



Vision Zero

In 2018, 36,560 people were killed in traffic crashes on the Nation's roadways. In a concerted effort to reduce fatalities, most States have adopted a zero deaths vision or approach in their Strategic Highway Safety Plans (SHSPs). In addition, more than 40 communities have committed to Vision Zero, a strategy to eliminate traffic deaths and severe injuries at the local and regional level. The growing number of communities, working to integrate a zero deaths vision and strategies into their traffic safety efforts, have created renewed opportunities for coordination and collaboration at the State and local level.

To support effective safety partnerships that help work toward zero deaths, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) sponsored several State-based workshops where stakeholders discussed their safety priorities and strategies to achieve their shared goal of zero traffic deaths. In addition, FHWA conducted follow-up webinars and are developing a resource to help other States and local communities coordinate their zero deaths efforts.

Toward Zero Death Efforts in Colorado

In December 2019, FHWA sponsored a workshop in Colorado where participating agencies shared information and identified opportunities to improve coordination and progress toward zero traffic deaths. A follow-up webinar was held in January 2020 with local, regional, State, and Federal partners. The 1-hour webinar is available for viewing online at <https://tinyurl.com/srfncj2>.

During the workshop and webinar, Colorado participants shared a number of their initiatives and activities that exemplify the coordination and collaboration resulting from the common zero deaths goal. The following section highlights

several of these noteworthy practices.

Noteworthy Practices in Colorado

- **Recognize limitations to the 85th percentile speed.** The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) collaborates with local transportation and enforcement agencies when setting speed limits on State highways. CDOT recognizes the importance of understanding and aligning the corridor visions of partner agencies, especially because arterial roadways are generally overrepresented in crashes and local agency input is needed to reduce these crashes. The major benefit of establishing partnerships is that CDOT is able to understand the competing concerns of local agencies with statutory requirements and traffic safety. In addition to the 85th percentile speed, CDOT also references road geometry, crash history, adjacent development and environment and engineering judgment.
- **Learn from speed evaluations.** As part of its Vision Zero efforts, the City and County of Denver conducted a Citywide Speed Limit Evaluation study to collect and examine data on 37 corridors. The study included a comparison of speed limit changes based on the conventional (85th percentile) approach and the context-sensitive (50th percentile) approach. Denver used the study to inform infrastructure changes, such as upgrading 10 traffic signals on South Federal Boulevard, a busy road on Denver's High Injury Network (HIN), including installing pedestrian countdown signals, leading pedestrian intervals, and modifying late-night signal timing. Post-improvement analysis in 2019 showed an almost 17 percent reduction in crashes (from 923 down to 768) and a 100 percent reduction in traffic fatalities (8 fatalities in the before period).



- **Set goals and increase funding for safety improvements.** CDOT has set a goal to reduce vehicle crashes by 2,500 by June 30, 2020, and by 7,500 by June 30, 2022. To achieve this aggressive goal, CDOT increased funding delivered by the Strategic Safety Program. The Strategic Safety Program, which is a part of the Whole System Whole Safety initiative, is a set-aside specifically for safety improvements on roadway assets, including cable guardrails, 6-inch reflective striping, and rumble strips. The program is funded by the HSIP penalty funds.
- **Collaborate on diverse transportation needs, not just on highways.** CDOT's Strategic Transportation Safety Plan (STSP) is an update of the 2014–2019 SHSP and is particularly noteworthy for its focus on collaborative input from other agencies and the public on the Plan. The STSP reflects work to center transportation for all modes on all roadways, not just moving vehicles on highways. The Plan emphasizes collaboration on Vision Zero, including in its vision and mission.

Other Efforts Supporting Zero Traffic Deaths in Colorado

- The Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) and CDOT are aligning State, regional, and local Plans. DRCOG's regional Vision Zero Plan is coordinated with CDOT's STSP and local jurisdiction safety plans. The intent is to conduct regional HIN analysis and regional crash profiles and prioritize focus areas (including an interactive map) to identify priority countermeasures.
- The City of Boulder has prioritized speed management in its Vision Zero efforts, setting the default speed limit at 25 MPH, providing pedestrian-crossing treatments, upgrading signals with protected left turns and leading pedestrian intervals, and adding green pavement marking in bicycle lanes. Boulder produces the [Safe Streets Report](#) to track

progress toward Vision Zero and evaluate past safety improvement efforts.

- The City of Fort Collins uses a data driven process to reduce number and severity of crashes. Good data and its evaluation resulted in a successful \$4 million safety grant to address a US Highway 287 intersection, which was of significant concern.

Opportunities for Further Traffic Safety Coordination in Colorado

Opportunities exist for local agencies and CDOT to coordinate more fully on safety goals from the start of projects. The following section presents some of the coordination ideas shared in the workshop and webinar:

- Institutional barriers to speed management were discussed and it is noted that traffic safety cameras are not yet allowed in Colorado. The City of Austin, Texas, approach to managing speed and developing street design guidelines is to achieve targeted, safe operating speeds, which can be a model for Colorado cities.
- Many Colorado cities face the challenge that crashes typically occur at night and/or involve older drivers and impaired pedestrians. Local agencies can partner individually or across jurisdictional lines with CDOT to help improve street lighting on the HIN. The Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) [Speeding Away from Zero](#) report indicates a higher incidence of distraction and impairment, in addition to speeding and low lighting on roadways, as possible causation factors in crashes involving pedestrians and bicyclists, specifically during evening or nighttime hours.

Resources/Information on Vision Zero can be found at:

<https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/zerodeaths/> or contact Chimai Ngo (chimai.ngo@dot.gov).