

VISION ZERO 2019 UPDATE

Seattle is committed to achieving our Vision Zero goal to eliminate transportation-related serious injuries and deaths. However, in 2019 we've seen a sharp increase in serious and fatal crashes on our streets. We've already surpassed the number of deaths that occurred in 2018 and are on-track to exceed the highest number of fatalities in more than a decade. Pedestrians make up the majority of the victims.

With support from Mayor Durkan, the City Council, and local and regional partners, Seattle is poised to take aggressive action toward our transportation safety goal.

\$20 million has been added to the Vision Zero program in the 2020 budget. These funds will support bold action for safe streets through expanded capital infrastructure programs, systemic interventions, innovative enforcement efforts, and new strategies in safety education.

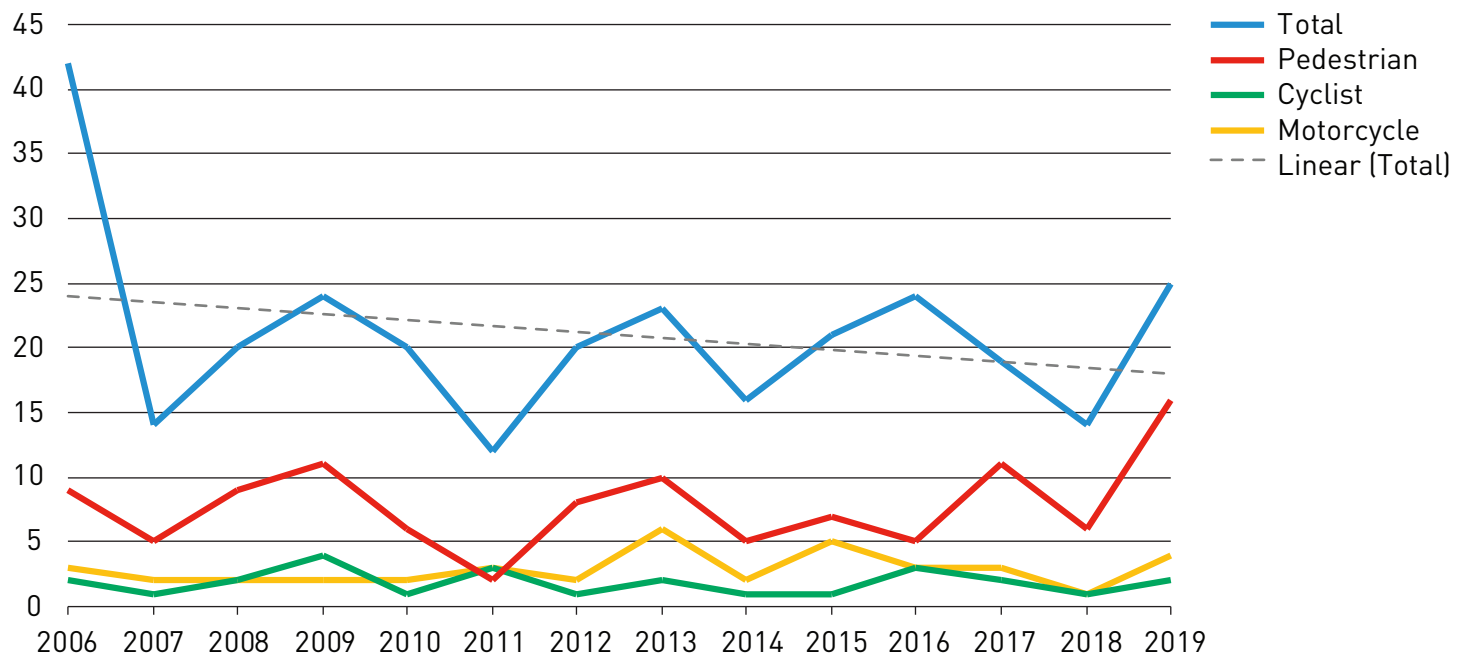
Data

2018 was one of the lowest years on record for transportation-related fatalities. Still, 14 people lost their lives last year and more than 170 people sustained serious injuries. As of December 2019, twenty-five people have been killed on our streets and another 153 people have been seriously injured. Impairment, distracted driving, speeding, and failure to stop for pedestrians continue to be the top contributing causes to collisions in Seattle.

Pedestrians account for the majority of victims in fatal collisions in Seattle. Pedestrians make up just 4% of total collisions annually but more than 50% of fatalities. And we know that older pedestrians are more at risk. In 2019, the median age of pedestrians killed in collisions is 62 years old.

More than 90% of severe collisions occur on our arterial streets. Arterials carry the highest volumes of people walking, biking, driving, rolling, or riding transit and more than 80% of our arterial streets have speed limits higher than 30 miles per hour.

Traffic Fatalities on Seattle Streets
(preliminary data as of 12/4/2019)



Seattle
Department of
Transportation

VISION
ZERO
SAFER STREETS FOR SEATTLE

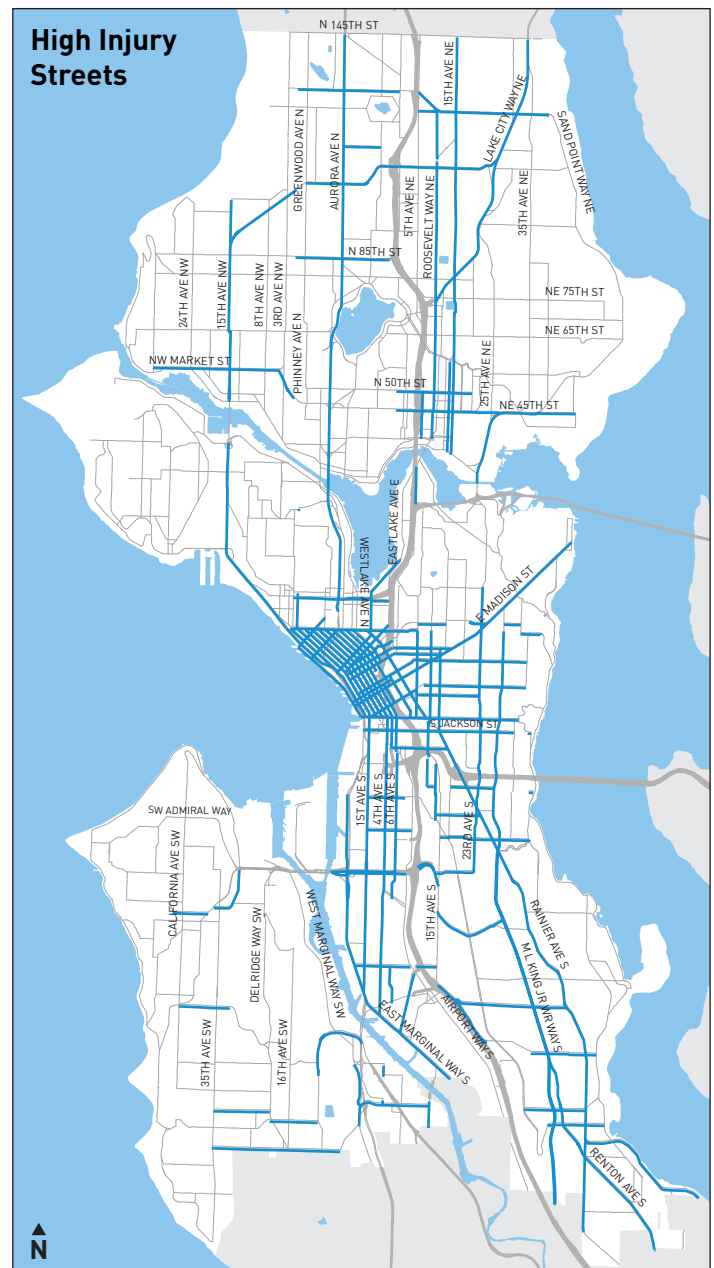
The 2019 High Injury Streets Map shows the arterial streets where collisions occur most frequently – Seattle’s top priority streets for Vision Zero interventions. We intend to address safety on each of these streets through engineering and enforcement efforts.

In 2017, we published the [Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Analysis](#) (BPSA) – a comprehensive analysis of seven years of pedestrian and bicycle crash data. This research allowed SDOT to identify the factors that have greater influence on collisions and proactively identify locations with the goal of preventing future crashes. In early 2020, SDOT will publish the BPSA 2.0 which contains additional years of data and revised exposure models.

The BPSA enables Seattle to address safety through a systemic, proactive approach where we deploy cost-effective strategies to reduce risk system-wide. Seattle is currently applying this approach to enhance safety through lower speed limits and leading pedestrian intervals.

By default, our approach to Vision Zero infrastructure investments has been grounded in equity. We use data to determine our focus areas – streets and intersections with the most fatal and serious injury crashes. Not by coincidence, these locations overlap with communities of color and vulnerable populations.

Our next step is to more intentionally lead with equity and embed it into our Vision Zero work, in street design/engineering, community engagement, partnership development, and particularly enforcement. We will look to partner and coordinate with our Transportation Equity and Race and Social Justice Change Team colleagues, and our public partners to continue building capacity.



This map shows priority streets for engineering and enforcement efforts. Streets are prioritized based on the density of collisions, frequency of serious injury and fatal crashes, average posted speeds, and equity.

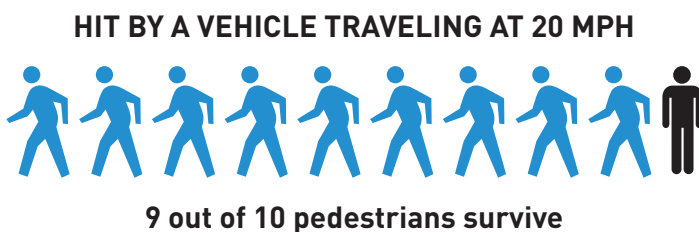
Actions

Speed Limits

Speed is the critical factor in the severity of crashes. Evaluating and setting appropriate speed limits is a key part of our Vision Zero efforts. We've already lowered speed limits in many areas of the city and the results have been encouraging. Since reducing downtown speed limits in November 2016, we've seen a 6% decrease in serious crashes and a 9% decrease in total crashes.

Under the direction of Mayor Durkan, SDOT has developed a comprehensive new speed limit setting policy, and Seattle will begin evaluating speed limits on all arterial streets across the entire city of Seattle in 2020. The new policy will allow speed limit reductions on more than 90% of arterial streets to 25 mph. Our policy also includes new sign placement standards that will ensure that drivers pass a speed limit signs every quarter mile and at every arterial-to-arterial intersection.

SDOT intends to reduce speed limits on the majority of arterials in 2020 starting with the southeast and southwest areas of the city and we will complete the remainder of the city by mid-2021. This includes State Routes. We will work in partnership with our colleagues at the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to lower speed limits on these shared streets.



As noted earlier, pedestrians are involved in a small percentage of crashes, but account for the majority of people who are seriously injured or lose their lives on our streets. 67% of pedestrian collisions occurred at locations with traffic signals. To help reduce this, we've ramped up the installation of what's called Leading Pedestrian Intervals, or LPIs.

With LPIs, we adjust the signal timing to give pedestrians the opportunity to enter a crosswalk 3-7 seconds before vehicles get the green light. By activating the WALK signal first, this treatment gives people walking a head start, making them more visible - especially for drivers who are turning. A few seconds can make a big difference. Studies from the Federal Highway Administration have shown a [60% reduction](#) in pedestrian-vehicle collisions at intersections with LPIs.

In 2019, we established a new policy to evaluate adding LPIs every time we build a new traffic signal or do other signal maintenance work that gives us the opportunity to make this upgrade - baking in pedestrian safety improvements to operational efforts. We've already implemented LPIs at more than 100 locations this year. In 2020, we will install another 125 LPIs. This will include every intersection in downtown Seattle, where huge volumes of people interact on our streets daily, and we'll continue installing LPIs along our most crash-prone streets on the High Injury Network.

Near-term actions and planning for the future of Aurora Avenue North

Seven people have been killed in fatal collisions on Aurora Avenue North as of early December 2019. Five of those people were killed as pedestrians. People of all ages and abilities live, work, and travel along this street. We must reduce collisions on Aurora if we are to reach our Vision Zero goal, and Seattle has developed a phased approach to address safety on this street.

In the near-term, SPD will increase enforcement on Aurora, WSDOT and SDOT will reduce the posted speed limit, and SDOT will implement \$2 million in spot safety and traffic calming projects on the corridor to be delivered over the next two years.

In late 2020, we will launch a planning process to re-envision Aurora in collaboration with partner agencies and the public. This project will develop the future cross-section of Aurora Avenue North, a 30% design for the corridor between N 115th Street and the city limits at N 145th St, and funding strategies to implement capital improvements.



Vision Zero Street Teams

While our yard signs can be seen throughout the city, we recognize the value and importance of reaching people in person and via other venues that they turn to for information. This is especially important when it comes to our desire to more intentionally reach historically underrepresented communities – particularly youth, older adults, people of color, lower-income individuals, and immigrants and refugees. In 2020, SDOT will launch Vision Zero Street Teams to spread transportation safety messaging throughout all of Seattle’s communities. We intend to raise awareness around transportation safety issues, and to disseminate information about lower speed limits and other infrastructure projects.

Investments in Safety Corridors and Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure

We’re focused on making investments and improvements to the streets and communities experiencing the bulk of Seattle’s serious crashes. And we know that street design changes are the most effective way to enhance safety. The 2020 budget allocates millions in new funding to expand Vision Zero capital projects.

SDOT will launch new Safety Corridor Projects on Highland Park Way and Boren Avenue while continuing our work on high-crash streets like Rainier Avenue South and Aurora Avenue North. In 2020, we’ll partner with WSDOT to implement \$8.5 million in pedestrian infrastructure projects on Lake City Way.

The budget also includes new funding to advance our Safe Routes to School projects and pedestrian safety in the Center City. And after completing critical segments of the Center City Bike Network in 2019, another \$10 million has been added to the Bicycle Master Plan program to build connected cycling routes in south Seattle neighborhoods.

Major Crash Review Task Force

In 2020, Seattle will convene a new task force to review the details of serious collisions and develop recommendations to enhance safety. The task force will consist of local and regional players including the Office of Mayor Jenny Durkan, SPD, the Seattle Fire Department, City Attorney’s Office, Public Health – Seattle & King County, WSDOT, members of modal advisory boards, and other stakeholders. Based on a proven Public Health model, the task force will bring people from a variety of disciplines together to discuss crash circumstances, which we strongly believe will lead to breakthroughs in interventions and countermeasures.



Our comprehensive approach to safety includes education, but a recent SDOT survey found that only 30% of respondents were aware of our Vision Zero goal. We'll aim to change that in 2020 with a robust overarching safety campaign, and also will continue our existing education projects. In the meantime, head over to www.seattle.gov/visionzero and take the pledge to be safe on our streets.

Expanded Enforcement Efforts

Law enforcement personnel play a crucial role in deterring behavioral issues and can intervene with people exhibiting high risk behaviors in real time. Over the next two years, the Seattle Police Department (SPD) will provide an additional 1,200 hours of enforcement on our High Injury Streets. Enforcement efforts will focus on the top contributing factors to collisions, including impaired and distracted driving, speeding, and failure to stop for pedestrians.

SPD will conduct Pedestrian Safety Enforcement starting in December 2019. In this operation, a plain-clothed officer attempts to cross the street in a marked crosswalk. Drivers who fail to yield will be contacted by another officer observing the scene and made aware of our state's pedestrian safety laws. Officers issue mostly warnings in this operation, which will be paired with media to expand the reach of the message.

SPD will also expand our use of photo enforcement systems. Over the next two years, Seattle will double the number of red-light cameras and add safety cameras in five new school zones. Data shows that photo enforcement systems are extremely effective at reducing collisions where already in use in Seattle.



As always, we'll take a high visibility approach with our enforcement actions and alert the public to the emphasis patrols using our network of dynamic message signs. The intent of our enforcement actions is not to write citations, but to increase awareness and compliance with the law, and reduce collisions.

Conclusion

The City of Seattle and our partners are not satisfied with recent trends and we are prepared to take swift action to reduce collisions and save lives. The data is clear that our top priorities for the Vision Zero program moving forward must focus on the High Injury Network and pedestrian safety. The actions outlined in this document, along with our existing programs and maintenance efforts, will advance our safety goal.

Vision Zero will always be about more than data. Each year, more than 180 lives were changed by traffic collisions. And the ripple effect is so much greater, as each person has a family, circle of friends, and larger community that continues to be impacted by loss, grief, and in many instances, long-term recovery.