

January 12, 2023

WHVZ DRAFT ACTION PLAN FEEDBACK THEMES

The Town published the Draft Vision Zero Action Plan to the project webpage and collected feedback via the website and written comments at the December 6, 2024 Public Meeting. We received 50 comments between December 4 and December 18, 2024, including final input from the Task Force. The following are key comment themes.

Stakeholders are actively engaged and passionate about ensuring the success of the Vision Zero initiative in West Hartford. There's a mix of positive sentiments, including excitement about the Town's commitment to Vision Zero, and constructive criticism over the pace at which the Town is moving to improve infrastructure. There is a call for ongoing transparent communication.

One main concern is that the Action Plan doesn't reflect the urgency of improving infrastructure in known areas of concern, such as quick-build projects. This is coupled with acknowledgement of the Town's staff and funding resource constraints to execute the Action Plan fully.

The primary feedback themes are followed by [responses and/or commentary in blue](#) and [edits in red](#).

1. Identify and Fund Immediate Actions to Meet the Urgency of Traffic Violence

- There is a concern that Town leadership's enthusiasm to act quickly has waned. The perceived lag in implementing safety measures is coupled with a call for short-term road safety measures (quicker than 2 years) at high-risk areas, to test concepts and gather data.
- Specify implementation timelines and measurable goals in the Action Plan.
- There is concern about lack of funding and/or staff resources to carry out the Action Plan, leading to weaker Vision Zero execution.
- There is inquiry about the Town's pursuit of more grants to subsidize demonstration projects and/or Action Plan implementation.
- Commenters suggest that the timeline and effort of Road Safety Audits will thwart progress. One requests that RSAs include a nighttime assessment to evaluate lighting.
- Prioritize addressing safety in school zones and areas with proposed housing developments.

Response

Funding and Staffing

Response

The Town of West Hartford currently has an active job posting for a civil engineering position dedicated to vision zero and traffic safety improvements (Action A4). It is anticipated that additional staffing will eliminate some staffing constraints. Identified constraints will be revised once the position is filled.

- **Edit:** Change Action A3 (“Pursue implementation grant funding...”) to 2024 timeframe.
 - *Comments:* West Hartford was successful in its grant application for the 2023 Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant program for a Speed Management Pilot Program in the amount of \$669,007. This grant includes, in part, funding to staffing positions to assist with the management of this program. It is possible that this staff person will assist in other Vision Zero efforts as well. In addition, the 2024 SS4A Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is anticipated in February 2024, with applications anticipated to be due April 2024. Upon completion of this Action Plan, the Town is eligible to pursue federal implementation funding, which applies to infrastructure, behavioral, and/or operational activities. Applying for the implementation grant will allow for supplemental planning and/or demonstration project funding, if the Town desires.

- **Edit:** Add new Action to Strategy D: “Engage with CRCOG in their 2024 update to the regional Safety Action Plan to ensure West Hartford Vision Zero priorities are represented at the regional level.”

- **Edit:** Add new Action to Strategy D: “Collaborate with CRCOG to leverage their Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Coordinator for technical assistance in evaluating and strategically applying for funding to subsidize West Hartford’s Vision Zero activities..”
 - *Comments:* Leveraging CRCOG staff will provide streamlined awareness of potential grant opportunities. This will reduce demands on town staff to track grant prerequisites, timelines, manage applications and awarded funding.

Road Safety Audits

- The Road Safety Audits represent a refined approach to establish clear actions relevant to the Vision Zero Focus Areas in a collaborative manner between Town officials and key stakeholders. The recommendation for RSAs provides a mechanism to ensure agreement between these parties on location-specific recommendations that are to be installed and provide an opportunity for further planning and design investigation which is not feasible for a town-wide Action Plan. Many of the potential countermeasures identified in the Action Plan (Implementation Support chapter) could impact various stakeholders and should be addressed in a methodical process.
- **Edit:** Add a “Key Action Highlight” to page 45 explain the role of the RSAs and why they are the best approach going forward.
- **Edit:** Add new Action to Strategy G: “Identify and implement quick build and short-term projects that will not impact corridor planning.”
 - *Comments:* This action identifies engineering best practices that can be easily implemented and will not impact corridor planning. For example, retro-reflective backplates on traffic signals, signal timing changes, no-turn on-red signage and other similar actions should be taken in this new action. Where possible, the Town should coordinate with CTDOT on DOT initiatives to include these countermeasures on town-facilities when feasible.
 - This action is noted with an annual frequency of 2 per year. Other actions such as those included in recommendations from the RSAs will likely include more complex recommendations, and those which may require potential impacts and trade-offs. A two-year horizon for these recommendations is appropriate to complete adequate community engagement, and complete design and construction phases of these projects.

Communication of Performance Measures and Progress

- The Action Table included in the appendix of the Final Action Plan includes many additional details that the community is interested in including target timelines, performance metrics, and lead/supporting entities.
- **Edit:** Two sections to the “Implementation Support” chapter are added including a Performance Measures and Data Dashboard section.
 - *Comments:* The performance measures and data dashboard will be a feature of the annual reports of the Vision Zero Action Plan. This is

expected to be delivered at the end of 2024 which will conclude the first year of the Action Plan.

- **Edit:** Modify Action A5 to read: “Conduct an annual review of the Vision Zero Action Plan. Include a work plan for projects to be undertaken in the upcoming year.”
 - *Comments:* The addition of a work plan will be created cross-referencing capital expenditures planned in Action A2. The development of the work plan will establish clear expectations for work to be initiated in the upcoming year.
- **Edit:** Modified Action A6 (“Establish an internal Response Team...”) to begin in 2024.

2. Conduct Inclusive Community Engagement

- Request for increased community engagement before finalization of the plan, including a public hearing on the full draft and publication of all stakeholder comments. Ensure that residents of all neighborhoods, especially lower-income areas, those who are transit-dependent, and those with special needs are meaningfully engaged.

Response

This accelerated planning process has included publicity and opportunities for community engagement, including review and comment on the Draft Vision Zero Action Plan, compatible with the project scope and fee. The team strategically balanced outreach, data analysis, Task Force management, and plan development within eight months. This timeline was driven by the Mayor’s 1-year Task Force appointment.

The consultants identified representation gaps among the Task Force, working closely with Equity Coordinator Adrienne Billings-Smith to include a transit-dependent woman of color and two high school students. Task Force members are responsible for amplifying the Town’s work around Vision Zero within their communities, to the best of their ability. The plan was developed with significant collaboration from the Task Force, who represent a variety of perspectives.

The consultant developed a scope amendment to increase outreach with the deaf community and to ensure ADA compliant-work products. The consultant also translated the community survey and accompanying material to Spanish, Chinese, and Portuguese, and worked closely with Town libraries to distribute

and help interested parties complete the survey.

The Vision Zero Project Management Team published the Draft Action Plan and notified the Town listserv regarding the public review and comment window in early December. This accompanied the second public meeting, ample media coverage, and a managed email inbox.

As outlined within this document, the Project Management Team is assessing all comments before finalizing the Action Plan. This is the early stages of West Hartford's Vision Zero journey, with opportunity for engagement throughout the next nine years.

- **Edit:** A simple graphic communicating the community's most commonly cited concerns is added within the Public Engagement chapter of the Action Plan.

3. Revisit the Priority and Timing of Vision Zero Campaigns

- There is mixed feedback on the need for and priority of strategic communications and educational programs for the duration of Vision Zero. Some request that the Town invest in physical changes with lasting impacts before launching communications or awareness campaigns. Others consider the education and changing of our community's culture a harder task than infrastructure improvements.

Response

The Vision Zero Action Plan is a blueprint for implementation, balancing change to policy, culture, and infrastructure based on data analysis, community input, and Task Force collaboration. Public education is a core element of building shared responsibility for roadway safety in West Hartford.

Per the community survey, 36% of respondents want education to address rules of the road and roadway safety. Another 23% call for education to reduce distracted driving.

Designing and implementing roadways to reduce harm is essential to achieving zero deaths. And it must be done while educating citizens on safe practices.

- **Edit:** Add new Action to Strategy J: "Publish an online "Vision Zero Pledge" that allows community members to show their personal commitment to achieving zero deaths and serious injuries."

- *Comments:* The Task Force drafted a pledge early in the Action Plan development process in 2023. This pledge could be reevaluated.

4. Consider Driver Behavior, Infrastructure, and Specific Locations

- Safety concerns are primarily related to speeding, aggressive driving, lack of consideration for vulnerable roadway users, and insufficient pedestrian infrastructure.
- There is a call for pedestrians to travel responsibly (wear visible clothing in low-light conditions) and follow the rules of the road (cross at intersections, minimize distracted travel).
- The community supports recommendations related to protected bike lanes, pedestrian bump-outs, signals that prioritize pedestrians, speed feedback signage, and other speed-calming infrastructure.
- Parking-related safety concerns include curb management in West Hartford Center, parking lot access at key commercial areas such as Bishops Corner, daylighting, and prioritizing bicycling infrastructure over on-street parking.
- Specific roadways that present safety concerns but are not included in the Vision Zero Focus Areas (all or partially) include:
 - Tunxis Road (between Ridgewood Road and Sedgwick Road)
 - Sedgwick Road
 - Simsbury Road
 - Bloomfield Ave
 - North Main at Bishops Corner
 - South Main Street
 - Albany Avenue

Response

The Vision Zero Action Plan identifies West Hartford's High Injury Network (HIN). When coupled with analysis of the community survey input and Transportation Equity Zones, this creates the priority Vision Zero Focus Areas (VZFA). The HIN represents roadways where most of the fatal and serious injury (KSI) crashes have occurred, using the last available 5 years of data (2018-2022). The HIN does not seek to identify all roadway segments that have experienced a KSI crash.

As the Town implements the Action Plan and revisits the HIN (every 3-5 years), we anticipate that improvements to today's designated VZFA will remove segments and make room for new segments. It is likely these identified roadways or segments will be included in future VZFA.

- **Edit:** Added text to High Injury Network section: “It is anticipated that VZFA will be updated in 2027. This may result in segments being removed as improvements are made and new priority areas identified.”
- **Edit:** Add section “Areas not identified within Vision Zero Focus Areas” following the presentation of the Focus Areas. This includes the following text:
 - “VZFAs give direction to the Town on projects which should be prioritized for safety improvements. Other projects may be initiated with different goals such as regular maintenance, streetscaping, operational improvements, pedestrian and bicycle facility roll-out, or other goals. The Town will review opportunities for safety improvements as part of these projects.
 - VZFAs do not preclude traffic calming on the streets outlined in the “Neighborhood Street Traffic Calming Program.”
- **Edit:** Updated “Culture” background section to include: “While human error is inevitable, Vision Zero will be more successful if it is supported by members of the public who understand the importance of Vision Zero and the role that they play in ensuring safe streets. Motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians each have responsibility to demonstrate safe behaviors. Vision Zero must actively engage with the public to teach traffic safety and design a safer system together. Cultural changes are evident in community action.”

5. Support Enforcement

- There is demand for increased police presence, enforcement, and stricter penalties for drivers who break laws. Commonly observed infractions are speeding, red light running, and distracted driving.
- There is support for implementing and enforcing "No Turn on Red" at key intersections.

Response

The Town’s grant funding to pilot a speed management program, using enforcement, policy change and increased staff, demonstrates commitment to using cameras to slow speeds and once reviewed by a Police Officer, issue fines to violators.

While enforcement is key to making our roads safer, designing our streets to be self-enforcing is also important – to lessen the need for enforcement, which has caused historic harms, particularly to BIPOC communities. Self-enforcing streets may

include narrowing travel lanes, installing roundabouts, and using other proven countermeasures as outlined in the Plan.

6. Revise Appropriate Policy and Ordinance(s)

- Revise existing Town ordinances and policies that may impede progress in or contradict road safety improvements. For example, the Town's Sidewalk Policy should allow for more objective evaluation and construction based on safety and cohesion of the network.

Response

The Town's Public Sidewalk Policy was updated in 2016 and supported by the Town Council. Revisions to the Public Sidewalk Policy followed the 2015 adoption of the Town's Complete Street Policy by Town Council. The revised sidewalk policy provides structure for the Town to review potential new sidewalk gaps while balancing pedestrian safety, capital costs to the Town, impacts of potential design within the right-of-way to adjacent obstructions, and maintenance burdens to property abutters for the removal of ice and snow. The policy provides clarity to several criteria which may be considered in the evaluation of a sidewalk gap, however, the policy clearly states that consideration is "not limited to" the criteria listed. The sidewalk policy was revised to be less stringent with regards to input from abutting property owners and provide greater flexibility to the town.

7. Other Edits

Based on review of urgent VZFA's and identification of issues in the Park Road RSA and applicable countermeasures:

- **Edit:** Revised list of potential countermeasures in Implementation Support chapter.