

For Immediate Release

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Traffic Deaths, Injuries Down in San José
Annual Transportation Safety Report Shows Progress Toward Goal of Zero Fatalities

SAN JOSE, Calif. – The 2018 Transportation System Safety Report, an annual look at projects and programs aimed at improving traffic safety and preventing fatalities and major injuries on San José streets, was approved last month by the San José City Council Transportation & Environment Committee.

The report identified a steady reduction in the City’s traffic injury crash rate since the late 1980s, as well as declining fatalities in recent years. Still, the report emphasizes the City’s Vision Zero goal of ending roadway fatalities, stating that any traffic deaths are preventable and unacceptable.

San José roads are some of the safest among large cities in the United States. Over the past 30 years, the rate of injuries associated with traffic collisions has declined by 72%. Moreover, in 2017, crashes involving pedestrians and bicyclists dropped to fewer than 450, from an average of 600 in recent years. Tragically though, in 2017, 46 people died in the City as the result of traffic collisions.

“San José has been investing in roadway safety projects that seek to address concerns raised by the careful analysis of our crash data,” said Laura Wells, Deputy Director of Transportation Safety, Operations, and Parking for the Department of Transportation (DOT). “At the same time, we’re working to promote safe behaviors through our Walk n’ Roll youth education program, our senior safety outreach, and safety education targeting homeless individuals living on or near high-crash corridors.”

In 2015, the City announced its Vision Zero initiative to eliminate roadway deaths and severe injuries. Seventeen “Priority Safety Corridors” have been identified, which make up only about 3% of the City’s roadway network but have a higher incidence of traffic deaths and severe injuries.

DOT is prioritizing major safety improvements along these streets. As a result, the department has won grant funding to enhance bike lanes and add traffic signals on Jackson Avenue, make pedestrian crossings safer on Monterey Road, fill in missing sidewalk segments on Senter Road, add flashing beacons to crosswalks on McLaughlin Avenue, and more.

To bolster the City’s efforts, an advisory group comprising bicyclist and pedestrian advocates, members of the senior citizen community, and the Santa Clara County Public Health Department has been formed

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to help develop and broadcast educational messaging, as well as monitor and weigh in on the Vision Zero Two-Year Action Plan.

“We're grateful for the priority that the City of San José puts on traffic safety and this report demonstrates how seriously it takes data and evaluation. The trends are proof that the City's commitment to Vision Zero is starting to pay off,” said Chris Johnson, Program Director of Walk San José. “That said, it's alarming that vulnerable users like pedestrians continue to be over-represented in these numbers. We look forward to continuing to work with the City toward our shared vision of a people first, fatality-free transportation system that serves all users.”

Across San José, roadway improvements have been made in recent years with the goal of improving safety, particularly for vulnerable travelers like pedestrians. Lane reductions on Hedding Road, Lincoln Avenue, Chynoweth Avenue, and Branham Lane have calmed traffic speeds and created more safe space for people to walk and bike. On Branham, a Vision Zero Priority Safety Corridor, reducing lanes resulted in approximately 40% fewer crashes in 2017 compared to the three years prior to the restriping.

The public is also encouraged to take an active role in making San José streets safer. The report notes that speeding is the primary factor in a fifth of fatal and severe injury collisions, more than any other collision factor. To that point, DOT and the Police Department are appealing to the public to slow down, follow all traffic laws, stop at stop signs and red lights, and keep an eye out for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Motorists are reminded to avoid distracted driving – not only is it unsafe to use a cell phone while driving, it is illegal to use a handheld phone behind the wheel for talking or texting. And people walking or biking are asked to do their part: always follow the rules of the road, be visible and predictable, and, in the case of pedestrians, cross at corners or marked crosswalks.

Though proud of the recent progress, the DOT doesn't plan to rest on its success. Expanded outreach, more roadway safety projects, and a renewed legislative push to allow a pilot project to test speed cameras are in the works.

“It sounds ambitious, but the goal of Vision Zero really is zero deaths and severe injuries on our roads,” said Wells. “We have a lot of work to do. But the goal of achieving safety on our roadways recognizes that even one traffic fatality on our roadways is one too many.”

About Vision Zero San José

In May 2015, San José became the 4th city in the nation to formally adopt a Vision Zero transportation safety initiative, which aims to eliminate fatalities and significantly reduce severe injuries caused by traffic collisions. The Vision Zero Two-Year Action Plan, maps, crash data, and Vision Zero pledge are at <http://visionzerosj.org>.

About the City of San José

Known as the Capital of Silicon Valley, San José is the nation's tenth largest city and the largest city in Northern California, with an ethnically diverse population of more than one million. San José was founded in 1777, once served as the state capital of California, and now encompasses 180 square miles. Facts about San José can be found here: <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/780>. The City's website is www.sanjoseca.gov.

About the Department of Transportation

The San José Department of Transportation (DOT) plans, develops, operates, and maintains transportation facilities, services, and related systems that contribute to the livability and economic health of the city. Our goal is to provide a transportation system that is safe, efficient, and convenient for all modes of transportation, and which supports San José's livability and economic vitality.

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