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**Title:** Adoption of Resolution Establishing a Vision Zero Policy to Work Towards Zero Traffic Deaths and Severe Injuries. (Transportation 4227287)

**Attachments:** 1. [Resolution](#), 2. [Correspondence - Updated 11-5](#), 3. [Presentation](#)

Text

Title

Adoption of Resolution Establishing a Vision Zero Policy to Work Towards Zero Traffic Deaths and Severe Injuries. (Transportation 4227287)

Body

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

On September 3, 2019, the City Council adopted a Council referral that included a call for a Vision Zero policy declaring safety to be the priority in designing and managing the City of Alameda’s (City) roadways. Previously adopted City plans that also call for Vision Zero include the Transportation Choices Plan and the Safety and Noise Element of the General Plan. In addition, the recently awarded consultant contract for development of an Active Transportation Plan included the development of a Vision Zero Plan.

Vision Zero is a traffic safety strategy to reduce and eventually eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries using a data-driven, multi-disciplinary, and safe systems approach that also increases safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all. In the City, between 2011 and 2018 an average of two people died and 10 suffered severe injuries per year; and over half of the fatalities were older people walking. The recommended Vision Zero Policy (Exhibit 1) aims to reduce those numbers by declaring Vision Zero as the City’s guiding principle for transportation planning, design, and maintenance, and directing specific implementation actions. It recognizes that while human error will always occur, a combination of education, enforcement, and engineering measures can reduce collisions and prevent collisions from causing death or severe injuries.

The Transportation Commission, at its September 25, 2019 meeting, unanimously recommended that the City Council adopt the Vision Zero Policy, with one small change: they specified that the annual Vision Zero progress report should be brought to the Transportation Commission each year. The policy now includes this addition.

**BACKGROUND**

Vision Zero is an international movement that provides a framework for reducing traffic deaths and life-changing injuries to zero. A core principal is that traffic deaths and severe injuries are unacceptable and preventable. Vision Zero is a multi-disciplinary approach that includes education, enforcement, and engineering measures; and focuses on safety for all road users, including drivers and their passengers.

Each year, approximately 40,000 people are killed in traffic collisions in the United States, according to data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. This gives the United States the highest traffic death rate per person compared to 19 peer nations, as found by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

Between 2011 and 2018, 16 people died and 82 people suffered severe, life-changing injuries on City streets, an average of two deaths and 10 severe injuries per year. Among the 98 people who died or experienced severe injuries, 33% were walking, 29% were riding bicycles, 21% were in motor vehicles, and 17% were riding motorcycles. Of those killed, half were walking when the crashes occurred. In addition, more than 1,750 people reported pain or endured mild-to-moderate injuries from traffic collisions of all modes during this time period, plus there are an unknown number of unreported collisions and near-misses. For detailed data, see the table below.

**Traffic Deaths and Severe Injuries in Alameda, 2011-2018\***

		Walking	Biking	In a motor vehicle	Riding a Motorcycle	All Modes
Killed	Number	8	2	4	2	16
	Average/year	1.0	0.3	0.5	0.3	2.0
	Percent	50%	13%	25%	13%	
Severely injured	Number	24	26	17	15	82
	Average/year	3.0	3.3	2.1	1.9	10.3
	Percent	29%	32%	21%	18%	
Killed + severely injured	Number	32	28	21	17	98
	Average/year	4.0	3.5	2.6	2.1	12.3
	Percent	33%	29%	21%	17%	

*\*Source: CA Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS). Crash records from 2016-2018 are considered 'provisional' and subject to change based on further investigation by the California Highway Patrol. The 2016-2018 fatality data were corrected using Alameda Police Department records and cross-checked with SWITRS entries to avoid double-counting. Collision data will continue to be refined during the Vision Zero planning process.*

Vision Zero recognizes that while human error will always occur, designing safer streets can reduce collisions and prevent collisions from causing death or severe injuries. For instance, measures that reduce motor vehicle speeds can save lives: a person walking has only a 50% chance of living if hit by a car traveling 42 miles per hour, but that same person has a 90% chance of living if the car is traveling 23 miles per hour.

Vision Zero policies and plans are spreading quickly across the country. In California, large jurisdictions such as San Jose, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, and medium and smaller-sized jurisdictions such as Fremont, Monterey, Santa Barbara, and Watsonville have all adopted Vision Zero policies. Many cities are seeing results from their policies: for instance, the trend lines in San Francisco and New York, two cities that adopted Vision Zero policies in 2014, both show general reductions in deaths and severe injuries.

In addition to saving lives by making City streets safer, a Vision Zero approach can help the City fulfill the community's vision of an equitable, family-friendly, and pleasant place to live, shop, and work. When residents feel unsafe on City streets, it diminishes their quality of life.

Research finds that children, seniors, people of color, people with disabilities, and people in low-income communities all face a disproportionate risk of traffic injuries and fatalities. People walking and biking are also disproportionately vulnerable. This vulnerability compounds for senior pedestrians: in the City from 2011-2018, 75% of pedestrian deaths were people 65 years old and older, and all of the people who died while walking City streets were 59 years or older.

By adopting a Vision Zero policy, the City will be aligning with federal and state commitments to Vision Zero. The Federal Highway Administration has made a commitment to eliminating fatalities and serious injuries on United States' roadways and the State Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has adopted the goal of moving "toward zero deaths."

## DISCUSSION

Traffic collisions, pedestrian and bicyclist safety, and high motor vehicle speeds are all ongoing issues identified as having great importance by both the Alameda community and the City Council. In 2017, the City adopted the Safety and Noise Element of the General Plan, which directly called for a Vision Zero policy. It states: "Ensure that the City prioritize public safety through the implementation of a Vision Zero policy to reduce annual pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities and serious injuries resulting from collisions with faster moving vehicles and unsafe street design."

In 2016, a grassroots group of City residents began work to address these issues with the *Slow Down in Town* movement, which focused on encouraging drivers to reduce speeds.

In July 2019, the City Council approved a consultant contract with Toole Design to produce a Vision Zero Action Plan as part of the Active Transportation Plan process. With this support, staff has begun the first essential step: preparation of a citywide Vision Zero Policy for adoption, which lays the foundation for the Vision Zero work and the steps necessary to eliminate fatalities and severe injuries on City streets.

The recommended Vision Zero policy is modeled on those adopted by other cities. The policy declares that Vision Zero is the guiding principle for the City's transportation design, implementation and maintenance. It requires that the City incorporate safety considerations into all transportation planning, engineering, and enforcement efforts, with the goal of eliminating fatalities and serious injuries among all transportation system users. This policy will provide the umbrella framework for future planning documents, including the Active Transportation Plan, future General Plan updates, new specific plans, etc. It also calls for equitable application of Vision Zero efforts, ensuring that underserved communities are not left out of safety improvements.

The policy requires that the City create a Vision Zero Task Force to be made up of a broad range of City departments, which will establish a shared understanding of the Vision Zero approach and integrate Vision Zero into all aspects of transportation planning, engineering, enforcement and education. Many departments will need to be involved in the process, including Planning, Building and Transportation; Police; Public Works; and the Fire Department. Other key stakeholders, including the Alameda Unified School District, will also be invited to participate.

With the support of the consultant team, the City will create a Vision Zero Action Plan with measurable actions to increase street safety. This work will be based on an analysis of all traffic collisions and their causes, to help identify trends and those actions that will have the greatest impact on reducing traffic deaths and severe injuries. The City will monitor progress against the plan with an annual report. Per direction from the Transportation Commission at its September 25, 2019 meeting, the policy requires that staff bring the annual Vision Zero progress report to the Transportation Commission as an informational item.

The recommended Vision Zero policy also requires the City to review and change several specific transportation engineering and design standards and policies. Consistent with the September 3, 2019 City Council Referral, staff have already begun researching revised or new standards for motor vehicle travel lane widths; street width for fire access; bike lane and buffer design; crosswalk placement and design; and rapid installation bulb-outs. In early 2020, staff plans to bring these updates to the Transportation Commission for input and then to the City Council for adoption.

As recommended by the same September 3, 2019 City Council Referral, the Vision Zero policy formalizes the City's use of the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) guides. NACTO's many guidance documents, such as the Urban Street Design Guide and the Urban Bikeway Design Guide, contain forward-thinking strategies for designing streets that are safer for all transportation system users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists. They have been endorsed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Caltrans and are utilized by cities across the country.

In conclusion, eliminating fatalities and severe injuries on City streets will require a variety of changes to existing facilities, standards, and requirements for roadway design and maintenance, plus modified approaches to enforcement and education. The recommended policy will not immediately achieve all of the necessary changes, but it establishes a policy framework to guide the years of work and effort that will be required by City staff, City Boards and Commissions, and the City Council to protect the health and safety of people using the public right of way in the City.

## ALTERNATIVES

The City Council may pursue several different alternatives:

1. Adopt the policy as recommended by the Transportation Commission and staff. The benefits of this alternative are described in this report.
2. Decide not to adopt a Vision Zero policy, and refer back to the Transportation Commission with recommended changes.
3. Decide to adopt the policy with modifications deemed necessary by the City Council.

## FINANCIAL IMPACT

Adoption of the proposed policy will not have a direct financial impact. Staff resources have been allocated in the recently adopted two-year budget to evaluate existing standards and requirements and identify needed changes to implement the policy. Future recommended capital expenditures to make changes to City infrastructure consistent with the Vision Zero policy will be evaluated during the annual review of the City Budget and Capital Improvement Plan.

## MUNICIPAL CODE/POLICY DOCUMENT CROSS REFERENCE

Adopting a Vision Zero policy is directly and indirectly called for in the City's existing policies and goals:

- The September 3, 2019 Council Referral included a call for a Vision Zero policy.
- The 2018 Transportation Choices Plan's Projects 2, 9, and 30 all include creating a Vision Zero Safety Policy/Plan, marked high priority in all cases.
- The 2017 Safety and Noise Element of the General Plan, Policy SN-5, states: "Ensure that the City prioritize public safety through the implementation of a Vision Zero policy to reduce annual pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities and serious injuries resulting from collisions with faster moving vehicles and unsafe street design."
- The 2013 Complete Streets Policy called for a "transportation network with infrastructure and design that allows safe and convenient travel along and across streets for all users."
- The 2010 Transportation Element of the General Plan Objective 4.1.1 calls for "safe and efficient movement for people, goods, and services" by improving safety of pedestrian crossings; enhancing general pedestrian safety; providing bike facilities throughout the City; ensuring that people with disabilities can use transportation facilities; and improving safety for all modes.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Approval to develop planning documents is statutorily exempt from further review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), the general rule that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Adoption of the Vision Zero Policy does not have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Any future physical changes to the environment or roadway network that requires discretionary action by the City Council or Transportation Commission will be subject to future environmental review.

#### CLIMATE IMPACTS

Working toward Vision Zero will help the City reach its climate goals. By creating safer streets, clean air transportation options become more appealing. The March 2019 Climate Action Emergency Resolution called for a reduction of citywide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as quickly as possible towards zero net emissions. The Climate Action and Resiliency Plan (CARP), adopted on September 3, 2019, requires that the City reduce GHG emissions to 50% below 2005 levels by 2030 and achieve net zero emissions as soon as possible. The CARP found that transportation will soon account for 70% of the City's GHG emissions, and that shifting people out of cars is paramount to reducing transportation-related emissions. People are more likely to walk and bike, including to transit stops and ferry terminals, when they feel safe doing so.

#### RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution establishing a Vision Zero policy to work towards zero traffic deaths and severe injuries.

#### CITY MANAGER RECOMMENDATION

The City Manager recommends approval of the proposed resolution by the Transportation Commission.

Respectfully submitted,  
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By,  
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Financial Impact section reviewed,  
Elena Adair, Finance Director

cc: Eric Levitt, City Manager