




FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

DIVISION OF PLANNING & PERMITTING

Jan H. Gardner
County Executive

Steven C. Horn, Division Director

White Paper - County Executive Review

From: Steven C. Horn, Director, Planning & Permitting Division 

Date: August 19, 2020

Subject: Toward Zero Deaths Policy and Action Plan Initiation

Issue:

From 2008 to 2017, seven pedestrians and 42 people died, and 228 suffered serious injuries on roads in Frederick County. Toward Zero Deaths is a public health-based traffic safety strategy to reduce traffic deaths and serious injuries that also increases safe, healthy and equitable mobility for all.

Background:

Toward Zero Deaths recognizes that while human error will always occur, a combination of engineering, education, and enforcement measures can reduce and prevent collisions from causing death or severe injuries.

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) has adopted the goal of moving toward zero deaths with a focus on using strategies to minimize impaired, aggressive and distracted driving, and a focus on seatbelt and car seat use, and pedestrian and motorcycle safety. By resolution, the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board on July 22, 2020 urged its members to reaffirm road user safety as a top priority and prioritize the implementation of projects, programs, and policies; and in the process specifically identified the region's top needs: increased seat belt use, as well as reduction of vehicle speeds and of impaired and distracted driving.

The County's 2019 Livable Frederick Plan set forth a goal of safety and a supporting initiative to:

“Support the Toward Zero Deaths vision of moving toward zero traffic related deaths by developing a local highway safety plan that supports safety through a combination of legislative action, police enforcement and public education as a way to end the driver, pedestrian and bicyclist deaths.”

The implementation of a Toward Zero Deaths Action Plan would:

1. Call for safety to be the highest priority when balancing competing needs and demands for improvements within the public right of way.
2. Evaluate and recommend modifications to existing standards and policies with the goal of improving roadway safety for all users.
3. Convene an interdepartmental Vision Zero Task Force which will be used to establish a shared understanding of the Toward Zero Deaths approach and integrate it into all aspects of transportation planning, engineering, enforcement, and education.
4. Specify changes to policies, standards, enforcement procedures, education efforts, infrastructure improvements, and other action items that will reduce speeding, reduce collisions, and move the County toward zero fatalities and serious injuries.
5. Be implemented in an equitable manner accounting for historic inequities in transportation and safety investments across the County.
6. Provide an annual report on progress toward the Toward Zero Deaths goals, tracking process and outcome metrics, and shall present this report each year to the County Executive and County Council.

Recommendation or Guidance Requested:

Approve the Toward Zero Deaths Policy (Attachment 1) and endorse the implementation of the Action Plan to initiate the policy (to be facilitated by the Planning and Permitting Division) in cooperation with other County divisions/offices and willing local municipalities, in particular The City of Frederick.

CAO Approval:

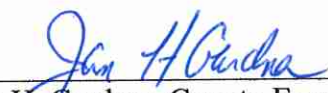


Rick Harcum, Chief Administrative Officer

8/26/2020
Date

Executive Approval:

Yes No



Jan H. Gardner, County Executive
Frederick County, Maryland

9/1/2020
Date

Executive Comments:

TOWARD ZERO DEATHS POLICY

The County Executive hereby makes the following findings:

According to data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, each year approximately 40,000 people are killed in traffic collisions in the United States. In a study comparing 19 peer nations, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that the United States has the highest traffic death rate per person.

Far and away the most fatalities and serious injuries occur at non-roundabout intersections; principal contributing factors include speeding and not wearing seat belts.

From 2008 to 2017, seven pedestrians and 42 total people died, and 228 suffered serious injuries on roads in Frederick County.

One death on County streets is one too many, and County leadership must be dedicated to strategies that aim to reduce and minimize deaths and serious injuries on County streets.

Seniors, new drivers, children, people with disabilities, people walking, and people bicycling face a disproportionate risk of traffic injuries and fatalities.

Increasing real and perceived safety for people walking and bicycling is a key step in enabling more people to choose these clean air modes of transportation.

Toward Zero Deaths is a public health-based traffic safety strategy to reduce and hopefully eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries using a data driven multi-disciplinary and safe systems approach that also increases safe healthy equitable mobility for all.

Toward Zero Deaths recognizes that while human error will always occur, a combination of engineering, education, and enforcement measures can reduce and prevent collisions from causing death or severe injuries.

The Federal Highway Administration has made a commitment to eliminating fatalities and serious injuries on the nation's roadways using a data driven interdisciplinary approach modeled after a Vision Zero approach - that 'Life and health should never be exchanged for other benefits within society'.

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) has adopted the goal of moving toward zero deaths with a focus on using proven effective strategies and countermeasures to minimize impaired, aggressive, and distracted driving, and a focus on seatbelt and car seat use, and pedestrian and motorcycle safety.

By resolution on July 22, 2020, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board urged its members to reaffirm road user safety as a top priority and prioritize the implementation of projects, programs, and policies; and in the process specifically identify the region's top needs: increased seat belt use, as well as reduction of vehicle speeds and of impaired and distracted driving.

TOWARD ZERO DEATHS POLICY

The County's 2019 Livable Frederick Plan sets forth a goal of safety: "*providing public infrastructure systems that minimize the risk of injury and maximize protection from harm;*" with the evaluation initiative to "*assess risks, identify and control hazards and continually evaluate our transportation and infrastructure systems;*" and a supporting initiative to "*support the Toward Zero Deaths vision of moving toward zero traffic related deaths by developing a local highway safety plan that supports safety through a combination of legislative action, police enforcement and public education as a way to end the driver, pedestrian and bicyclist deaths.*"

Toward Zero Deaths will be the countywide guiding principle for transportation planning, the design of streets and sidewalks, and the maintenance of the public rights of way, as well as a policy that will support and strengthen the County's Complete Streets Policy adopted on May 28, 2020.

The County will develop an **Action Plan** for its transportation system with the overriding goal of eliminating fatalities and serious injuries among all system users.

The Toward Zero Deaths **Action Plan** will:

1. Call for safety to be the highest priority when balancing competing needs and demands for space within the public right of way.
2. Evaluate and recommend modifications to existing standards and policies for auto travel, lane widths, street widths for fire access, bike lane and buffer design, crosswalk design and bulb outs, and other pedestrian safety facilities, with the goal of improving roadway safety for all users.
3. Convene an interdepartmental Vision Zero Task Force to include staff from Planning and Permitting, Public Works, Public Schools, Community College, Sheriff's Office, Municipal Police, Fire & Rescue, and the Health Department, which will be used to establish a shared understanding of the Toward Zero Deaths approach and integrate it into all aspects of transportation planning, engineering, enforcement, and education.
4. Summarize specific changes to policies, standards, enforcement procedures, education efforts, infrastructure improvements, and other action items to be taken by County departments and that will reduce speeding, reduce collisions, and move the County toward zero fatalities and serious injuries.
5. Be implemented in an equitable manner accounting for historic inequities in transportation and safety investments across the County.
6. Provide an annual report on progress toward the Toward Zero Deaths goals, tracking process and outcome metrics, and shall present this report each year to the County Executive and County Council.

Adopted and approved this day of 9-1, 2020

FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND

By: Jan H. Gardner
Jan H. Gardner, County Executive