

2050 TRANSPORTATION POLICY PLAN

Ensuring that people do not die or face life-changing injuries from using any form of transportation is a key objective for the region's goal for healthy and safe communities. The Imagine 2050 Transportation Policy Plan calls for all partners to work to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries from traffic crashes on the transportation system by 2050 through using a Safe System Approach. Incorporating traffic safety into local comprehensive plans is a foundational step for meeting this regional goal. To support safer transportation systems in the region, the minimum requirements for local comprehensive plans now include a safety element. This fact sheet is intended to introduce safety planning concepts, how to connect to your comprehensive plan and key resources.

SAFE SYSTEMS APPROACH

The Safe System Approach, promoted by the U.S. Department of Transportation and supported by MnDOT, is an important shift in safety planning and implementation. It provides a more holistic approach to addressing traffic safety as a system rather than as individual problems or solutions. The Safe System Approach reframes how to address traffic safety with core principles and elements that incorporate these areas. The Federal Highway Administration highlights that "the Safe System Approach requires a culture that places safety first and foremost in road system investment decisions." Two key aspects of this paradigm shift are that human mistakes will be accommodated and impacts on our bodies are kept to tolerable levels. Speed and kinetic energy must be managed to minimize injuries for all of us traveling on our system.

Comprehensive plans incorporating this approach would focus on reducing and preventing fatal and serious injury crashes and designing and operating the transportation system and supportive land use in ways that when mistakes happen, they don't result in death or serious injury. Incorporating the Safe System Approach into local comprehensive planning should include embedding the six principles of the approach into comprehensive plan policies.

More information about the Safe System Approach is included in the Overview chapter of the 2050 Transportation Policy Plan. Additional resources are listed in the Resources section below.

REGIONAL SAFETY ACTION PLANS

In 2024, the Council completed a Regional Safety Action Plan focused on addressing fatalities and serious injuries from traffic crashes. The 2024 plan focused on fatal and serious injury vehicle crashes and bicycle-vehicle crashes. An earlier plan from 2022 focused on pedestrian crashes.

The 2024 plan identified streets in the region with high concentrations of crashes that resulted in fatalities or serious injuries. Known as High Injury Streets, they represent 1.8% of the region's overall road miles, but almost 31% of the fatal and serious injury crashes in the region. This analysis was done separately by mode (pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcyclists, and motorists) and also combined into an overall identification. Corridors identified in this analysis should be top priorities in addressing safety because of the existing issues.

In addition to this analysis of existing crashes, the plan included a more proactive analysis to identify road segments and intersections with high-risk characteristics for both drivers and bicyclists. This analysis used the number of travel lanes, posted speed limits, and traffic volumes to create a crash risk index. This plan identifies the top 25 high-risk corridors and intersections in the region, along with up to 10 high-risk corridors for each county, based on these data analyses.

These segments and intersections were not included in the community system statements and they are not required to be referenced in comprehensive plan updates. However, it is recommended to include these into local comprehensive planning for communities that may not have done more localized safety-focused planning already. Communities should use any identifications in their areas as starting points for additional study if work is not already planned to address safety concerns in these corridors or at these intersections.

The plan also includes a toolkit focused on five categories of infrastructure-based countermeasures that were primary areas of concern from the regional data analysis: speed management, pedestrians and bicyclists, roadway departures, intersections, and factors that cross areas.

In 2022, the Council completed a Regional Pedestrian Safety Action Plan. One of the key findings from this plan was that almost 80% of fatal or serious injury pedestrian crashes at intersection happen near transit stops. This does not mean transit is causing these crashes. Transit stops are a proxy for higher pedestrian exposure. Pedestrian connections and crossings near transit stops should be high priorities for safety improvements throughout the region.

2050 COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Crash data analysis should inform and support local investment prioritization to reduce deaths and serious injuries on our transportation system for all travelers. This analysis should disaggregate data by mode and crash severity, with an emphasis on fatalities and serious injuries. Pedestrians and bicyclists should be analyzed separately for a more complete understanding of safety needs. At least five years of crash data should be used in the analysis. The analysis should identify primary focus areas, such as those in the Minnesota Strategic Highway Safety Plan.

Any high priority corridors or locations for safety improvements to reduce fatalities and serious injuries should be identified for the community. Many communities are developing safety action plans, some with grant support from the USDOT Safe Streets and Roads for All discretionary program. Safety-focused local planning should be referenced in the comprehensive plan.

Higher priority locations may be identified through different ways, such as creating a local High Injury Streets identification based on data analysis or doing proactive analysis for risk factors.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resources include further details on the Safe System approach from federal and state sources, and regional safety plans developed by the Met Council to aid in the development of local transportation safety element of comprehensive plans.

- [Detailed overview of the Safe System Approach](#), FHWA
- [Proven Safety Countermeasures](#), FHWA
- [Minnesota Crash Mapping Analysis Tool](#) (MnCMAT2), MnDOT
- [MnDOT State Aid Safety Resources](#), MnDOT
- [Demystifying the Safe System Approach](#), Vision Zero Network - includes examples of ways local agencies can incorporate this approach.
- [Safer Streets Priority Finder](#), City of New Orleans, Toole Design, funded by USDOT - tool to support estimating crash risks for pedestrians and bicyclists on your road network.
- [Regional Safety Action Plan](#), Met Council - includes High Injury Streets and a Crash Risk Index for the region, along with the top high-risk corridors and intersections for the region and by county. High Injury Streets include pedestrians.
- [Regional Pedestrian Safety Action Plan](#), Met Council - includes more specific trend analysis for pedestrians and countermeasure references.