

November 17, 2017

Dear Mayor Treece, and Councilpersons Ruffin, Trapp, Skala, Thomas, Pitzer and Peters:

This letter is to give support from the Public Transit Advisory Commission to the draft ordinance on banning texting and driving for all drivers in Columbia, regardless of age. We applaud the Council for taking up this important issue. This is an ordinance that, when passed, can save lives.

The Public Transit Advisory Commission's (PTAC's) establishing legislation charges us with all matters of safety relating to transit of our citizens, however that transit may occur; therefore, for the safety of all citizens, we feel very strongly that the current state law, which allows motorists who are over 21 and who are not commercial drivers, to text while driving should be changed. We are aware that state legislators have been pushing for a full ban on texting when driving, but they haven't been able to accomplish it. You have a chance to change that for Columbia with your vote on this ordinance.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) says it takes 5 seconds to send or read a text. It is not age that makes the difference, it is being aware of what taking your eyes off the road for those 5 seconds can do. Staying focused on highway safety is important all of one's life – not just until you turn 21.

One of the incidents that led to the PTAC's keen awareness of our "charge relating to safety" was when a young pedestrian was hit after getting off a bus in the evening and trying to cross Providence Rd. in January 2015. That, and the numerous other fatalities and serious injuries prior to that, led to the formation of the Mayor's Pedestrian Safety Task Force which then led to the Vision Zero Implementation Plan. As you know, the PTAC had several members that served on the Mayor's Pedestrian Safety Task Force and we currently have two members serving on both the Vision Zero Implementation Plan's Engineering and Education Committees.

The formation of the Mayor's Pedestrian Safety Task Force, and the implementation of Vision Zero are evidence of Columbia's commitment to the safety of its citizens. The process of passing an ordinance is yet another tool that could reduce the amount of distracted driving and continue our City's emphasis on public safety. Awareness is key to this issue.

At our November 16th regular monthly meeting, the PTAC discussed this issue and voted unanimously to send a letter of support for the passage of the ordinance.

Your vote to pass this ban in Columbia can not only help ensure safety for our citizens, but can show the direction that should be taken on this issue

We'd like to thank all of you for your concern for the safety of all our citizens, as well as for all the time you put in working toward a better Columbia for all of us.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Price, PTAC Chair

Kathy Lee, PTAC Vice-Chair