



**CITY OF TACOMA, WASHINGTON  
OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
COUNCIL CONSIDERATION REQUEST**

**TO:** Mayor & City Council  
**FROM:** Council Member Chris Beale and Council Assistant Lynda Foster  
**COPIES TO:** Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager; Tadd Wille, Deputy City Manager; Bill Fosbre,  
City Attorney  
**SUBJECT:** **Reaching Vision Zero and joining the Vision Zero Network**  
**DATE:** February 6, 2020

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**I ask for your support for a Resolution to commit to Vision Zero in the City of Tacoma and to direct the City Manager to take actions required to join the Vision Zero Network.**

**LEGISLATIVE INTENT:**

**History of traffic collisions in the City of Tacoma**

Each year, more than 40,000 people — the population of a small city — are needlessly killed on American streets and thousands more are injured. In cities in Western Washington, the rate of fatal and serious injury crashes increased about 5.4% from the five-year period before 2014 to the five-year period from 2014 onward.

In Tacoma, the crisis of traffic safety is even more stark and the reality more grim. Between 2014 and 2018, there were approximately 17,000 reported collisions on Tacoma’s streets, resulted in 7,700 possible injuries resulting in:

- An increase in fatal and serious crashes twice as high as the statewide average, with an **increase of 11.9%**.
- Over **400 fatalities and serious injuries** – meaning approximately once **every four and a half (4.5) days**, a family is changed forever because of a serious injury or fatality that occurred on Tacoma roads.
- 187 school-aged bicyclists or pedestrians (ages 0 – 19) involved in a collision.

These figures clearly demonstrate a crisis of safety on Tacoma’s streets that must be immediately addressed by the city. This data does not reflect the number of close calls and near misses that almost always go unreported – but greatly impact traffic safety and walkability. Additionally, this data does not reflect crashes unreported due to distrust of police and lack of information around how to report.

Traffic collisions also have tremendous economic cost to those who are not immediately impacted, since they share responsibility for the increased costs of medical services, legal and court fees, emergency service response, insurance administration, congestion, property damage, and decreased workplace productivity. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the national economic costs of these crashes totaled \$242 billion in 2010. When quality of life valuations are considered, the total value of societal harm from motor vehicle crashes throughout the country in 2010 was \$836 billion. At a state level, from 2015-2017, according to the 2019 Washington State Highway Safety Plan, 1,650 people were killed and 6,537 were seriously injured while using

Washington roads. The estimated economic and social costs of those three years of crashes are more than \$3.3 billion.

For too long, society has appeared to consider traffic deaths and severe injuries to be inevitable side effects of modern life. While often referred to as “accidents,” the reality is that, as a community, we have a clear and present need and responsibility to help prevent these tragedies by taking a proactive, preventative approach that prioritizes traffic safety as a public health issue. The City is committed to this by ensuring policies have a positive health effect on the community and the people they affect through the “Health and Equity in All Policies” policy passed by City Council on December 12, 2017.

### **The Vision Zero Network**

Vision Zero is a strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all. The first step in this effort is asserting that everyone has the right to move safely in their community, and everyone shares the responsibility to make safe systems for travel.

While everyone is affected by collisions, collisions do not affect everyone equally. Nationally, pedestrians who use a wheelchair face a 36% higher chance of death than pedestrians who do not. In Pierce County, 3.4% of people killed in traffic crashes were American Indian or Alaskan Native, but these communities make up just 1.2% of the population. According to the Center for Disease Control in traffic fatality data tracked from 2001 to 2010, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, regardless of gender, had the highest annualized age-adjusted traffic-related pedestrian death rates of all race/ethnicities. A 2015 scientific study found that twice as many drivers failed to yield to Black pedestrians than White pedestrians at a marked crosswalk. Vulnerable users of the City’s transportation infrastructure include, but are not limited to: children, older adults, individuals experiencing homelessness, individuals who rely on streets, bike lanes, and sidewalks for income, individuals with a disability, and individuals who have historically been profiled by law enforcement. Making roadways safer for vulnerable users is an important part of making the roadways safer for everyone. To move toward more just mobility, we must end discrimination based on race, class, legal status, ability, gender identity, sexual orientation, or age in how our travel is regulated and accommodated, including ending racial profiling.

The Vision Zero Network (Network) will recognize as “Vision Zero communities,” those who are taking demonstrable and significant actions to advance the principles of Vision Zero to ensure safe mobility for all people. While certain strategies and timing will differ from place to place, these principles are core to successful Vision Zero efforts:

1. Traffic deaths and severe injuries are acknowledged to be preventable.
2. Human life and health are prioritized within all aspects of transportation systems.
3. Acknowledgement that human error is inevitable, and transportation systems should be forgiving.
4. Safety work should focus on systems-level changes above influencing individual behavior.
5. Speed is recognized and prioritized as the fundamental factor in crash severity.

The Network is helping communities across the nation mobilize to address the crisis of traffic deaths in this country, and millions more injuries. They are bringing key stakeholders together to declare that “Enough is Enough,” recognizing these tragedies as preventable with the right strategies and commitment. The City of Tacoma shares the Network’s goal of safe mobility for all. The Network’s guidelines are evolving to acknowledge histories of violence and exclusion related to enforcement.

Infrastructure investments can reduce traffic speeds, diminish conflicts between road users, and result in an overall reduction in traffic collisions. While the City cannot fully control all of the factors which contribute to collisions, such as distraction, impairment, and aggressive driving, and indeed cannot eliminate risk, we can help change some factors which contribute to roadway safety and we can help take a leadership role to encourage the changes which will result in progress to the goal of zero fatalities and serious injuries.

### **City Initiatives that inform this resolution**

The Transportation Master Plan, an element of the One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan, was adopted in November 2015 and provides a long-term vision for transportation infrastructure in the City of Tacoma. It is the City's primary tool for forecasting transportation demand and identifying services and improvements. The vision states that the City is strategic in how it plans its transportation system with an emphasis on carrying the people and goods that foster Tacoma's culture, character, and competitiveness. It offers multimodal travel options that provide safe access for all users and neighborhoods, encourage healthy living, and protect the environment. In the 2019-2020 Biennial Budget, the City Council funded an effort to update and amend the Transportation Master Plan for consistency with City initiatives, emerging trends, and transportation development. In conjunction with the Transportation Master Plan amendment effort, the City Council also allocated funds to develop a Vision Zero Action Plan.

Reaching Vision Zero will require engagement with the Tacoma Police Department and appropriate staffing to achieve results in traffic enforcement. The City of Tacoma is administering a comprehensive police staffing study that will identify and recommend appropriate staffing and deployment levels for every discrete operational and support function in the department. The anticipated timeline is for work to begin during the first quarter of 2020 with a final report delivered to the City Manager and Tacoma Police Department on or before April 30, 2020.

### **Policy Objectives**

Through this resolution the Tacoma City Council will publicly commit to pursuing the goal of *eliminating* traffic fatalities and severe injuries in the City of Tacoma by 2035.

To achieve this, the Council will direct the City Manager to:

1. Determine roles and responsibilities for the creation, implementation, and evaluation of the Vision Zero Action Plan. This will include identifying:
  - Lead staff to coordinate the creation, implementation, and evaluation of progress on the Vision Zero Action Plan, who will also lead in outreach to and engagement of key stakeholders.
  - A Citizen Commission to lead the development of the Vision Zero Action Plan and review an annual evaluation of its progress.
  - An internal, inter-disciplinary city staff work group to engage with when monitoring and adapting city processes to achieve Vision Zero. Key participating departments include, but are not limited to, Public Works, the Tacoma Police Department, Planning and Development Services, and the Office of Sustainability.
2. Take bold action and work with the Transportation Committee and the Bike and Pedestrian Technical Advisory Group to complete a summary report on the "State of Speed and Safety in Tacoma." The report will include, but is not limited to, consideration of policy recommendations:
  - Reducing the City of Tacoma speed limits, including evaluation of a default speed limit of 25 miles per hour for arterials and 20 miles per hour for residential streets.
  - How to update our design manual, including street cross sections, development requirements, and project prioritization criteria using best engineering practices and recommendations meant to reduce speeds and calm traffic, and
  - How to update our design manual to establish more dedicated facilities for walking and biking, especially separated sidewalks, and establish protected bike facilities as the default facility type on city of Tacoma major roadways.

3. Identify options for long-term, sustainable sources of funding to support priorities established in the Action Plan, and present these options to Council for consideration during the development of the 2021-2022 biennium budget.
4. Determine staffing needs for accomplishing the actions outlined in the Vision Zero Action Plan. Staffing needs should be centered on the need for accountability for implementation, monitoring progress, and reporting out to the citizen commission and City Council. This is expected to include consideration of the establishment of a Vision Zero coordinator and consideration for establishing an internal Office within the Public Works Department dedicated to mobility and safety issues. The cost of fully funding this program should be shared with Council for consideration in future budget cycles.
5. Provide annual reports to the Mayor and City Council of the City's progress towards the goal of Vision Zero, to include a report of all serious injury and fatality-involved collisions. The report should include analysis for vulnerable populations, including school-aged children and older drivers
6. Center equity and social justice in all elements of the Vision Zero Action Plan's creation and implementation, including how the community is engaged in the plan's development, the prioritization of key strategies, and ongoing evaluation.
7. Coordinate with the Mayor's office to apply for the City of Tacoma to join and become an on-going member of the Vision Zero Action Network.

DESIRED RESOLUTION DATE: February 18, 2020

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Council Members Beale and Walker sought feedback from numerous stakeholders when developing this policy. Council Members presented to the Commission on Disabilities, Transportation Committee, and the Bike & Pedestrian Advisory Group for discussion. Additionally, Council Member Beale shared the resolution with the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, the Puyallup Tribe of Indians' government relations staff, Pierce Transit, and the South End Neighborhood Council.

### **2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

#### **Equity and Accessibility:**

This resolution directly approaches achieving the goals of Vision Zero using equity and social justice as guiding principles. As stated previously, in Pierce County, 3.4% of people killed in traffic crashes were American Indian or Alaskan Native, but these communities make up just 1.2% of the population. Nationally, pedestrians who use a wheelchair face a 36% higher chance of death than pedestrians who do not. Everyone is not impacted at the same rate or at the same risk of injury or death when using the City's transportation infrastructure. This resolution will center those most impacted by traffic violence as we work to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries for all

#### **Economy/Workforce:** *Equity Index Score: Moderate Opportunity*

Increase the number of infrastructure projects and improvements that support existing and new business developments.

Increase positive public perception related to the Tacoma economy.

#### **Livability:** *Equity Index Score: Moderate Opportunity*

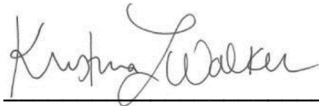
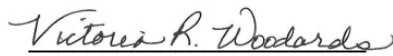
Increase the number of Complete Compact Communities/ 20-Minute Neighborhoods throughout the city.

Improve health outcomes and reduce disparities, in alignment with the community health needs assessment and CHIP, for all Tacoma residents

If you have a question related to the Council Contingency Fund Request, please contact Lynda Foster at 253.591.5166 or [Lynda.Foster@CityofTacoma.org](mailto:Lynda.Foster@CityofTacoma.org).

SUBMITTED FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION BY:  \_\_\_\_\_  
Council Member Beale

**SUPPORTING COUNCIL MEMBERS SIGNATURES**

1.  \_\_\_\_\_ POS# 8
2.  \_\_\_\_\_ POS# Mayor