



Quarterly Newsletter

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Madison is a Great Place to Walk and Bike

A message from Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway

There are so many benefits when walking and biking in our communities including environmental sustainability, health and wellness, affordability and general quality of life. When residents reach out to make suggestions on ways to make walking and biking a safer, easier choice in their neighborhood or in areas they frequently travel, the City of Madison listens and acts whenever possible.

In 2024, the City of Madison facilitated many projects to improve safety for people walking and biking. These projects use “[Proven Safety Countermeasures](#)” which are researched improvements that address known causes of crashes. This includes improvements such as rectangular rapid flashing beacons at crosswalks, bike lanes, sidewalks, high visibility crosswalks, and improved streetlighting.

While the [City’s Vision Zero initiative](#) focuses heavily on changes to the design and operation of streets, there are other important programs that also help ensure residents are safe. Each November, as the nighttime hours start earlier and last longer, the City launches a “Be Bright at Night” campaign aimed at increasing the visibility of people biking and walking. Staff collaborate with many different groups to get lights onto people and bikes. On the University of Wisconsin campus, City staff work with the University Police Department to stop and

educate bicyclists riding without lights, and then provides and installs lights for those without them. City staff also collaborate with middle school principals to ensure that students biking to school have a light, and that walkers have a light or reflective materials so that they are visible when they leave school at 4:25pm.

The City of Madison also works closely with the school district and the Wisconsin Bike Fed for [Safe Routes to School](#) planning with our schools. Thanks to a recent grant through the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, over 25 schools will have assistance in updating their School Travel Safety Plan and identifying the most important changes to make it safer for children traveling to school.

Later this year, the City will launch an update to our Pedestrian Plan that includes developing a prioritized list of improvements to ensure that people can safely reach locations such as parks, schools, businesses, transit stops and other important destinations.

I remain committed to ensuring that Madison remains a top rated City for both walking and bicycling. Safe, walkable, bikeable cities provide important opportunities for the community to stay connected, to be physically active, to attract visitors and to create sustainable travel options.

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School Zone Safety

Safety for our most vulnerable road users is a core principle of the Vision Zero Initiative. With the start of a new school year, it is imperative that we make school zone safety a priority. Fortunately, we are able to identify aspects of school zones that are potentially hazardous and make adjustments to reduce those issues. From strategic school zone traffic plans, school zone signs, flashing beacons, RRFBs, and more, we can keep our families safe.

Each of the following measures help the overall goal of safety:

Signage: Posted parking restriction signs are in place to help reduce congestion in front of and around the schools in areas that can lead to poor visibility and increased driver distractions.

Visibility: Keeping crosswalks clear is another way to create a safe environment for pedestrians and bicyclists. Do not park closer than 15 feet of, stop on or block a painted crosswalk when dropping your children off at school. The City of Madison has included flashing beacons and Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) at many crosswalks to increase the visibility of crossing users to approaching vehicles. [School Crossing Guards](#) also provide an additional visible safety reminder for anyone approaching a crossing.

Be predictable: Mid-block or other sudden changes in direction can be unpredictable and very unsafe in school zones due to high volumes of children and traffic congestion around schools. Completion of a U-Turn or other mid-block turn in a school zone is strongly discouraged and many school zones have signs prohibiting U-turns making them a ticketable offense where posted.

Distractions: Put down the phone. Not only can talking on the phone or texting in an active school zone earn you a hefty fine — it can be deadly.

Slow Down: Observe the speed limits on all roadways, and especially in school zones. School zone speed limits in Madison are 15 or 20 mph, depending on the road. Slow down to the school zone speed limit when passing a school when children are present, **or when passing an intersection staffed by an adult crossing guard.**

By exercising caution and care by following the rules of school zones, everyone can have a huge impact on the safety of our families arriving to school, no matter the transportation method selected.



Madison Continues to Keep Pedestrians Safe

The Madison Police Department's role in the Vision Zero initiative is to focus on the hazardous driving behaviors that lead to traffic-related deaths and serious injuries of drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists. Traffic enforcement (citations), educating drivers about traffic laws (warnings) and reminding them about their responsibilities (press releases) are important strategies when trying to address and change driving behaviors that put all of us in danger.

Grant funding from the State of Wisconsin's Department of Transportation bol-

sters MPD's traffic enforcement efforts and helps make our streets safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. These grants allow us to pay a group of six officers for four hours of dedicated traffic enforcement outside of their primary assignment at the department. Crash data, citizen complaints and other factors, such as speed limits, the presence of schools and crosswalks, the volume of vehicle traffic, and pedestrian and bicycle traffic, help guide our work.

Enforcing speed limits during these traffic grants is one way to make our streets saf-

er. We know that lower speeds reduce impact forces, increase stopping time and distance, and improve visibility, thus improving the chances of a pedestrian or a bicyclist surviving a crash.

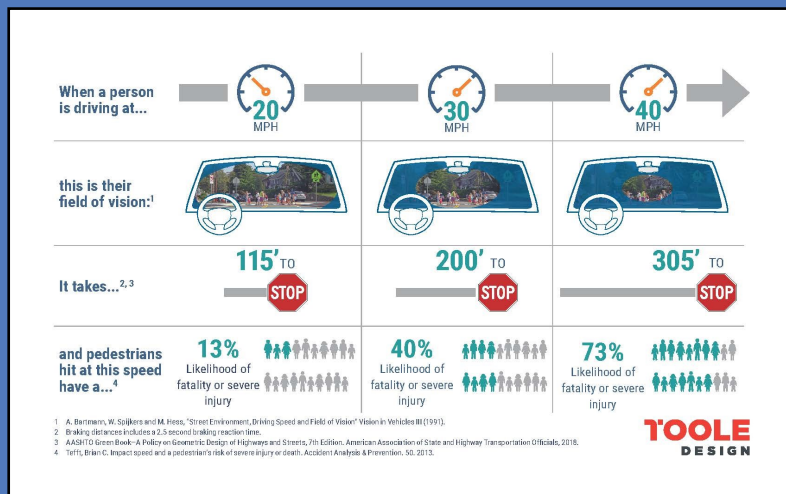
One of the biggest complaints we at MPD hear from pedestrians and bikers is about the danger that speeding, distracted, impaired and reckless drivers pose to them. Our citizens are very vocal about their appreciation of our efforts — efforts that are making everyone in our community safer.

20 is Plenty - Neighborhood Speed Reduction Project

The City of Madison Vision Zero initiative uses safety strategies and proven countermeasures with the purpose of reducing the severity of preventable crashes in our community. These changes come in all forms from physical roadway updates to enhanced signing and marking. Along with speed management strategies on all roadways, the 20 is Plenty program focuses specifically on the reduction of local, residential street speeds where we have the greatest mix of users – pedestrians, bicyclists, and motor vehicles.

Phase 1 of 20 is Plenty, initiated in 2021, saw speed reductions in two different neighborhoods totaling 11.18 miles of residential streets. This phase was used to study the impacts of the reduction from 25 mph to 20 mph while also learning how to best implement changes for a future Phase 2. This winter, Phase 2 will begin implementation citywide, one neighborhood at a time, with a completion date of December 2025.

Across the country, there is a trend to prioritize safety in urban areas by lowering speed limits. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), crashes between pedestrians and motor vehicles increased by 46% across the United States between 2009 and 2018 and that is a trend we do not want to see locally. Speeding plays a major role in crashes, both increasing the chance of a crash occurring as well as in-



creasing the severity of a crash.

Slowing down while in residential areas will only add a few seconds to your trip but can have a huge impact on the safety of the neighborhood. As a city we can show our support for changing the safety culture on our streets by following posted speed limits and eliminating distractions to stay focused on driving.

Together we can do this!

Stopping for School Buses, Protecting Safe Routes to and from School

As school buses transporting students become a common feature of our daily commute this fall, a reminder to please stop at a safe distance behind a school bus that is flashing its red lights, or when you are in the opposing traffic lane and facing the school bus flashing its red lights indicating students near the bus stop. Come to a complete, safe stop while remaining in your lane of traffic and maintaining a safe following distance with other vehicles.

On September 10th, 2024, City of Madison Common Council approved an amendment of the **Madison General Ordinance 12.80**, Use of Flashing Red and Amber Warning Lights by School Bus Operators, to clarify and increase the use of flashing lights by school buses.

With this amended ordinance, you will now see school buses increase their use of flashing red and/or amber warning lights, stop arm, and stop sign. Please be aware of these as you encounter school buses using these traffic and pedestrian safety mechanisms in areas where there are no traffic signals. Respecting the flashing signals and stop arms/signs of a school bus will allow for students to safely access the bus on the way to or from school. We are reminding drivers and riders of the dangers of multiple threat crashes, which are those that may occur when the first driver stops to allow a bus to stop or a pedestrian to cross, but a second driver fails to stop. Students may be in the crosswalk and out of view when that second

driver fails to stop or attempts to pass the school bus itself or another stopped vehicle.

To prevent serious injuries or deaths from these types of crashes near school buses and students, it is important to be aware of your vehicles blind spots and to maintain adequate following distance. As vehicles become bigger, so too are the blind spot lengths. Similarly, bigger vehicles require more time and distance to come to a complete stop, and even longer during adverse weather. While driving or riding in perfect road conditions, the general rule of thumb is to multiply the vehicle speed by 4 in order to arrive at the brake distance to come to a sudden, complete stop. Please keep these factors at the top of mind when driving or riding near a school bus, in order to protect our newest and most vulnerable pedestrians accessing safe routes to and from school.

Ordinance 12.80 - USE OF FLASHING RED AND AMBER WARNING LIGHTS BY SCHOOL BUS OPERATORS. Pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 349.21, school bus operators may use flashing red and/or amber warning lights in a residence or business district at locations **where there are no traffic signals** when pupils or other authorized persons are to be loaded or unloaded and such persons must cross the street or highway before being loaded or after being unloaded. School bus operators shall be required to use their best judgment in determining whether the use of flashing warning lights is appropriate.

Safer Streets Thanks to BRT

The Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project is a major investment in transit for the City of Madison, and with that investment comes updates and changes to our streets and traffic signals that will help improve safety. From adding or updating pedestrian & bicycle facilities, to updating traffic signal equipment and street lighting, here are a few of the ways we expect to reduce crashes, injuries, and fatalities along the route.

Safety improvements being incorporated into the BRT project can be generally attributed to eliminating conflicts at intersections or mitigating them. This can be physical infrastructure like the widened sidewalk along Mineral Point Road which will provide people with a physical buffer between higher speed vehicle traffic and people walking or rolling, or operational changes at traffic signals.

Due to median bus lanes requiring separating left turns from the thru moving buses, left turns along Mineral Point Road and some intersections along East Washington and University Avenue have been converted to protected only left turns (left on a green arrow only). This is also a significant safety improvement as protected only left turns have been proven in national and local studies to reduce angle crashes. At three intersections where left turns were converted to protected only left turns here in Madison, left turn angle crashes were reduced by 93% over a 4-year period.

When looking at the crashes along Mineral Point Road, angle crashes involving drivers making left turns off Mineral Point Road resulted in 5 fatalities and 44 people injured, from 54 crashes in a 5-

year period. If the trend of reducing angle crashes is seen here as they were elsewhere, we can expect to see a significant reduction in these severe crashes.

Other conflict reduction strategies along the route include restricting right turns on red across crosswalks with BRT stations and across separated bike facilities, as well as implementing leading bike and pedestrian phases along the University Avenue counterflow bike lane.

Along with conflict reduction, we are also installing Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) at locations with BRT stations. These devices will allow people with vision impairments to receive an audible cue when the crosswalk "walk" signal is on for them to cross.

We take every opportunity we can to improve safety in Madison, and the BRT project is no different. With these changes, we hope to look back in a few years and see a fewer members of our community harmed by crashes and empowered to move around Madison safely and efficiently by the mode of transportation of their choice.



Vision Zero is a data driven strategy intended to eliminate traffic deaths and severe injuries on all roadways, bikeways and sidewalks by 2035.

The City of Madison Vision Zero initiative strives to improve safety for all roadway users throughout the city, and improve the identified high injury intersections and roadway segments, all in an effort to prevent avoidable fatal crashes.

Safety starts with all of us.

We can't control human error, but we can help create more forgiving infrastructure and change systems to prevent crashes from being serious and fatal.

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