

# Vision Zero Somerville

An Overview

Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone  
October 9, 2018



# About Somerville

- ~80,000 population
  - Most densely populated city in New England
- Walkable
  - Gold-level Walk Friendly Community
  - Overall Walk Score of 86/100
- Transit Accessible
  - **Davis Square** and **Assembly Square** MBTA stations
  - Six new **Green Line** stations by 2021 as part of Green Line Extension
  - 14 MBTA bus routes
  - 30% transit mode share (pre-GLX)
- Bike Friendly
  - 5<sup>th</sup> highest bicycle mode share in US in 2017 (9%)
  - Gold-level Bicycle Friendly Community
  - 12.5 miles of bicycle facilities



# Vision Zero

- Vision Zero is a worldwide movement to eliminate serious injuries and fatalities on our streets
- Began in Sweden in 1997, spread throughout Europe in 2000s, and in US in 2010s
- Action plans in NYC, San Francisco, Boston, Cambridge, and other US cities
- Mayor Curtatone committed Somerville to Vision Zero in September 2017



# Why Vision Zero?

- Compels all City projects and programs to consider traffic safety and vulnerable road users
- Reinforces the notion that even one traffic-related serious injury or fatality is too many
- Treats our transportation network as a singular entity, rather than splitting into modes or focusing on individual corridors or intersections
- Formalizes values and philosophies we already hold as a city



# #CrashNotAccident



- Most serious crashes are preventable, but common lexicon “car accident” assumes that they are unavoidable facts of life
- “Accident” implies there’s nothing that could have been done to avoid a crash, considering both roadway/intersection design or the behavior of road users



**Related Article:** Relatives mourn the deaths of the crash victims

Before the disaster, the limo was full of exuberance -- 17 birthday party guests who had many reasons to celebrate. There were newlyweds and young couples and four sisters, all on their way to revel at an upstate New York brewery.

But for reasons still unknown, the limo plowed through a stop sign, crashed into a parked SUV and caused the deadliest US transportation accident in almost a decade.

All 17 passengers were killed. So was the limo's driver. So were two pedestrians.

# Speeding vehicles kill



● If hit by a person driving at:      ● Person Survives the Collision      ● Results in a Fatality

20 MPH



30 MPH



40 MPH



# Why Vision Zero?



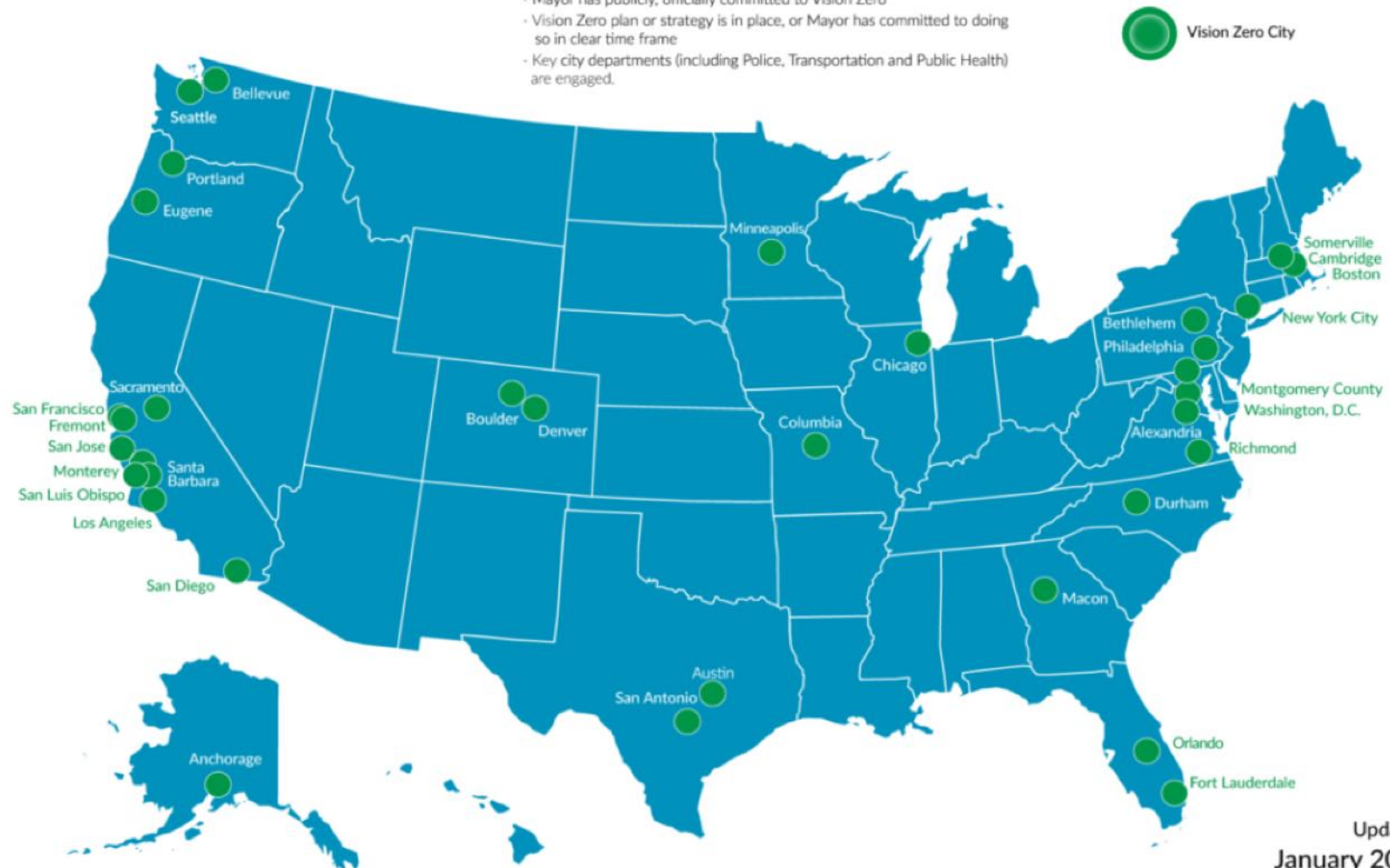
- Vision Zero is a public health issue
  - Each year, more than 35,000 people are killed in traffic crashes in the United States, an epidemic that must be addressed with the same data-driven approach as any other public health crisis.
  - Safe streets encourage users to use cleaner, more sustainable transportation options.
- Vision Zero is a public safety issue
  - Everyone who lives, works, and plays in Somerville interacts with our roadway network every day.
- Vision Zero is a quality of life issue
  - Safe streets are more inviting to vulnerable road users to walk, bike, and take transit. Studies show that those who routinely walk or bike report a higher quality of life compared to those who primarily drive.
- Vision Zero is an equity issue
  - Traffic violence disproportionately impacts disadvantaged and vulnerable populations.

# US Cities Committing to VZ

## Vision Zero Cities

A Vision Zero City meets the following minimum standards:

- Sets clear goal of eliminating traffic fatalities and severe injuries
- Mayor has publicly, officially committed to Vision Zero
- Vision Zero plan or strategy is in place, or Mayor has committed to doing so in clear time frame
- Key city departments (including Police, Transportation and Public Health) are engaged.



Updated  
January 2018



# Nine Components of a Strong Vision Zero Commitment

Source: National Vision Zero Network



Political Commitment	✓
Multi-Disciplinary Leadership	Ongoing
Action Plan	In Development
Equity	✓
Cooperation and Collaboration	Ongoing
Systems-based Approach	✓
Data Driven	✓
Community Engagement	Upcoming
Transparency	✓

# Timeline

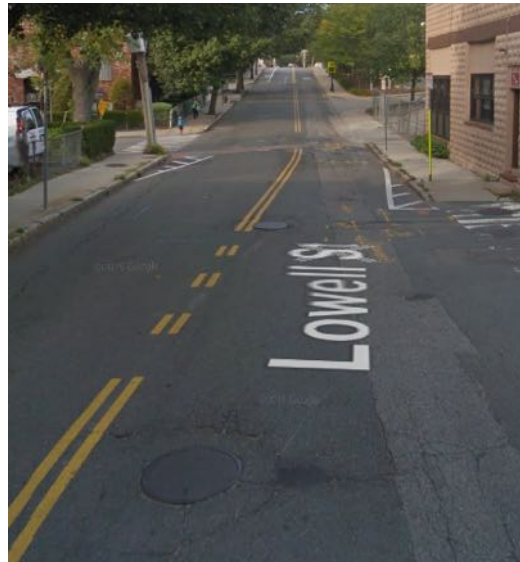
- May 2014 Passed first Complete Streets ordinance in MA
- November 2016 Reduced citywide speed limit to 25mph
- September 2017 Mayor Curtatone commits to Vision Zero
- June 2018 Vision Zero key initiative in City budget
- **October 2018** **VZ Task Force formed**
- Oct – Nov 2018 Public Outreach
- December 2018 Release draft Vision Zero Action Plan
- Winter 2019 Gather public feedback
- April 2019 Release final Vision Zero Action Plan



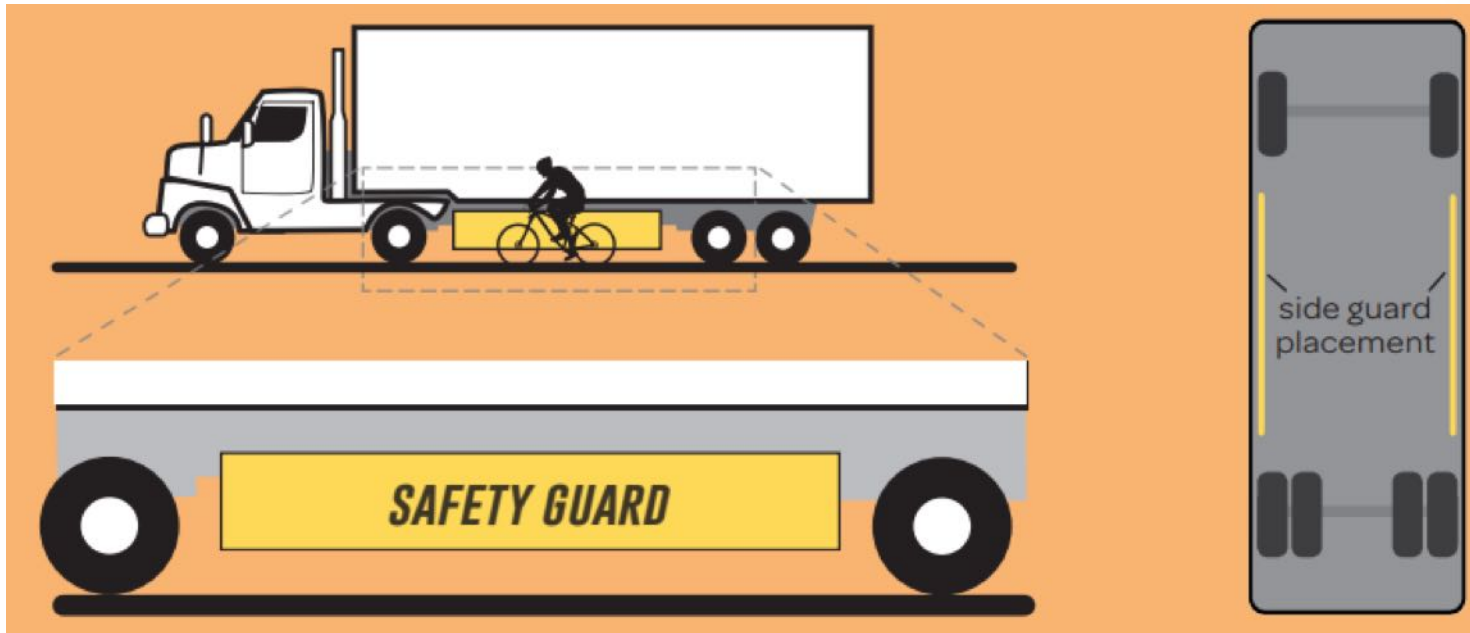
# Speed Limits



# Traffic Calming



# Truck Sideguard Ordinance



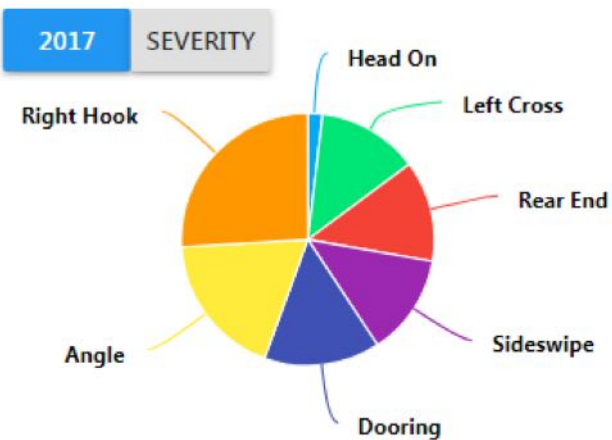
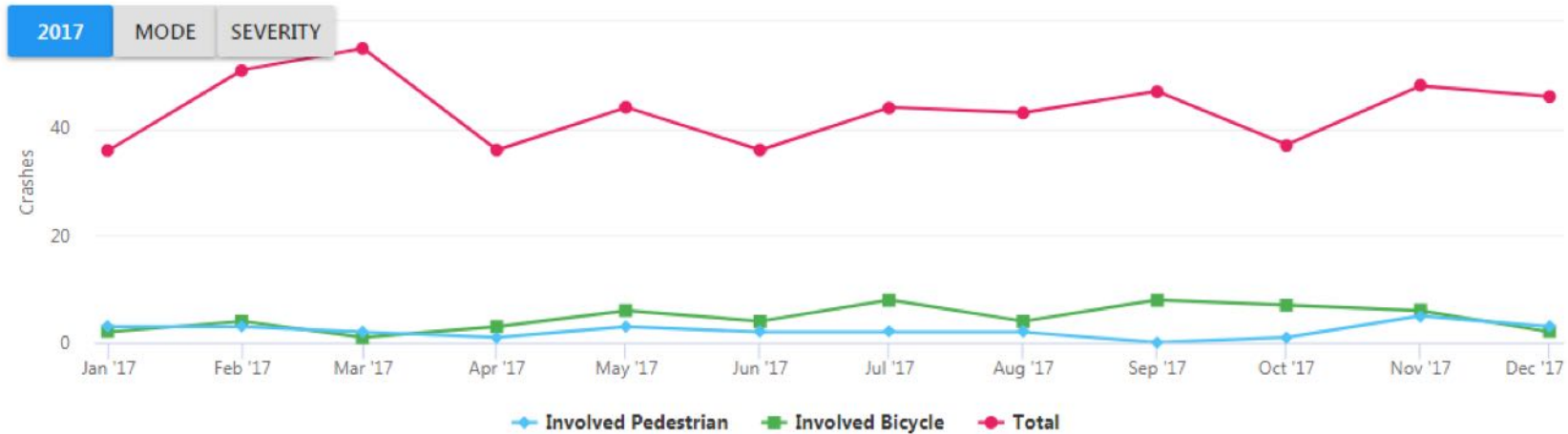
## LATERAL PROTECTIVE DEVICES (SIDE GUARDS)

- Vehicles must have device installed between the front & rear wheels to help prevent injuries to vulnerable road users, particularly from falling underneath the vehicle.



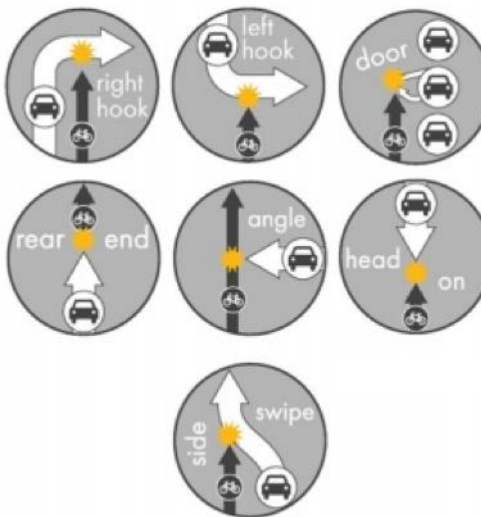
# Data Dashboard

www.somervillema.gov/visionzero



Click 'year' or 'severity' to filter results.

(See full visualization)



Bicycle crash types, courtesy City of Cambridge



# Goals of this Task Force

- Identify measurable short, mid, and long-term action items for inclusion in the Vision Zero Action Plan
- Act as a liaison within your personal, professional, and advocacy network
  - Somerville Bicycle Advisory Committee
  - WalkBoston
  - Livable Streets Alliance
  - Pedestrian safety group
  - Somerville Cambridge Elder Services, etc.
- After Action Plan is published, work with City officials implement action items and measure and report progress.

# What is a Vision Zero action item?

Vision Zero Action items are measurable goals toward achieving a more broad initiative that will help reduce the likelihood of serious crashes.

- Evaluate and Expand Safety Zone Program
  - Expand one-street safety zones to neighborhood safety zones
  - Explore 20mph speed limit on larger scale (citywide, or all residential streets)
- Improve public feedback mechanism for improving pedestrian and transit safety & access
  - Form a permanent Vision Zero Action Committee
  - Form a pedestrian and transit advisory committee (or committees)



# What is a Vision Zero action item?

Action items should focus on all the “E’s” – not every issue requires an engineering solution

- Engineering
- Enforcement
- Emergency response
- Education
- (Policy) Enactment

Action items should identify specific goals and milestones, so that items can simply be checked off as “Completed”, “In Progress”, or “Not Completed” without much explanation.

# What is NOT a Vision Zero action item?

Vision Zero Action items should NOT be:

- Hyper-local/specific
  - “Install a crosswalk across Highland Avenue at Putnam Street”
  - Exception: Major intersections in need of re-design (Powder House Circle) as individual action items under a larger umbrella
- Overly vague or non-committal
- Unrelated to safety
  - Aesthetics
  - Noise abatement
  - Pollution reduction
  - ...while worthy considerations, all items should help reduce serious crashes

# What needs more discussion?

- Mobility improvements that may not be safety improvements
  - Idaho Stop for bikes
  - Switching from exclusive pedestrian phasing to concurrent
  - Parking (vehicle and bicycle)
  - Expansion of Bluebikes network
  - Bus priority
- Mode shift
  - While mode shift away from driving is a goal of the city, this may be a positive side-effect of VZ, rather than something we can directly control

# Upcoming Schedule

- Thursday, October 25 – VZ Task Force
- Tuesday, November 13 – VZ Task Force
- November – Public meetings