

RE: proposed “Pedestrian Safety” ordinance B265-25

To the Mayor, Council, City Manager, and City staff

At its meeting on November 19, 2025, the City Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Commission received the draft of the above proposed ordinance for discussion and recommendation to the City Council. The proposed ordinance was discussed at that meeting and at subsequent Commission meetings on[insert DATE(S)]. We note and for purposes of discussion, agree on the following points:

1. The Commission, and indeed, all members of the community, recognize the imperative to ensure pedestrians’ and bicyclists’ safety on Columbia streets and roadways. Council has adopted Complete Streets and Vision Zero policies aimed at reducing death and injury, particularly to vulnerable road users.
2. We also recognize the expressed desire of some in the community to address the presence of persons soliciting from the medians, adjacent properties, and curbs. We take no position on this “anti-panhandling” feature of the ordinance. Opinions differ as to whether these activities are a detriment to the community or are a significant danger to individuals on or adjacent to the roadways.
3. Members of the community who walk or use mobility devices within the roadway are disproportionately threatened by traffic. We expect that the ordinance will be evaluated on the basis of their effects on pedestrian safety.
4. Major corridor roadways disproportionately are sites of injury and death. A paper in 2021 found that “nearly two thirds (63%) of all hot spot corridors were roadways with 1) three or more lanes, 2) speed limits of 30 miles per hour or higher, and 3) high traffic volumes.” (R. Schneider, et al., “U.S. Fatal Pedestrian Crash Hot Spot Locations and Characteristics,” *Journal of Transport and Land Use* 14(1) 2021, quoted in W. Marshall, *Killed by a Traffic Engineer* Washington DC: Island Press, 2024, p.179).

However, we strongly disagree that the ordinance as proposed will improve pedestrian safety significantly. While it might lead to reduced numbers of public solicitations (item 2, above), it would not improve pedestrian safety on these roadways.

1. The ordinance treats vehicle speed, traffic volume and physical features as givens rather than as variables subject to change. There is apparently no consideration given to alleviating any of these variables for the purpose of improving pedestrian safety, yet all can be addressed by altering the conditions of the major corridor roadways.
2. Speed on major roadways is a function of physical conditions. Wide roads lead to faster traffic and higher volumes. (<https://www.ucdavis.edu/magazine/does->

[widening-highways-ease-traffic-congestion](#), accessed 12/11/2025). The ordinance does not address traffic calming on major corridors.

3. Many of the major corridor intersections covered by the ordinance feature slip lanes which present a hazard to pedestrians, especially the visually and physically impaired and the young. We are unaware of any slip lanes that provide signaled pedestrian crossing of both the slip lane and the adjacent street.
4. Section 14-587(d)(1) states “No person shall cross a major corridor roadway at anyplace except in a crosswalk.” This section glosses over the fact that intersections on these high-use/high speed roadways are widely spaced. For example, the proposed ordinance as written implies that crossing the following roads legally will require up to an extra mile-long walk, since the crosswalks on these roadways are one-half mile apart. (Note that this is not an exhaustive list.)
 - a. West Broadway, Fairview to Stadium, Stadium to Clinkscales. Note that most of Broadway East of Clinkscales through downtown wouldn’t be covered by the ordinance because the speed limit is 30 mph.
 - b. Scott Blvd throughout its length
 - c. Stadium Blvd except through the MU campus.
 - d. Business Loop 70, Stadium to Garth, Providence to Rangeline and East of Rangeline.
 - e. East Broadway, Williams to Old Hwy 63, Old Hwy 63 to Trimble Rd
 - f. Old Hwy 63, East Business Loop to Broadway, Broadway to Stadium Blvd.

We cannot expect members of the community, especially vulnerable individuals (the disabled, parents with strollers, individuals in wheelchairs, etc.) to extend their trips by a half-mile or more, just to cross the street. Nor should we require Columbia police officers to enforce such an ordinance, which would lead to complaints of selective (discriminatory) enforcement.

5. Section 14-587(d)(4) states “No person, other than an occupant of a vehicle, shall be upon a major corridor roadway except to lawfully cross such roadway.” This is problematic for multiple reasons:
 - a. There are no definitions of vehicle as part of the ordinance. Are powered cycles, scooters, and e-bikes all considered vehicles? Are they allowed to be on the roadway, but human-powered bicycles not allowed?
 - b. People are often forced to use the shoulder or bicycle lane because the sidewalk is icy or snow-covered, poorly maintained, or because there is no sidewalk at all.
 - c. People in wheelchairs or power chairs often use the side of the road because the sidewalks, even when cleared, are too uneven to allow sufficient stability.
 - d. Many of the high-usage streets lack sidewalks on one or both sides of the roadway. Prominent examples: Broadway East and West of Stadium; East side

of Rangeline St, North of I-70 (this was the site of a fatality). This ordinance would leave pedestrians with the choice between an impassable path and ignoring the ordinance.

- e. Many marked intersections on major corridors lack lighting or pedestrian signals (i.e., HAWK lights) throughout the city, e.g., West Broadway, Scott Blvd at Georgetown, and many T-intersections.
- f. Roundabouts on major corridors are poorly marked for pedestrian access and road crossing. As the City looks to construct more roundabouts to facilitate traffic flow, these should be engineered to provide enhanced visibility, signals and pedestrian access.
- g. The ordinance includes no definition of a “designated passenger loading zone” where entering a stopped vehicle would be permissible.
- h. A longer stop in the median can be for reasons other than soliciting, e.g., disability, controlling pets or children, even conversation. CPD officers should not be put in a position to decide what conforms to an ambiguous reason for being in a location.
- i. The ordinance as written forbids all solicitations in the roadway, including charitable fundraising. Do we want to prohibit firefighters holding up their boots to raise funds for the United Way, or student groups fundraising for cancer research?

Commission recommendations

1. We recommend that the City install signaling devices (e.g., HAWK crossings) every quarter-mile on major corridor roadways.
2. We recommend installation of speed humps or lighted signals on slip lanes to reduce vehicular speed through these designated pedestrian crossings.
3. We recommend that the City undertake a comprehensive program to reduce vehicular speeds on major roadways, including protected bicycle lanes and other engineering innovations to remove drivers’ perception of a “clear path ahead” which increases the tendency to speed.

In conclusion, the proposed ordinance is notable for what it doesn’t address, vehicle speed and human behavior, which are affected by road design and conditions. If the proposed ordinance directly addressed causes of pedestrian injury and death, we would support it. As it stands, however, the ordinance casts the blame on individuals, including vulnerable members of the community, without addressing the limiting factor: Columbia’s need to design and build a road transportation system with people foremost.