

Complete Streets Policy with Vision Zero and Safe Systems Approach

Complete Streets are streets that safely accommodate users of all types, ages, and abilities, including pedestrians, transit riders, and motorists, as well as light individual transportation modes such as electric scooters, motorized wheelchairs, and bicycles. Through this policy, the City of Roanoke commits to Vision Zero principles that recognize traffic deaths and serious injuries are preventable and unacceptable. The City intends to ensure that all parties with agency over transportation shall plan, fund, design, regulate, construct, operate, and maintain streets according to the Complete Street principles of the City's "Street Design Guidelines" and Safe Systems Approach, to create an attractive connected multi-modal network that eliminates traffic fatalities and serious injuries while balancing the needs of all users, except where there are demonstrated exceptional circumstances.

Vision Zero and Safe Systems Commitment

By adopting this policy, the City of Roanoke embraces Vision Zero's fundamental principle that human life takes priority over convenience and mobility. The City commits to implementing a Safe Systems Approach that recognizes human error as inevitable and designs transportation infrastructure to prevent death and serious injury when crashes occur. This approach encompasses safe roads, safe speeds, safe vehicles, safe road users, and effective post-crash care.

Policy Foundations

By adopting this policy, the City of Roanoke:

- Affirms that creating safe streets for all users is a City Priority and that zero traffic deaths and serious injuries are an achievable goal through systematic safety improvements aligned with City Plan 2040, the City's Comprehensive Plan.
- Recognizes that the development of pedestrian, Light Individual Transportation, and active mobility infrastructure supports City Plan 2040's strategic initiative "Investing in Critical Amenities" by creating inherently safer transportation options that mitigate traffic-related injuries and fatalities while enhancing recreational opportunities and well-designed cityscapes.
- Appreciates the positive role that safe, accessible pedestrian and Light Individual Transportation facilities play in attracting population growth and sustainable economic development.
- Values the long-term cost savings of developing safe pedestrian and Light Individual Transportation infrastructure as they relate to reduced crash-related healthcare costs, improved public health, improved environmental stewardship, reduced fuel consumption, and the reduced demand for motor vehicle infrastructure.
- Recognizes that both Complete Streets and Vision Zero will only be achieved over time through a combination of capital projects, the City's General Development Standards, operational safety improvements, and maintenance activities such that all sources of transportation-related funding are drawn upon to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries.
- Intends to maximize safe transportation options available within the public right-of-way while minimizing exposure to traffic-related injuries and fatalities.

Policy Directives

Roanoke City Council declares it is the City of Roanoke's policy to:

1. Use the Street Design Guidelines incorporating Safe Systems principles to guide the planning, funding, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of new and modified streets in Roanoke, prioritizing human life and safety while remaining flexible to the unique circumstances of different streets where sound engineering and planning judgment will produce context-sensitive designs that prevent serious injuries and fatalities.
2. Incorporate the Street Design Guidelines' Vision Zero and Safe Systems principles into all City Zoning and Development Standards and City plans, manuals, rules, regulations, and programs as appropriate, ensuring that safety considerations take precedence in all transportation decisions.
3. Design streets with appropriate widths and safe speeds that account for human error and prioritize protecting vulnerable road users, keeping street pavement widths to the minimum necessary while ensuring adequate space for safe mobility.
4. Provide safe pedestrian accommodation in the form of sidewalks or shared-use pathways protected from vehicle traffic on all arterial and collector streets and on local streets in all the character districts described in the City's Street Design Guidelines document.
5. Provide protected Light Individual Transportation accommodation along all arterial and collector streets that separate vulnerable users from motor vehicle traffic wherever feasible. Light Individual Transportation accommodation on local streets should prioritize safety through traffic calming measures, appropriate speeds, and clear delineation of space sharing between vulnerable roadway users and motor vehicles.
6. Implement traffic calming measures and appropriate speed limits based on Safe Systems principles that account for human survivability in crashes, particularly in areas with high pedestrian and Light Individual Transportation activity.
7. Where physical conditions warrant, plant trees whenever a street is newly constructed, reconstructed, or relocated, recognizing that street trees can serve as protective barriers while enhancing the streetscape.
8. The Director of Public Works, Director of Parks and Recreation, or the Director of Planning, Building and Development will present a written explanation to the City Manager for approval when policies 3-7 above are not reasonable or feasible per the following exceptional circumstances:
 - Public safety would be compromised through the implementation of the accommodation
 - Severe topographic constraints exist that cannot be overcome through engineering solutions
 - Environmental or social impacts outweigh the safety benefits of these accommodations
 - The purpose and scope of the project do not facilitate the provision of such accommodation
 - The total cost of constructing and maintaining the accommodation, including potential right-of-way acquisition, would be excessively disproportionate to the safety benefit achieved

Implementation Strategy

In support of this Complete Streets Policy with Vision Zero and Safe Systems approach, the City of Roanoke will:

- Update all necessary and appropriate codes, standards and ordinances to ensure that design components for all new or modified streets follow the intent of the Street Design Guidelines and prioritize the elimination of traffic deaths and serious injuries.
- Establish a systematic process for identifying and addressing high-crash locations and streets with the greatest potential for serious injuries and fatalities.
- Identify all current and potential future sources of funding for street safety improvements, including grants or other funding specifically targeted toward Vision Zero initiatives.
- Continue project coordination among city departments via the internal Street Design Team with an interest in activities within the public right-of-way to better use fiscal resources while maximizing safety benefits and Vision Zero considerations.
- Train pertinent staff in Engineering, Parks & Recreation, Planning, Police, Fire/EMS, Economic Development, and Transportation departments on Vision Zero principles, Safe Systems approach, and the content of the Street Design Guidelines.
- Collaborate with regional transportation partners (including Valley Metro, Roanoke City and Roanoke County Public Schools, etc.), law enforcement, emergency medical services, and community organizations to implement comprehensive traffic safety education and enforcement programs.

Project Planning Process

The City will use the following process articulated in the Street Design Guidelines when planning improvements within the public right-of-way:

- Conduct a safety assessment to identify existing and potential safety hazards for all road users
- Identify the various street types in proximity to the project according to Roanoke's street hierarchy and associated safety considerations
- Identify the current and future character districts that pertain to the project and their specific vulnerability factors
- Identify the most appropriate street typical section according to the street type, character district, and safety requirements
- Identify any general elements that may apply to the project, with priority given to safety improvements
- Evaluate proposed project improvements against Vision Zero goals and Safe Systems principles

Performance Measurement

The City will measure the success of this Complete Streets Policy with Vision Zero and Safe Systems approach using the following performance measures:

Safety Outcomes:

- Number of traffic fatalities annually (goal: zero)
- Number of serious traffic injuries annually (goal: zero)
- Year over year analysis of the City's high-injury network to include a rolling 5-year average of Crash rates by mode and location

Implementation Measure:

- Number of high-crash locations addressed annually through infrastructure improvements (quick build and permanent)

Infrastructure Measures:

- Percent and year over year change of total street centerline miles citywide that are complete (i.e., have an appropriate street typical section based upon the street type, character district, and safety requirements)
- Percent and year over change of existing city sidewalk infrastructure with updated curb ramps and accessible crossings
- Percent and year over year change of lane-miles of protected light individual transportation infrastructure
- Percent and year over year change of lane-miles of buffered light individual transportation infrastructure
- Percent and year over year change of lane-miles of streets with speed limits aligned with Safe Systems principles
- Total and year over year change in the number of street trees planted along city streets

The City will update the Street Design Guidelines as needed to reflect evolving best practices in Vision Zero implementation and Safe Systems design, ensuring continuous improvement toward the goal of eliminating traffic deaths and serious injuries in Roanoke.