exceptions for mobility-restricted persons, public workers, and permitted events
 - Over 10 years, 226 pedestrian crashes occurred in Columbia at an intersection
 - 92% resulting in injury or fatality
 - 29% of intersection-related crashes had a median

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance Opposition Themes

- Theme: Not supported by data/study
 - “Hierarchy of Concern” (pages 45-49), prioritize speed, volume and median width as top factors
 - Pedestrian Survival rates drop with speed
 - 87% survival at 20 mph
 - 60% survival at 30 mph
 - 27% survival at 40 mph
 - Volume is simply the increase in potential conflicts with a pedestrian

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance Opposition Themes

- Violates First Amendment Rights
 - Ordinance imposes reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions which courts have upheld as constitutional when tied to safety
 - Narrow medians create sufficient initial evidence in a legal case to support a claim (i.e. “prima facie evidence”) of risk if not crossed promptly
 - Springfield’s ordinance has been in place since 2017 without major challenges

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance Opposition Themes

- Better Focus on Infrastructure
 - Public Works has been very successful in recent years in moving our safety initiatives forward using Safe Streets for All (SS4A) grants. Example projects include:
 - Pedestrian Level of Comfort Map
 - Complete Streets Update – current complete streets policy in place since 2005
 - High Injury Network Analysis
 - Route B High Friction Surface Treatment Demonstration
 - Business Loop 70 Road Safety Audit (RSA) and Reconnecting Communities & Neighborhoods (RCN) Grant
 - Highway Safety Manual (HSM) analysis was used for a safety first focus on the 2025 Capital Improvement Sales Tax (CIST). HSM will be used to review additional roadways.
 - This ordinance is just another “tool in our toolbox.”

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance Opposition Themes

- Disproportionate Impact on Vulnerable Roadway Users
 - It applies universally to all individuals
 - Exceptions for mobility-restricted persons, public workers, and permitted events

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance Opposition Themes

- Misguided/Masked Intent
 - In the opinion of Public Works, the intent is safety focused, as evidenced by the study's focus on data driven risks
 - Rising crashes and national trends support taking action
 - Medians contribute to 29% of intersection crashes
 - Distraction from unexpected median use aligns with National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) warnings

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance

Council Questions

- What is the actual safety risk of people standing in the median?
 - Vehicles hitting pedestrians
 - Medians not designed for standing (not ADA accessible)
 - FHWA recommends medians be a minimum of 4 feet to accommodate pedestrians
 - Creates driver distraction
 - Reduces safety for both pedestrians and drivers

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance

Council Questions

- How many crashes involved a pedestrian at a median?

- Summary (2015-2024)
 - Total Crashes: 226
 - No median: 160 (71%)
 - With median: 66 (29%)

Year	No Median	% of Crashes w/ no Median	Median	% of Crashes w/ a Median	Total Crashes
2024	15	65%	8	35%	23
2023	16	73%	6	27%	22
2022	14	82%	3	18%	17
2021	11	73%	4	27%	15
2020	11	65%	6	35%	17
2019	21	78%	6	22%	27
2018	12	55%	10	45%	22
2017	23	74%	8	26%	31
2016	20	74%	7	26%	27
2015	17	68%	8	32%	25
Total Crashes	160	71%	66	29%	226

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance

Council Questions

- Why is standing on a median more dangerous than on a sidewalk abutting travel lanes?
 - Traffic in these locations is coming from at least two directions
 - A pedestrian is an unexpected presence in these locations
 - City standard typical roadway section includes grass buffer strip for separation between pedestrians on the sidewalk and the roadway. That is not present in these locations

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance

Council Questions

- Definition of a traffic signal “cycle”
 - Full duration from start of one phase (e.g. green) until signal returns to that same phase

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance

Council Questions

- How long are the signal cycles on the affected corridors?
 - Varies by intersection
 - 60-120 seconds is typical
 - The cycle is based on, but not limited to, the following:
 - Traffic Volume
 - Intersection width
 - Time of day
 - Coordination needs

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance

Council Questions

- How is a “cycle” determined if there is no traffic signal?
 - The police officer would do this based on observation, determining an individuals intent to cross the roadway, a conversation with the individual, etc.

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance

Council Questions

- How many of the corridors don't have traffic signals?
 - 115 total segments
 - 58 segments do not have signals
 - 57 segments do have signals
 - 73 segments do not have roundabouts along them
 - 41 segments do have roundabouts along them
 - 1 segment has no signals or roundabouts
 - 17 segments have a combination of roundabouts and signals

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance

Council Questions

- How many of corridors with medians less than 6 feet are not signal regulated?
 - 1 – Nifong Boulevard from Ponderosa Street to State Farm Parkway
 - There was previously a signal at Rock Quarry Road & Nifong Boulevard
 - The 2025 CIST includes intersection improvements at State Farm Parkway & Nifong Boulevard
 - Estimated Start of Construction is 2027
 - In conjunction with a major maintenance project along State Farm from Grindstone to Veteran's United Drive

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance

Council Questions

- What are the precise exceptions that will be allowed?
 - Law enforcement on duty
 - Rescue/emergency aid
 - Public employees on duty
 - Permitted work or special events
 - Passenger loading zones (taxis or public transportation)

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance

Council Questions

- Concerns regarding the lack of an available sidewalk and someone walking in the road.
 - Existing City Ordinance 14-583 discusses “manner of walking along roadways”
 - Unlawful to walk in road when sidewalk and proper curb cuts and cross slopes are provided
 - When no sidewalk is provided, walk on left side of road (or shoulder) facing traffic
 - Unlawful for any pedestrian to obstruct traffic

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance

Council Questions

- Concerns regarding the lack of an available sidewalk and someone walking in the road.
 - Existing City Ordinance 14-578 discusses “leaving curb suddenly or entering path of vehicle”
 - “No pedestrian shall suddenly leave a curb or other place of safety and walk or run into the path of a vehicle which is so close that it is impossible for the driver to yield.”

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance

Council Questions

- What about when there's not a crosswalk, traffic signal, or intersection and someone needs to cross the road?
 - Existing City Ordinance 14-580 discusses “crossing at right angles”
 - “No pedestrian shall cross a roadway at any place other than by a route at right angles to the curb or by the shortest route to the opposite curb, except in a crosswalk.”
 - Existing City Ordinance 14-582 discusses “prohibited crossing places” and includes:
 - Between adjacent intersections controlled by traffic signals
 - Only in a crosswalk within any business district

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance

Council Questions

- What is the definition of “mobility restricted to a degree that someone is unable to safely cross?”
 - A definition is not required
 - Phrasing for officer to make a determination
 - “..unless such person’s mobility is restricted to a degree which makes such person unable to safely cross the roadway during two (2) consecutive opportunities.”

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance

Council Questions

- Are there any other ordinances that require a police officer to determine mobility/disability before determining if it was broken?
 - Failure of a person to leave the median after 2 consecutive cycles is “prima facie evidence” of this subsection (mobility dependent)
 - Officers are required to use discretion on a regular basis

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance Council Questions

- What is the definition of an obstruction?
 - Anything that impedes or blocks the flow of traffic

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance

Council Questions

- If the definition is that someone must be fully stopping the flow of traffic, how is anything happening on the median considered an obstruction?
 - “The vehicle may not obstruct or impede moving traffic in order to engage in distribution conduct with a person standing on a sidewalk”

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance

Council Questions

- The council memo says a public education campaign will be required. What will that campaign look like?
 - Similar to any new activity or change in policy and done using a combination of the following:
 - Press Releases
 - Social media posts
 - Educational posts
 - Personal one on one interaction
 - Distribution of printed information
 - Typically over 60-90 days

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance

Council Questions

- What will the potential cost of that campaign be?
 - Normal cost, should not incur any additional out of pocket expenses

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance

Council Questions

- Besides this ordinance, what projects or improvements will this pedestrian study lead to?
 - Pedestrian Safety Study will be used to help prioritize future improvements
 - No specific projects are identified at this time but it contributes to some of the SS4A projects discussed earlier
 - However, as mentioned earlier, staff has had many recent successes in applying for SS4A grants which are heavily safety focused

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance

Why Now?

- Core Purpose: Enhance safety for all users on Columbia's major corridors by reducing hazards and distractions for lingering on narrow medians
 - 226 total pedestrians crashes at intersections
 - 92% resulted in injury or fatality
 - 29% (66 crashes) involved a median



Pedestrian Safety Ordinance

Why Now?

- According to Be Heard: 52% in favor, 43% oppose
- One additional tool, not a replacement
- Data supported measure to reduce preventable risks while continuing to strive for safe streets

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance Questions

Questions?

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance

Potential Definitions

- From the FHWA:
 - Median – the area between opposing lanes of traffic, excluding turn lanes
 - Pedestrian Refuge Island – a median with a refuge area that is intended to help protect pedestrians who are crossing a road

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance

Purpose of the Ordinance

- Enhances safety for motorists and pedestrians on Major Corridor Roadways and intersections
- Reduces traffic hazards and distractions from activities on Columbia's busiest streets
- Promotes safe and efficient traffic flow at intersections

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance

Key Definitions

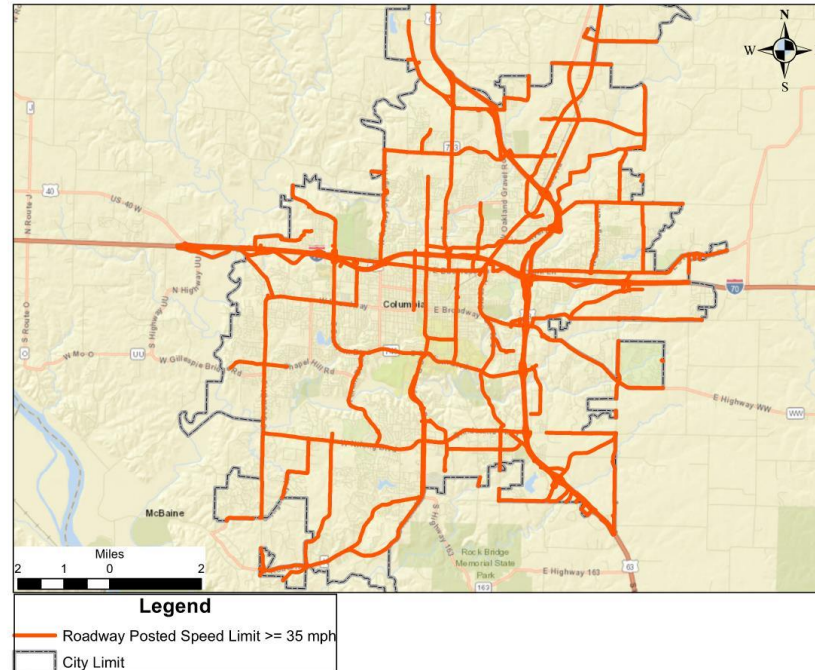
- Major Corridor Roadway: Speed limit greater than or equal to 35 mph and/or traffic volume greater than or equal to 15,000 vehicles per day (vpd)
- Major Corridor Intersection: Any intersection with greater than 35 mph, 15,000 vpd, and/or <6 ft median on at least one approach. Includes roadways within 100 feet of intersection
- Distribution Conduct: Exchanging items between pedestrians and vehicle occupants

Pedestrian Safety Ordinance Prohibitions

- Crossing Major Corridor Roadways outside crosswalks or at pedestrian signals
- Lingering on medians less than 6 feet wide
- Exiting vehicles or approaching vehicles on Major Corridor Roadways

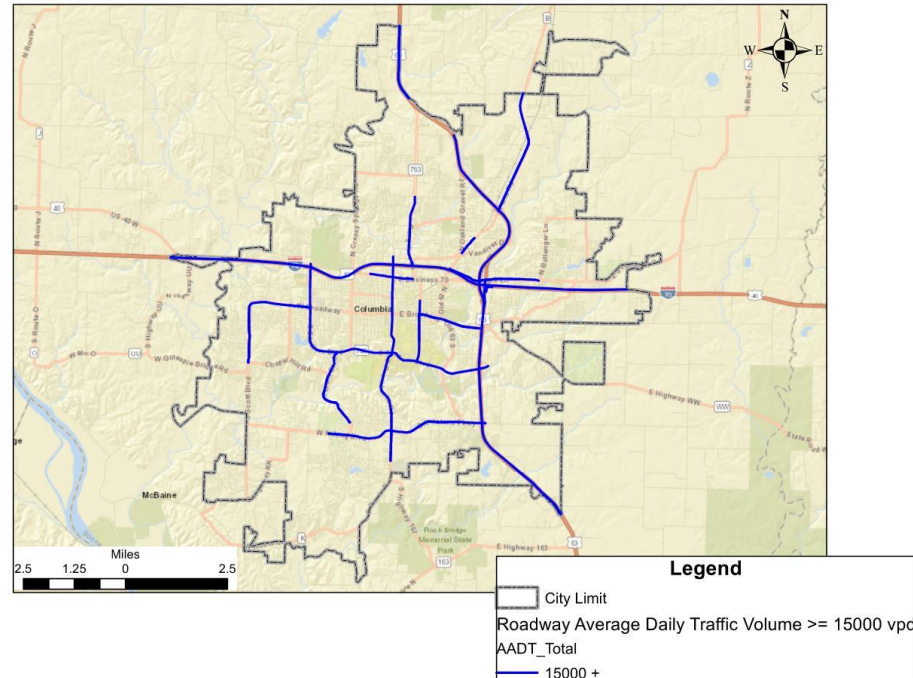
Roads with Speed Limit 35 mph and above

Roadways in City of Columbia with Speed Limit Equal or Above 35 Miles Per Hour (mph)



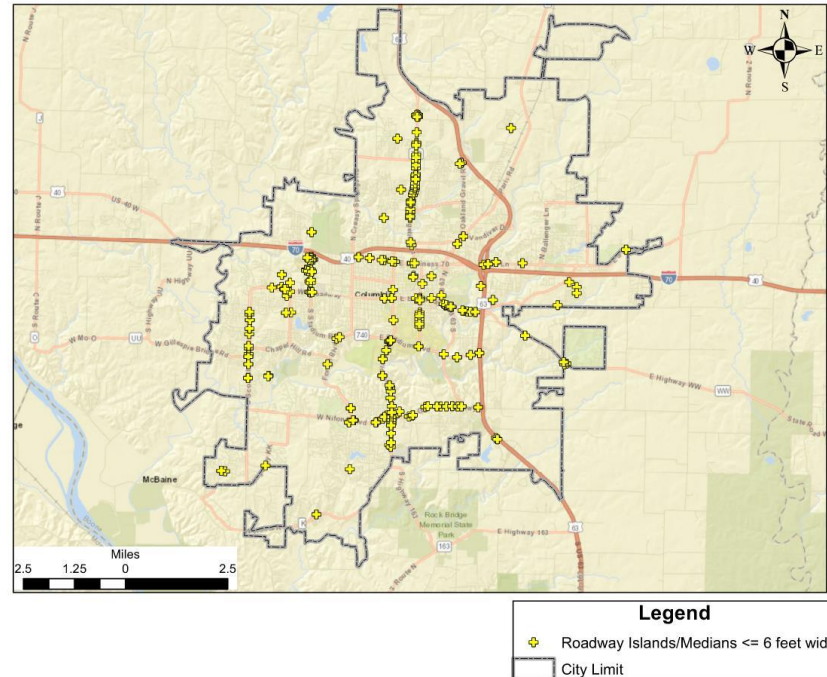
Roads with ADT greater than 15,000 vpd

Roadways in City of Columbia with Roadway Average Daily Traffic Volume $\geq 15,000$ vpd



Roadway & Median islands 6 feet in width or less

Roadway Islands and Medians Locations in City of Columbia (Width 6 Feet or Below)



Combined Criteria

Roadway Islands and Medians Locations Map in City of Columbia (Width 6 Feet or Below)

