

Draft Safety Action Plan policy recommendations

The Department of Planning and Development (DPD), through its approved Safe Streets and Roads for All grant agreement with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is required to develop a Safety Action Plan for approval by FHWA. Through the contract with DPD for this work, Toole Design has been tasked with synthesizing transportation safety recommendations from a combination of sources including the draft Comprehensive Plan, the Great Streets Plan and the Climate Justice Plan, in addition to best practice recommendations from FHWA and Toole's own professional experience working with cities nationwide. The recommendations listed below are proposed as the basis of DPD's Safety Action Plan, and will be further developed into the Safety Action Plan structure required by FHWA and that supports the City's Vision Zero target.

Source Key: CP = draft Comprehensive Plan (June CPC draft), GSP = Great Streets Plan, CJP = Climate Justice Plan, PPD= Providence Police Department, FHWA = Federal Highway's Proven Safety Countermeasures, Toole = proposed by Toole.

Establish standards for traffic signals and implement citywide

(CP: M3.B, M4.B, GSP: p94, 96, FHWA)

There are many standards available to the City to adopt that would reduce the time taken to improve safety at traffic signals. Recent steps to implement Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPis) citywide should be accompanied by adoption of standards for walk signals similar to those recommended by the Green & Complete Streets Advisory Council and incorporate additional best practices for signal timing and technology.

Strategically expand where right turns on red are prohibited

(CP: M3.C, M5.G, GSP p96)

When drivers are allowed to turn right from a red light, it is harder to ensure the safety of people in the crosswalk as drivers are looking in the opposite direction for a gap. Many locations in Providence already have "No Right Turn on Red" signage, and this coverage should expand to all locations where doing so would increase safety. To increase compliance with these right turn restrictions, it is also important to take steps to remind drivers to pay attention to the signs.

Determine and implement standards for crosswalk comfort and accessibility in priority areas

(FHWA, Toole)

Determine a standard acceptable distance between crosswalks depending on a street's context, and create a prioritized list of new crosswalks to add based on these standards. Identify thresholds for enhanced crossing treatments like Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons (PHBs), Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs), and raised crossings. Identify key destination types where new

midblock crossings should be considered to enhance safety of pedestrians accessing those destinations. Consider how to integrate these standards into development, restoration, or other roadway projects.

Add crosswalk markings and accessible ramps to every crosswalk location where they are absent

(CP: M3.D)

Intersections with pedestrian activity should have marked crosswalks, adding pedestrian signal equipment as necessary, to enhance pedestrian visibility and driver compliance of yielding the right of way. Where the curb ramps at marked crosswalks are not compliant with federal requirements or are missing, they should be brought up to standard. A plan for addressing these violations by 2030 should be made and implemented, prioritizing locations with high pedestrian demand and existing marked crosswalks that are missing curb ramps.

Install daylighting around crosswalks to improve visibility, where possible

(CP: M3.F)

“Daylighting” refers to installing permanent or temporary materials near corners, crosswalks, and bus stops to increase pedestrian visibility and enforce illegal parking rules. Some designs can also reduce crossing distances for crosswalk users, limiting their exposure to potential conflicts with car traffic. This strategy has been a cornerstone of cities that have succeeded at achieving Vision Zero targets such as Hoboken, New Jersey.

Improve street lighting of crosswalks, sidewalks, and urban trails

(GSP p97)

A disproportionate share of serious collisions in Providence occur at night, and recent investigation of North Main Street revealed illumination levels at crosswalks below recommended thresholds. In areas of high collisions or high pedestrian volumes, existing lighting conditions should be evaluated for short, medium and long term improvements that will improve safety at crosswalks.

Improve sidewalk & roadway infrastructure maintenance, including snow clearance, especially in frontline communities

(CP: M3.H, M3.K, GSP p97, CJP p75 & p77)

Improve maintenance of sidewalks so that accessible paths are available everywhere there are sidewalks and implement changes to sidewalk snow clearance, potentially including centralized oversight of snow clearance for priority routes and increased enforcement of existing regulations. Establish standards for clearing snow from bike lanes following snow events. Work with frontline

community organizations to support programs that improve community cleanliness and safety and create living wage jobs for frontline community members.

Fix sidewalks buckled by tree roots & plan to increase tree canopy while mitigating sidewalk repair issues

(CP: M3.I)

Street tree canopy improves the walkability of a street and provides co-benefits related to stormwater management and extreme heat mitigation. At the same time, the roots from street trees can create accessibility barriers on sidewalks if design, installation, and maintenance do not proactively address the problem. Providence should expand street tree coverage in line with the recommendations in the PVD Tree Plan.

Establish procedures to address sidewalk obstructions and avoid new obstructions

(Toole)

The City should inventory permanent sidewalk obstructions such as utility poles, guy wires, or utility cabinets, and implement a plan for addressing them. For recurring temporary obstructions such as outdoor dining, business signage, overgrowth of plantings, or waste receptacles, the City should establish procedures and work with abutters to find alternatives. Standards should also be established and enforced for construction detours and sidewalk/lane closures to prioritize maintaining walking and bicycling connections during road projects.

Work with RIDOT to improve the safety and comfort of walking and biking on highway crossings and state-owned roadways

(CP: M3.E, M4.C, GSP p98)

Achieving the City's Vision Zero target is not possible without RIDOT's collaboration to prioritize the safety of its facilities over traffic flow on streets where people walk and bike. The planned update of the current RIDOT Design Manual should reflect new design concepts for bicycling, walking, and micromobility. The City should request to review and make suggestions on RIDOT's update work, and engage the General Assembly if necessary.

Work with the State Legislature to adopt changes to State Law to improve safety

(GSP p98, Toole)

Advocate for such changes as adoption of an "Idaho Stop" law, allowing bikes to proceed during a Leading Pedestrian Interval, revision of "Frank's Law" to be a 4 ft passing distance, clarification that both Class 1 and Class 2 e-bikes are allowed on bike paths, requirement of helmets for adult

motorcyclists, requirement of “lateral protection devices” to improve large truck safety, and removal of the exemption for delivery and ride-share vehicles to laws about parking in bike lanes and on sidewalks.

Update ordinance language for operating a bicycle

(GSP p89)

Some language in the Code of Ordinances about bicycles date from 1946 and is significantly out of date. Clarify language around conflicts between bicycling and walking, and remove outdated and unenforced bans on carrying passengers, riding next to others, and riding in parks.

Consider lowering statutory speed limits on local residential streets to 20 mph

(CP: M5.C)

The default speed limit is 25 mph for most roadways in Providence. In line with the recommendations from NACTO’s “City Limits” report and in accordance with state law which gives local governments the authority to set their own default speed limits, the City Council should reduce the default speed limit on all local residential streets to 20 mph.

Improve driving behavior, potentially by working with the state and local driving instructors on Driver’s Education programs

(CP: M5.F)

In addition to evidence-based safety improvements for those influences on driver behavior that are under City control, the City should work with the Rhode Island Department of Motor Vehicles to ensure that the state driving exam and other regulations of driver’s education effectively promote safe driving behavior.

Expand Youth Bicycle Education Programming to Citywide

(GSP p99)

The City should work with nonprofit partners to teach youth bicycling skills at recreation centers or other suitable venues in line with the 2017 “Pedal Power” program.

Expand the calendar of events such as Open Streets and community rides

(CP: M4.D, M4.G, GSP: p99)

Open Streets events are popular in many cities around the world, giving communities recurring experiences with walking and biking and seeing streets in a different way. Social bike rides are another tool for creating safe and fun environments for people to interact with their city in a new way. Many cities have an extensive calendar of open streets events and slow group rides at

different times of day and targeted at different demographics. Providence should seek to cultivate similar events regularly.

Expand the City's Street Ambassador Approach to Public Engagement

(GSP p99)

The City should invest more in the Street Ambassador program to hire, train, and deploy community members at events and in everyday environments to collect input on projects being planned or considered, and spread awareness of opportunities for further engagement. Street Ambassador approaches allow cities to engage thousands of community members who otherwise would likely not be engaged in traditional planning processes. Street teams should also be used to publicize reduced-fare programs for the City's bike share and scooter share.

Issue more tickets for violations impacting safety, using technology where appropriate

(CP: M5.D, M5.E, GSP: p89 & p97, FHWA)

Equitably implemented, fines and tickets are an essential tool in the policy toolbox for making streets safer. Work with City Council to consider methods of scaled fines to ensure both effective deterrence of unsafe driving and respect for the cost burdens on many Providence families. Expand the use of camera enforcement, where appropriate, for speeding, running red lights, and blocking the box, and consider additional technologies to address dangerous behaviors such as distracted driving. Direct parking enforcement efforts to place greater emphasis on parking violations impacting safety, such as blocking crosswalks, bike lanes, bus stops, and visibility near corners, and parking on sidewalks.

Provide the Traffic Bureau the personnel resources to conduct nighttime enforcement

(PPD)

Increase the size of the Traffic Bureau and fill any position vacancies. Create a DUI/Speeding Task Force within the Traffic Bureau to address Night/Weekend Operations when fatalities are most likely to occur.

Conduct ongoing law enforcement campaigns along high-crash corridors and report changes in crash type, crash severity, and contributing behaviors over time

(PPD)

Develop enforcement operations plan for priority sites.

Provide resources and training to officers on the importance of properly filling out crash reports, laws related to vulnerable road users and positive enforcement methods

(PPD)

Increase the number of officers attending training on pedestrian bicycle laws, crash causes and contributing factors, roll call videos, VZ strategies and significance of accurately filling out crash reports.

Create supplementary plans for mobility topics not addressed in this plan

(CJP: p77)

Create a citywide mobility plan that builds upon existing plans addressing such topics as EV infrastructure and EV ride sharing, as well as a plan for improving the public right-of-way to be accessible in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Public Right Of Way Accessibility Guidelines

Electrify vehicles through City procurement and through expanding charger access

(CP: M5.I, M5.L, CJP: p25, p75)

Replacing internal combustion engine vehicles with electric vehicles is a central strategy for eliminating transportation emissions and reducing air pollution in the city. To achieve the targets in the Climate Justice Plan, the City should encourage wider installation of electric vehicle charging stations on private property such as at residential developments, gas stations and parking facilities, and also establish a program for publicly-available chargers in public right-of-way and on City property.

Reduce diesel pollution from industrial sources including trucks, especially in frontline communities

(CP: M5.H, CJP p75)

Implement the strategies identified in the Climate Justice Plan for reducing truck emissions and their public health impact.

Elevate transit experience to be a viable alternative to driving for more people

(CP: M1.H, M1.J, M1.L, M2.B, GSP p98, CJP p75)

Improve the accessibility and comfort of bus stops and bus hubs by improving ADA infrastructure; working with RIPTA to expand the coverage of benches, shelters, and other stop infrastructure; installing bus lanes in high-frequency corridors; and working with RIPTA on a maintenance plan for

bus stops, to both keep stops clean and to clear snow from bus stops when needed; Advocate to electrify MBTA line to enable faster service with reduced emissions, and for the creation and use of Park-and-Ride locations at the periphery of the urban core

Establish street design standards consistent with safety best practice and implement whenever capital, maintenance, or restoration work allow

(Toole)

At locations where pedestrians must cross motor vehicle traffic, pedestrian safety should explicitly be prioritized over traffic flow. Clear, quantified benchmarks of traffic congestion should be established as the only exceptions to default pedestrian safety measures. Define a target level of pedestrian crossing stress for all intersections, according to a set of criteria. Existing procedures to balance safety and traffic flow should be evaluated and formalized, following best practice guidance.

Update agreements and standards for road and sidewalk opening standards to capitalize on project opportunities for Great Streets implementation

(GSP p92, p95)

Utility construction and road patches once work is complete should be evaluated to ensure small opportunities to improve safety are not being missed. Road opening permits and utility agreements should be evaluated to ensure that suitable safety is provided during road closures and detours, and that walking and biking infrastructure is restored in a timely fashion.

Create more and better spaces that are designed for walking

(CP: M3.G)

Cities around the world have experimented with extensive creative designs to improve walkability. Amenities to enhance the pedestrian experience such as furnishings, water, shade, and identifying spaces away from car traffic are examples of improvements that increase the comfort of walking. Locations with high proportions of children walking should be prioritized for these improvements.

Improve routes to the train station for walking and bicycling to reduce traffic congestion and encourage train ridership

(CP: M2.F)

Routes for walking and bicycling to and from the train station should be enhanced to the highest levels of safety and comfort. Roads to access the station such as Exchange Street, Finance Way, Park Row West, and Gaspee Street should be prioritized for such improvements as protected urban trails, wide sidewalks, street trees, regularly spaced benches, intersection improvements,

and accessibility compliance upgrades. These improvements should also be considered for Memorial Boulevard, Smith Street, Francis Street, Steeple Street, and Canal Street, in addition to safety improvements on these arterials for people getting to and from the train station.

Add wayfinding signage on bike routes to improve navigation

(CP: M4.K)

In 2022, the City completed a wayfinding sign plan for the urban trail network, resulting in a menu of sign types and a design template for wayfinding signs. This program should be modified as necessary and included in any new urban trail projects. A plan should be established for improving existing urban trails with this signage. Wayfinding signs should be installed on the urban trail network each year until the completed portion of the network is fully outfitted with wayfinding signs.

Eliminate parking minimums for new development and consider the establishment of maximum parking levels

(CP: M5.O, GSP p89)

The City's draft Comprehensive Plan recommends eliminating parking minimums and considering parking maximums. In other cities, this has reduced housing costs by allowing for more housing units to be built.

Manage the curbside for greater accessibility

(CP: M1.I, M5.N, M5.Q, M5.S, GSP p94-95, CJP: p77)

The City should complete a Curbside Management Plan including: Clear standards for prioritization of curb uses, with more accessible parking spaces and loading zones in business districts; Improvements to the Overnight Parking Permit Program to be more intuitive and incentivize participation; More flexible parking meter rates to incentivize shorter duration parking in high-demand areas and longer-duration parking in lower-demand areas; A program for businesses and residents to create parklets within the parking lane adjacent to their location; and expansion of the snow parking pilot program.

Provide more and better bike parking

(CP: M2.D, M4.E, M4.I, GSP p95)

Actively educate and encourage property owners and business owners to replace sub-standard bike parking infrastructure with better racks, potentially even through a program to partially subsidize the new infrastructure. Expand the number of locations with secure bike parking especially at City-owned facilities and work with stakeholders at the train station to offer secure bike parking there. Add additional standard bike racks to the public right-of-way.

Encourage employers & universities to incentivize non-car transportation options

(CP: M1.K, M4.J, CJP: p75)

Encourage employers and universities to actively promote walking, bicycling, and transit to their communities, to provide subsidized transit passes to their communities and to phase out subsidies for parking, starting with providing employees who do not use the parking the opportunity to receive the equivalent employee benefit to the parking subsidy. Collaborate with universities to improve routes for walking and bicycling near campuses and establish on-street parking policies to mitigate the impact of colleges and other major attractions, such as resident-only parking permits or enforced time limits on parking in impacted areas.

Improve bike- and scooter-share programs

(CP: M4.F, CJP p75)

The City should continue to facilitate shared micromobility options with the following improvements: Improve financial accessibility, potentially by expanding use of the reduced-fare “access” plans; improve parking compliance by requiring devices to be left only in designated parking corrals, at least in the highest-demand areas of the city; improve service levels by ensuring that sufficient distribution of vehicles in good working order are available; and consider establishing a publicly-owned bike share system similar to the model used in Boston’s bike share system.

Expand car-sharing coverage throughout the city

(Toole)

Car-sharing is available to the general public in approximately 30 Zipcar locations throughout the city, primarily clustered Downtown and on College Hill. To be usable by more people, opportunities should be evaluated to add shared vehicles accessible to the public within a quarter-mile walk of as many City residents as possible.

Discourage large vehicles by considering weight-based fees that reflect the increased safety risk, climate harm, and road damage large vehicles create.

(Toole)

Large vehicles contribute a disproportionate amount to street safety issues, pollution, and damage to roadways. The City should incentivize smaller vehicles, starting by ensuring city fleet vehicles and contractors’ vehicles meet emerging direct vision standards and are equipped with safety devices such as side guards (“lateral protective devices”). Additional incentives could take the form of registration fees, excise taxes, parking fees, speeding tickets, working with the State on tiered highway tolls, or other road user fees scaled to the weight of the vehicle.

Study evidence-based tools to mitigate traffic congestion

(CP: M5.B)

The RI Congestion Mitigation Plan identifies locations where traffic congestion is especially pronounced around the state. In addressing those locations, traffic safety must be prioritized, and solutions should be designed for typical conditions over a 24-hour period, not just peak periods.

Consider supplementing State incentives for e-bikes with a City incentive

(CP: M4.H)

The state rebate for electric bicycles provides the lesser of \$350 or 30% of the cost of an e-bike, or \$750 / 75% for income-qualifying residents. Some cities have begun offering local rebates for electric bike purchases as well. The City should explore this possibility.

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