



Vision Zero in San Francisco



An image from the [Vision Zero SF homepage](#) of a busy, multi-modal San Francisco street.

Problem

In 2017 and 2018, San Francisco saw historic lows in traffic-related deaths on its streets. However, every year in San Francisco, approximately 30 people lose their lives and more than 500 are severely injured while traveling on city streets. San Francisco has resolved that even one death is unacceptable, and is committed to stopping further loss of life.

Solutions

The city adopted Vision Zero in 2014 to set an ambitious strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and reduce severe injuries in San Francisco. Vision Zero reflects the city's commitment to building better and safer streets, educating the public on traffic safety, increasing enforcement of traffic laws, and adopting policy changes that save lives.

More than a dozen city agencies have signed resolutions in support of the city's Vision Zero policy, including the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA), San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH), the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD), and the San Francisco Department of Public Works (SFDPW).

SFMTA and SFDPH co-chair the Mayor's Vision Zero Task Force. The Task Force includes city agencies, community members, and community organizations, which meet quarterly to advance projects, programs, and policy changes for Vision Zero.

City agencies report quarterly to the San Francisco County Transportation Authority's (SFCTA) Vision Zero Committee. Through this Committee, the agencies report on progress and updates related to Vision Zero and identify policies that can advance the Vision Zero goal. The Vision Zero Coalition, a community-based coalition comprised of more than 30 organizations and led by Walk SF, regularly engages with both the Task Force and city agencies to advance Vision Zero and hold the city accountable.

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Interagency coordination is a key component of San Francisco's Vision Zero goal. The inclusion of SFDPH is particularly notable because it reflects the city's view that traffic injuries and fatalities are a public health crisis. For example, the SFDPH staff working on Vision Zero includes a dedicated epidemiologist whose responsibilities include coordinating and analyzing data in collaboration with Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital (ZSFG) trauma surgeons, staff, and the SFPD.

Vision Zero recognizes that reducing traffic fatalities on San Francisco city streets can only occur through a safe systems approach that better incorporates safety and livability into its streets. The goal of the safe systems approach is to design a more forgiving road system that takes human fallibility and vulnerability into account. Guided by the safe systems concept, designers develop a comprehensive transportation system in which, when one part fails, other parts can protect people from death and serious injury. To support this approach, [San Francisco's Vision Zero](#) policy focuses on *safe streets*, *safe people*, and *safe vehicles*. Highlights of recent progress in each of these areas are included below.

Safe Streets

- SFDPW spends approximately \$65 million annually in engineering projects that aim to increase street safety. Projects range from quick and effective improvements (such as pavement markings and signal modifications) to larger corridor and Complete Streets projects. SFDPW focuses its investments on the [High Injury Network](#), where 13 percent of streets account for 75 percent of the city's severe and fatal traffic crashes. In 2018, more than 70 miles of safety improvements were installed on city streets, 21 miles of which were on the High Injury Network.
- SFMTA launched a Safe Streets Evaluation Program to standardize data collection and analysis for safety improvement projects. These evaluation results will be published annually to summarize the safety benefits of capital improvements.
- SFDPW continues to identify opportunities for design or policy changes that emphasize street safety. For example, in coordination with community organizations, the SFMTA implemented new guidance on signal crossing times to better accommodate slower walking speeds for seniors, youth and people with disabilities.
- SFDPW launched a Rapid Response team that identifies engineering treatments for consideration immediately after a fatal collision. This Rapid Response team includes coordination with the SFPD and SFDPH.

Safe People

- Through broad communications, the city is working to promote a cultural shift in how people think about traffic safety; collisions are “crashes”—not accidents—and are considered unacceptable and preventable.
- SFDPH provides community grants to senior centers, service providers, and community-based organizations to build support for safer streets. These grants provide funding for educational outreach and community engagement, including assistance with translation and culturally appropriate communications.



- SFMTA, in partnership with SFPD and SFDPH, developed a [Safe Speeds campaign](#) that uses a variety of communication tools to teach people about the dangers of speeding. These tools include bus and transit shelter ads, radio spots, and social media. The city is also developing a new education campaign focused on changing driver behavior to reduce left-turn collisions.
- SFMTA leads San Francisco’s Safe Routes to School program to elevate Vision Zero safety around schools and with youth and their families.
- The SFPD, through its [Focus on the Five](#) program, prioritizes enforcement of the five violations most frequently cited in injury collisions—speeding, red-light running, stop-sign running, failure to yield to pedestrians, and failure to yield while turning—to encourage drivers to follow the rules of the road.
- The SFPD conducts high-visibility enforcement along the High Injury Network. Through this enforcement, the SFPD targets unsafe driving behaviors, such as speeding or distracted driving, and also increases community awareness about ticketing for these unsafe behaviors.
- San Francisco is participating in a State task force that is identifying opportunities to urge drivers to reduce excessive speeding, including the possibility of pursuing State authorization for an [Automated Speed Enforcement](#) pilot.

Safe Vehicles

- SFMTA currently collects telematics (i.e., data on how vehicles are driven) for all qualified city vehicles. This data provides information on trends for speeding city vehicles and can be used to improve driver training programs.
- SFMTA monitors industry reports to identify safety improvements for the city fleet, including potential advances in collision avoidance technology.
- With continued emerging technologies, SFMTA is launching a mobility permit program to identify safety features and data that will be required for permitting new transportation services on city streets.
- Vision Zero will be a key component of a new “Automated Vehicle Technology Vision and Policy Playbook” that is currently under development. City agencies are providing comments on potential Federal and State rulemaking related to autonomous vehicles to ensure that safety is elevated.
- SFCTA released a transportation network company (TNC) safety study that identifies the impacts of TNCs on safety and recommends potential improvements. (Sometimes known as “mobility service providers” or “ride-hailing services,” a TNC is a company that matches passengers with drivers via websites and mobile apps.)

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Data Initiatives

Collecting data and tracking performance are critical to the success of San Francisco's Vision Zero program. The following list describes San Francisco's data initiatives:

- SFDPH created [TransBASESF.org](https://transbasesf.org), an online database and analytical tool that summarizes injury data alongside data on transportation, land use, and community characteristics.
- Every 3 years, SFDPH leads the update of the [High Injury Network](#), a map that identifies the 13 percent of city streets where 75 percent of severe and fatal injuries occur. The High Injury Network helps the city to prioritize its investments for engineering projects and to target enforcement and education efforts for the greatest impact.
- SFDPH, in coordination with ZSFG has led the development of a [comprehensive, coordinated injury and fatality surveillance](#) system that uses police, hospital, and EMS data.
- San Francisco's Vision Zero SF Injury Prevention Research (VZIPR) Collaborative is a coordinated effort between epidemiologists, trauma surgeons, nurses, geospatial analysts, and other key staff from SFDPH and ZSFG. The collaborative is coordinating with the SFPD and SFMTA to develop an emerging mobility injury monitoring system. This system is used to track data on injuries associated with newer vehicle types and services, such as e-scooters.
- SFDPH has worked with SFPD to add specific data variables to their collision reporting form to capture data that can inform targeted Vision Zero efforts, including involvement of TNCs and taxis, autonomous vehicles, suspected use of cannabis, and whether an injured person has a disability.

Early Successes

The city's [2017-2018 Action Strategy](#) includes annual metrics for tracking progress against Vision Zero and conducts evaluations on key individual projects. In 2018:

- The city installed more than 70 miles of safety improvements on its streets, 21 miles of which were on the High Injury Network. This includes more than 9 miles of new or upgraded bikeways and 6 miles of new protected bikeways.
- SFPD's [Focus on the Five](#) initiative resulted in more than 17,000 traffic citations being issued.
- Education and outreach campaigns generated more than 250 million media impressions, and community events reached more than 25,000 people. Some 94 percent of community outreach events had Chinese, Spanish, and/or Filipino ambassadors and materials present.
- The SFDPH Safe Streets for Seniors program funded 8 community-based organizations, which reached more than 3,000 seniors, people with disabilities, and service providers.
- As part of the [Safe Routes to Schools](#) program, 92 schools and 13,000 students participated in Walk and Roll to School Day.