

DEPARTMENT SOURCE: Police
TO: City Council
FROM: De'Carlton Seewood, City Manager
DATE: November 14, 2025
RE: Proposed Ordinance 14-587

Memorandum

This memo provides background information and the Columbia Police Department's recommendations related to proposed ordinance **14-587** *Rights and duties of motorists and pedestrians in major corridor roadways and major corridor intersections*, which will be coming before the City Council for consideration. The ordinance is intended to enhance safety for pedestrians and motorists along Columbia's busiest roadways and intersections.

Timeline

In October 2024, former Councilmember Lisa Meyer requested a report from City staff on the safety risks associated with individuals standing or remaining on medians throughout Columbia. Councilmember Meyer resigned from the City Council in May 2025 for health reasons.

In March 2025, the City Council approved hiring CBB Engineering to review pedestrian safety along major corridors.

In June 2025 CBB Engineering presented their findings during a pre-Council work session, which identified elevated risks for pedestrians on high-speed medians and intersections. The presentation included draft ordinances from Springfield, MO, Sioux Falls, SD, Abilene, TX, Bismarck, ND and San Angelo, TX. After some discussion, Council chose to wait until after the Ward 2 special election in August 2025 to fill Councilmember Meyer's vacated seat before considering the ordinance further.

At the first City Council meeting in October 2025 a draft ordinance was included on the Council Agenda.

Enforcement and Education

If adopted, the Columbia Police Department will implement the ordinance in a phased approach emphasizing education and voluntary compliance.

- Education:
 - Police Department staff will coordinate a public education campaign to inform residents about the ordinance during a 60-day education period prior to citation issuance.
 - For the first 60 days after the ordinance becomes effective, officers will give verbal or written warnings to individuals observed violating the ordinance.

- Enforcement:
 - After the 60-day education period, officers may issue citations, which will be processed through the City of Columbia’s Municipal Court. Officers are encouraged to use discretion when determining when a warning or citation is appropriate.
 - Individuals who receive citations may be eligible for the Community Support Docket, a part of the DIVERT program through the City’s Municipal Court that connects participants with supportive services and resources to resolve the matter without formal adjudication. The goal of this process is to work towards dismissal while connecting the individual to long-term case management and local resources.

This approach balances public safety with education and community support, helping ensure compliance while offering alternatives for those who may benefit from additional assistance.

Impact on Police Department

All calls for service are prioritized by Boone County Joint Communications based on immediate risk and safety factors. Officers are dispatched to calls based on their priority, and supervisors monitor call volume and status and direct officers as appropriate. Officers use discretion in determining how to address low-level violations (such as City ordinances) and whether a warning or citation is most appropriate.

The Police Department receives a steady stream of calls in regards to people standing, laying, sleeping, or otherwise occupying medians. These calls often result in an officer responding to perform a welfare check with unclear legal authority to order the individual creating the safety or traffic concern to leave the median. The new ordinance establishes a consistent, legally supported process for issuing warnings or taking enforcement action when necessary that has been used in other cities in addition to those cited in the study presented to the City Council. These cities include:

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| ● Omaha, NE | ● Plano, TX | ● Santa Fe, NM |
| ● Des Moines, IA | ● Dallas, TX | ● Tulsa, OK |
| ● Scottsdale, AZ | ● Wilmington, NC | ● Roanoke, VA |
| ● Houston, TX | ● Tuscon, AZ | |

The proposed ordinance is a proactive measure to protect pedestrians, motorists, and first responders by reducing the risks associated with individuals occupying busy intersections and narrow medians. The application of the ordinance balances safety, education, and community support that applies equally to all individuals and activities. The Columbia Police Department recommends the passage of this ordinance.