



State and Local Efforts Towards Zero Deaths—The Texas Experience



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. This growing number of communities working to integrate a zero deaths vision and strategies into their traffic safety efforts has created renewed opportunities for coordination and collaboration at the State and local level.

The Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Office of Safety promotes developing effective safety partnerships as a way to advance zero deaths efforts. To support this effort, FHWA has sponsored several State-based workshops where stakeholders gather to discuss their safety priorities and strategies to achieve their shared goal of zero traffic deaths. In addition to the workshops, the FHWA is conducting follow-up webinars and developing a resource to help other States and local communities coordinate their zero deaths efforts.

Towards Zero Death Efforts in Texas

In February 2019, FHWA helped to facilitate a workshop in Texas where stakeholders were charged with identifying opportunities for increased coordination and progress toward zero deaths. A follow-up webinar was held in April 2019 with local, regional, State, and Federal partners. The one-hour webinar is available for viewing online at <https://vimeo.com/329847356>.

During the workshop and webinar, Texas shared a number of their initiatives and activities that exemplify the coordination and collaboration taking place as a result of the common zero

deaths goal. Several of these noteworthy practices are highlighted below.

Noteworthy Practices in Texas

- **Large project coordination.** The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, the City of Austin, and other regional partners have been working to improve the I-35 corridor. This large project is balancing efficiency goals (including optimizing the existing facility, improving connectivity, increasing capacity, and managing traffic) with the goals of improving safety, minimizing the need for additional right-of-way, enhancing compatibility with neighborhoods, and advancing active transportation options. The [Mobility35 Shared Use Path Design Guidance](#) is one example of a corridor-wide solution resulting from coordination between agencies and increased public engagement.
- **Design flexibility.** Existing standards reference relevant information on bicycle and pedestrian safety and comfort, including the [TxDOT Guidelines Emphasizing Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations](#), which states that "TxDOT is committed to proactively plan, design and construct facilities to safely accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians." This emphasis is timely because of a disproportionate safety problem among vulnerable road users, including those walking and bicycling.
- **Pedestrian Safety Action Plan.** The City of Austin analyzed crash data and engaged with the Austin community to identify top safety concerns to create a holistic framework for improving citywide pedestrian safety. Austin identified six behaviors that contribute to most pedestrian crashes: failure to yield, impairment, distraction/inattention, improper



maneuver, failure to stop, and speed. The plan describes how the risk of crashes—and the injury severity when crashes occur— increase exponentially as speeds increase. The City's Vision Zero/Safe Systems approach reflects this focus on managing speed, including redesigning roadways to encourage safer speeds.

- **Crash records coordination.** Texas has a robust Crash Records Information System (CRIS) and supports tools for public users to query, extract, and analyze crash data.
- **Safety grant implementation.** The City of San Antonio used a TxDOT safety grant to develop and distribute safety education cards to drivers on two State-owned roads. The City also produced a 3-minute video to familiarize San Antonio police officers with Vision Zero and the importance of completing crash reports fully and accurately.

Other Efforts Supporting Zero Traffic Deaths in Texas

- TxDOT staff is updating the State's Roadway Design Manual to incorporate revisions to the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Green Book along with revisions for pedestrian and bicycle design, and other safety considerations. TxDOT staff is also working on a safety score tool effort.
- A newly formed TxDOT System Safety Council offers an opportunity to integrate safety throughout the Department's business processes and project development.
- Cities are looking for design flexibility to bring about safer designs, especially for vulnerable road users.

Opportunities for Further Traffic Safety Coordination in Texas

Opportunities exist for cities and TxDOT to coordinate more fully on safety goals from the start of projects, including planning, programming, communications, and evaluation. The following section presents some of the short-, medium-, and long-term coordination ideas

shared in the 2019 Texas Workshop and Webinar:

- Some Texas cities expressed an urgent need to manage speeds for safety, particularly on arterials and frontage roads. Workshop participants discussed street design changes and greater flexibility to lower speed limits. An example of safer street design is a street that provides greater separation between pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles. Such redesign and speed management is especially important on State-owned roads, where a disproportionate number of pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities occur.
- Agencies can share speed management strategies (and examples from other communities) regularly with traffic safety professionals. TxDOT could share Governors Highway Safety Association's (GHSA) report [Speeding Away from Zero: Rethinking a Forgotten Traffic Safety Challenge](#) with key policymakers, including the Texas Governor's office and TxDOT leaders, to provide inspiration and recommendations for action.
- Traffic safety leaders from across the State could coordinate efforts on crucial safety initiatives, including:
 - Traffic Records Coordinating Committee
 - Planned update to the State's *Roadway Design Manual*
 - Participating and leading SHSP emphasis area teams
- TxDOT and cities could work together to analyze data and evaluate the preponderance of serious traffic injuries and fatalities on State-owned roads in cities in order to strategize effective solutions.
- Traffic safety leaders from across Texas could identify areas in which State and Federal policies could be updated to allow the State to more fully advance effective traffic safety strategies, including proven speed management measures.

Resources and information on zero deaths vision can be found at:

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