

# Perspectives

## What is Vision Zero?

In 1997, the national government of Sweden introduced “Vision Zero” as a street safety policy that strives for the elimination of traffic fatalities for all transportation modes. The initial goal was to eliminate fatalities by 2020—Sweden has since adjusted their reduction target to 50% by 2020 and to zero deaths by 2050.

Over the past decade, many European nations have adopted Vision Zero programs and have achieved significant fatality reductions, for example: Sweden (39%), Switzerland (41%), Germany (45%), France (48%) and Spain (53%).

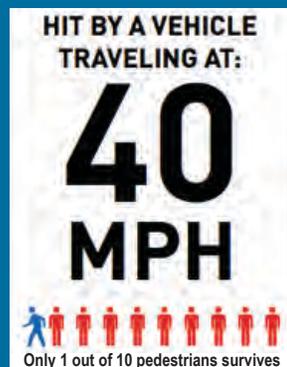
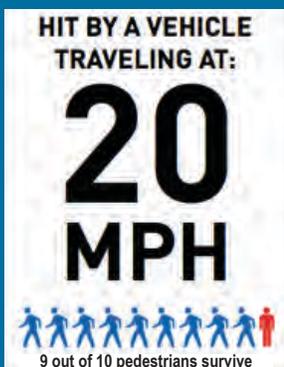
The effectiveness of Vision Zero comes from a “safety first” collaboration among political leaders, roadway designers and managers, traffic enforcement agencies, vehicle manufacturers, transit operators, government regulators, educators, public health officials, community advocates, and the public.



## Core Principles

The core principles that guide Vision Zero are:

1. Traffic deaths are preventable and unacceptable.
2. Human life takes priority over mobility and other objectives of the road system. The street system should be safe for all users, for all modes of transportation, in all communities and for people of all ages and abilities.
3. Human error is inevitable and unpredictable; the transportation system should be designed to anticipate error so the consequence is not severe injury or death. Advancements in vehicle design and technology are a necessary component toward avoiding the safety impacts of human errors and poor behaviors.
4. People are inherently vulnerable and speed is a fundamental predictor of crash survival. The transportation system should be designed for speeds that protect human life.
5. Safe human behaviors, education and enforcement are essential contributors to a safe system.
6. Policies at all levels of government need to align with making safety the highest priority for roadways.



## Related US Safety Initiatives

In addition to international Vision Zero initiatives that have become popular among European countries in the past decade and more recently for a growing number of US cities, several other similar national street safety programs have developed over the past year, as described below.



### Toward Zero Deaths

In 2014, a group of national organizations led by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) adapted Sweden's Vision Zero program and established a national strategy on highway safety referred to as *Toward Zero Deaths* (TZD). TZD uses a data-driven, interdisciplinary approach and focuses on the topics of 1) safer drivers and passengers, 2) safer vulnerable users, 3) safer vehicles, 4) safer infrastructure, 5) enhanced emergency medical services, and 6) improved safety management. In 2014, San Jose Department of Transportation (DOT) registered as a "proud partner" of the *Towards Zero Deaths* program.



### National Association of City Transportation Officials

NACTO is a coalition of transportation agencies serving America's largest cities. San Jose DOT joined NACTO in 2014. NACTO has adopted advocacy actions that urge the federal government to endorse a Vision Zero policy with a goal to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries on streets, roads and highways.



### US DOT Mayors' Challenge for Safer People and Safer Streets

In 2015, US DOT Secretary Anthony Foxx issued a challenge for mayors to take significant action to improve safety for bicycle riders and pedestrians of all ages and abilities over the next year. US DOT recognizes the many benefits walking and bicycling provide—including health, safety, environmental, transportation and quality of life. In March 2015, San Jose DOT, in coordination with Mayor Sam Liccardo, accepted the challenge and joined nearly 200 cities across the nation. Among the "challenge" activities include issuing a statement about the importance of bicycle and pedestrian safety, and delivering on a series of actions supporting safer streets. The actions in *Vision Zero San Jose* boldly address Secretary Foxx's challenge.