

City of
Bellevue



Transportation Commission Study Session

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TO: Chair Lampe and Members of the Transportation Commission

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SUBJECT: Vision Zero Comprehensive Plan Amendment

DIRECTION REQUESTED

Action

Discussion and direction

Information

On December 7, 2015 the City Council adopted [Resolution 9035](#), endorsing Vision Zero. Vision Zero is a comprehensive approach to traffic safety, the ultimate goal of which is to end traffic deaths and serious injuries in the City of Bellevue by 2030. With this resolution the Council directed the Transportation Commission to determine if any updates, revisions or additional policies are warranted to incorporate Vision Zero into the 2016 amendments for the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan. To meet this request, a recommendation from the Transportation Commission will be due to the Council by March 2016. Staff presented a preliminary recommendation with a range of potential alternatives for Commission consideration on January 14, 2016.

Now, having received Commission direction, staff has crafted draft policy language for discussion and approval on February 11, 2016. Recommended policies would embed Vision Zero within the existing chapters of the Transportation Element, and would specifically include a policy to support a Vision Zero “programmatically approach”.

BACKGROUND

On January 14, 2016, Transportation Department Staff presented several options on potential updates, revisions, and additional policies to incorporate a Vision Zero framework into the existing Comprehensive Plan. The different options were:

No Action –existing policy language is sufficient.

Basic Approach Option 1 - create a new Vision Zero “chapter” within the Transportation Element, similar to the chapters on Roadways, Transit, etc. In a Vision Zero chapter, a brief statement of policy intent would be followed by several new Vision Zero-specific policies. The existing safety-related policies would be retained in their respective chapters.

Basic Approach Option 2 - integrate new Vision Zero policies into the existing Transportation Element chapters. In this option, policies that capture the Vision Zero intent would be matched with similar policies in other chapters.

Programmatic Approach - recognize that Vision Zero is more than a framework for existing policies and programs. It could be used to identify collaborative, expanded or new efforts in programs, support modifications to the design of transportation facilities, clarify priorities and document the need for new resources. At the core of a *Programmatic Approach* are the “6 Es” that are the essence for implementing Vision Zero in an actionable framework:

- Education: Inform residents about traffic laws and safe behavior for travelers of all ages and abilities
- Encouragement: Incentivize safe behavior
- Enforcement: Implement strategies to more effectively enforce traffic laws and regulations
- Engineering: Employ street design techniques to make streets safe for all, especially for the most vulnerable users
- Equity: Ensure that safety applies to everyone no matter who you are, what mode you are using or where in the city you are traveling
- Evaluation: Monitor progress, adjust strategies, and celebrate success

Commission Direction

The Commission directed staff to pursue a Comprehensive Plan amendment that follows *Basic Approach Option 2* and to incorporate a policy to support a *Programmatic Approach*—recognizing that additional resources and further definition would be necessary. Specific tasks and outcomes associated with a programmatic approach would be developed with the Commission following policy adoption. Recommended policy language has been streamlined to avoid redundancy and has been vetted with the City Attorney’s Office.

INFORMATION

Legal Review of Policy Language

During policy discussion on January 14, Commissioners questioned the use of the word “safe” in proposed new policy to describe an intended outcome of the design of projects in a Vision Zero framework – with the primary concern being potential liability exposure to the City. Staff posed the question to the City Attorney’s office – below is the response:

“We (City Attorney’s Office) discussed this issue internally and do not have any concern with the use of the word “safe” in policy language. As you pointed out we use the word “safe” in many of our policies. Also, the term “safe” is used in the MUTCD.”

The staff recommendation in Attachment 1, contains no new policy that uses the word “safe”. This outcome is the result of the Commission’s direction to embed Vision Zero policies in the existing Transportation Element chapters and to avoid redundancy. The words “safe” and “safety” are used in existing policies and staff determined that the message is clear.

Other Requested Information

Commissioners requested information with regard to existing efforts in the city to evaluate and respond to collision data. Please refer to Attachment 2 for an overview of existing evaluation efforts. Graphs and other information specifically related to collision data will be included in the presentation for the February 11 Commission meeting.

Further response to the Commission’s request is an explanation regarding how Vision Zero would help align existing city safety efforts (Attachment 3).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Attachment 1 outlines the staff recommendation for amendments to the Transportation Element to incorporate Vision Zero within the existing Roadways and Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation chapters. The recommendation adds four new policies—three into the Roadways chapter and one into the Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation chapter—and modifies three existing policies—two in the Roadways chapter and one in the Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation chapter—to add language to support Vision Zero generally and to provide direction toward a programmatic approach that features the six “E”s. Additionally, a call out text box and a new narrative paragraph would be added to the preamble of “Bellevue’s Transportation Plan”.

It is important to note that the work plan and resources to implement a *Programmatic Approach* to Vision Zero would be developed after adoption of the new Vision Zero language into the Transportation Element. Draft policy **TR-B** provides guidance for developing an

implementation plan, but the actual *Programmatic Approach* content will be developed and discussed with the Commission and Council after policy is adopted.

“TR-B. Develop a programmatic approach to Vision Zero that integrates components of Education; Encouragement; Enforcement; Engineering; Equity; and Evaluation.”

NEXT STEPS

If the Commission approves a Vision Zero recommendation on February 11, 2016 staff will report that recommendation to Council in March 2016 and will seek Council direction. That direction would take the form of a Council request to initiate a Comprehensive Plan amendment to incorporate Vision Zero in the Transportation Element. If further Commission deliberation on Transportation Element is required, staff will bring a final draft Vision Zero recommendation for Commission consideration and action on March 10, 2016.

If Council provides direction to include draft Vision Zero policies with the 2016 Comprehensive Plan amendments, Transportation Department staff will work with the Planning and Community Development Department and the Planning Commission to ensure that Vision Zero policies are vetted and reviewed in the context of other proposed amendments to the Plan. Adoption of Plan amendments is anticipated in December 2016.

Subsequent to policy adoption—assuming support for a programmatic approach to Vision Zero—staff will work with the Transportation Commission to prepare a work program and to identify the resources to implement a programmatic approach.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Transportation Element – Integrate Vision Zero
2. Existing Evaluation Efforts
3. Programmatic Approach

ATTACHMENT 1

Integrate Vision Zero in the Transportation Element.

This attachment demonstrates how Vision Zero would be integrated into the existing Transportation Element, with new narrative below to describe Vision Zero plus several new and amended policies that would support existing safety efforts, complement safety-related policies within the chapters, and advance a programmatic approach. Note that a programmatic approach would require: 1) policy approval and; 2) dedication of staff and resources.

Transportation Element Amendments

Add text box to margin

WHAT IS VISION ZERO?

Vision Zero is an approach to traffic safety that has the ultimate goal of ending traffic deaths and serious injuries. It is a framework for a multi-faceted approach to create a transportation system that is safe for all users. Components of a Vision Zero programmatic approach to safety include several categories of actions: Education; Encouragement; Enforcement; Engineering; Equity; and Evaluation.

Add a new paragraph to the narrative of “Bellevue’s Transportation Plan”

Vision Zero

Bellevue City Council Resolution 9035 (December 17, 2015) endorsed Vision Zero—recognizing that death and serious injury on city streets is unacceptable and preventable. Policies related to Vision Zero are integrated throughout the Transportation Element to support implementing context-appropriate traffic safety measures for all travel modes and to emphasize protecting the most vulnerable users. In a comprehensive, coordinated and programmatic manner, Bellevue will maintain, enhance and monitor progress in a citywide effort to achieve zero traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2030.

Integrate Vision Zero Policies in Existing Transportation Element Chapters

Roadways - Policies that address design and management of the city’s street system to meet community mobility needs **and safety expectations.**

(Draft Vision Zero policies and amendments are shaded)

TR-A Strive to achieve zero traffic deaths and serious injuries on Bellevue streets by 2030.

TR-B. Develop a programmatic approach to Vision Zero that integrates components of Education; Encouragement; Enforcement; Engineering; Equity; and Evaluation.

TR-C. Design and manage streets to foster travel behavior that is appropriate to the type of street and the neighborhood.

TR-53. Maintain and enhance safety for all users of the roadway network, regardless of demographics and geography.

TR-55. Maintain a collision reduction program to identify high collision locations, evaluate and prioritize potential safety improvements and implement recommended changes.

TR-56. Provide street lighting where needed and appropriate based on neighborhood context to improve visibility and safety while minimizing light/glare spillover.

TR-57. Minimize visual distractions, extraneous objects, and excessive clutter along arterials.

TR-58. Minimize the number of driveways on arterials to improve the pedestrian environment and reduce the potential for pedestrian and vehicle collisions.

Transit - Policies that address the provision of transit service and access to transit in Bellevue.

(No new Vision Zero policies needed in the Transit Chapter)

TR-76. Develop and maintain safe and convenient pedestrian access to transit stops and stations, through shared responsibility with transit providers, that:

1. Provides short, direct routes within a ten-minute walk;
2. Designs the pedestrian environment to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without adaptation;
3. Maximizes safety for pedestrians at street crossings; and
4. Gives priority to pedestrian access and safety.

TR-77. Facilitate intermodal transfers and increased access to transit stations through partnerships with public and private providers of transit and shuttle services with an emphasis on safety for people transferring between the station platform and the various modes.

TR-91. Implement standards and guidelines to create transit stations that are valued places in the community by providing:

1. Comfortable and safe access to the surrounding community;
2. Space that is comfortable for both large and small numbers of people; and
3. Design that encourages social interaction.

TR-94. Maintain and enhance safety when incorporating high capacity transit along Bellevue streets, through the use of street design features, materials, street signage and lane markings that provide clear, unambiguous direction to drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

TR-97. Ensure that agreements with transit providers include elements to provide long-term safety and security, operation and maintenance of stations.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation - *Policies that address increasing the opportunities to provide people with safe, comfortable, **protected** and connected pedestrian and bicycle facilities in Bellevue.*

(Draft Vision Zero policies and amendments are shaded)

TR-105. Implement the Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan and prioritize projects that:

1. Address safety issues;
2. Provide access to activity centers;
3. Provide access to the transit and school bus systems;
4. Complete and connect planned pedestrian or bicycle facilities;
5. Develop primary north-south and east-west bicycle routes through the city;
6. Improve multimodal level of service along travel corridors; and
7. Serve residents **regardless of their age or ability, especially those** who have special accessibility needs.

TR-D. **Strive to provide separation between moving vehicles and vulnerable pedestrians and bicyclists using tools that are feasible, reasonable and appropriate to the context.**

TR-109. Ensure that a safe, permanent, and convenient alternative facility is present prior to the permanent vacation of an off-street pedestrian or bicycle facility.

TR-110. Support education and information programs to promote a share the road/share the trail message.

TR-116. Improve the opportunities for pedestrians to safely cross streets at intersections and designated mid-block locations.

Neighborhood Protection - *Policies that address how the city will protect neighborhoods from impacts associated with the transportation system, such as noise, congestion, speeding, and cut-through traffic in coordination with the policies of the Neighborhoods Element.*

(No new Vision Zero policy needed in the Neighborhood Protection Chapter)

- TR-145.** Preserve the safety and livability of residential streets through an adequately funded neighborhood traffic safety program.
- TR-153.** Employ traffic calming measures to slow vehicular travel speed along residential streets and to reduce the volume of cut-through traffic.

ATTACHMENT 2

Existing Evaluation Efforts

At the Commission meeting on January 14, 2016, Commissioners were interested to know more about current collision rates and the effectiveness of the existing programs. Evaluation efforts consider both location-specific collision circumstances and city-wide trends. Currently, the biggest evaluation process considers intersection and corridor collision data to determine where to focus location-specific analysis. This is done through the Accident Reduction Program.

An Annual Accident Study identifies the high collision locations and sorts intersections and corridors by highest collision rate. This list provides information about potential locations for site specific safety improvements as funding allows.

Over the last 24 years, the City has done over 80 safety projects as part of the Accident Reduction Program. Projects range from \$1,000-\$20,000 but includes some larger projects ranging from \$100,000 to \$650,000 that are done through the CIP. For each project, before-and-after collision incidents are monitored and cost savings are calculated based on national standards for cost of an accident to society. The public benefit (cost savings) from these targeted collision reduction projects is almost \$67 million since the program began.

- In 2009, enhancements were made to the signalized crosswalk at 102nd Ave NE and NE 8th St to reduce conflict between left turning cars and pedestrians by installing an edge lit flashing sign. The project cost \$5,000 and helped to reduce to the number of pedestrian collisions to zero in the last five years compared to four (one serious) in the previous five years before the installation.
- In 2005, a project at NE 20th St between 140th Ave NE and 148th Ave NE eliminated left turns out of driveways and restricted left turns to reduce approach turn and right angle collisions. The CIP project cost \$600,000 and helped to reduce the number of collisions from 449 (4 serious injuries) in the twelve years before installation to 35 (no serious injuries) in the ten years following installation.

Staff has identified some gaps in Bellevue's evaluation efforts. There currently is not any geospatial mapping of collisions available. Commissioners were interested in seeing more aggregated representation of data citywide—by injury, cause, location, age, etc. While this data can be found in individual collision reports, it is not readily available to be analyzed across the whole collision database. There are other safety efforts, such as photo enforcement, crosswalk enhancements and street lighting that are not part of the Accident Reduction Program. The Pedestrian and Bicycle Implementation Initiative *“investigates “Vision Zero” techniques to enhance safety for all users of the roadway network”* and is starting to strengthen the City's evaluation efforts.

ATTACHMENT 3

Programmatic Approach

How a Programmatic Approach in Bellevue Would Help Align Existing Efforts

Transportation Department staff currently work on several programs and projects related to safety that follow the principles of Vision Zero. With policy direction, the efforts of a programmatic approach could evaluate existing efforts and determine where additional resources, programs or efforts would be needed to create a robust safety program within the Vision Zero framework. The benefit of this type of framework is that it would be coordinated and comprehensive.

The following are examples of how other jurisdictions have established Vision Zero with a programmatic approach:

- Washington DC’s [A Plan of Action](#) integrated existing programs into actionable



No matter how you travel in D.C., transportation safety is our number one priority.

policies. To develop an action plan, staff evaluated past plans and programs, created interagency workgroups and sought public involvement.

- The city of Austin, TX integrated a programmatic approach toward [Vision Zero](#) into their comprehensive plan. In 2014, the



Austin City Council passed a resolution to create a Vision Zero Task Force. The planning staff sought to integrate the resolution in the comprehensive plan in the form of new policies and actions.

- San Francisco’s [Zero Traffic Deaths in San Francisco by 2024](#) adopted policy in 2014 “committing to build better and safer streets, educate the public on traffic safety, enforce traffic laws, and adopt policy changes that save lives”. Eleven departments passed resolutions to support Vision Zero efforts and developed a Two-Year Action Strategy.



Typical Programmatic Approach Elements

Specific tasks and outcomes associated with a programmatic approach would be developed in Bellevue following policy adoption. Transportation Department staff would work with the Transportation Commission, other departments, and the community to formulate a Vision Zero “action strategy”. In general, a programmatic approach would be a funded, staffed and actionable approach to Vision Zero, the actual elements of which will be determined based on an evaluation of the needs in Bellevue. As an example, typical elements include:

- Establishing an ongoing Vision Zero task force that engages interdepartmental representatives as well as community stakeholders to coordinate roadway safety efforts, considering the 6 Es;
- Preparing and implementing—with adequate resources—a Vision Zero action plan that incorporates the 6 Es and includes a clear purpose, outcomes, action items and performance measures;
- Updating Vision Zero strategies periodically, as needed to keep current with evolving local needs and national best practices;
- Providing periodic (annual) Vision Zero status reports that document efforts and communicate progress to the City Council, boards and commissions, and to the general public.