

# **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  $\frac{1}{4}$  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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 individual's 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

---

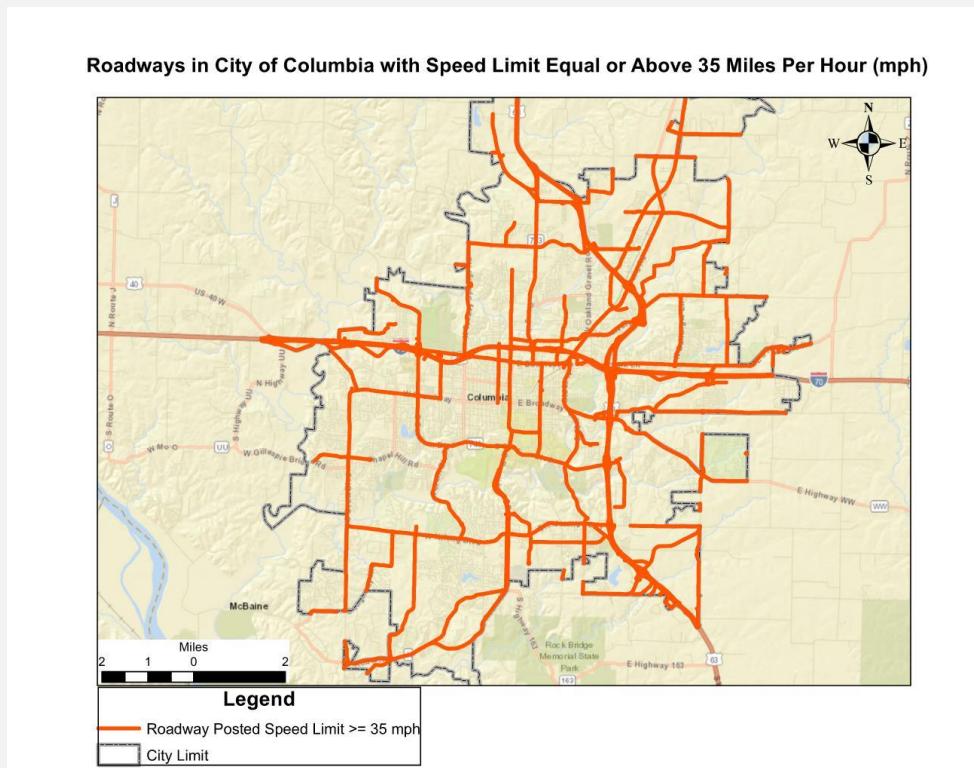
- Major Corridor Roadway: Speed limit greater than or equal to 35 mph and/or traffic volume greater than or equal to 15,000 vehicles per day (vpd)
- Major Corridor Intersection: Any intersection with greater than 35 mph, 15,000 vpd, and/or <6 ft median on at least one approach. Includes roadways within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

# Pedestrian Safety Ordinance Prohibitions

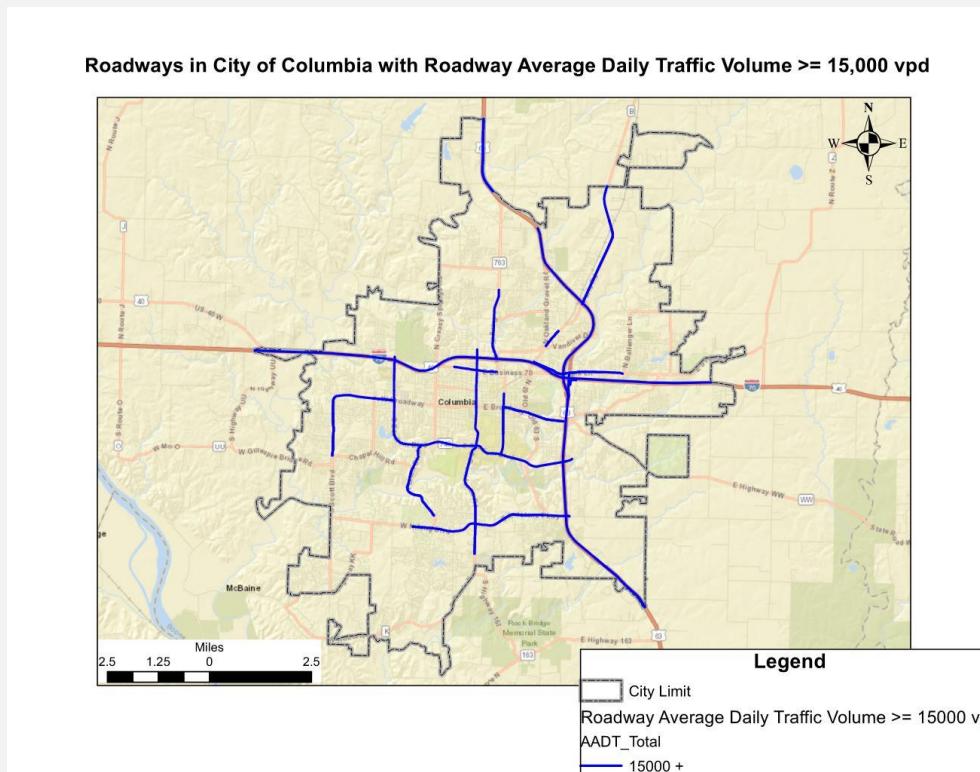
---

- 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**

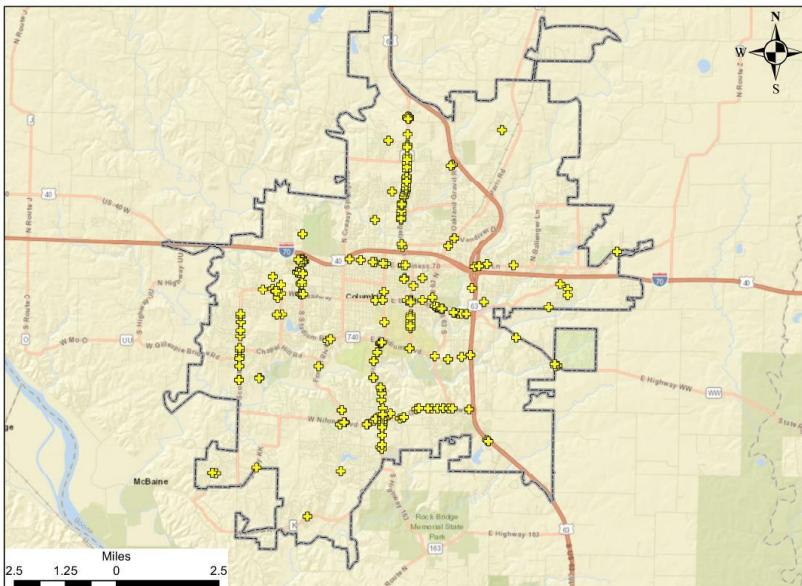


# Roads with ADT greater than 15,000 vpd



# Roadway & Median islands 6 feet in width or less

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



Legend	
	Roadway Islands/Medians <= 6 feet wide
	City Limit

# Combined Criteria

