

Tacoma Vision Zero Action Plan Inaugural Annual Progress Report (Sept 2022-Sept 2024)

Introduction

Tacoma began its journey to Vision Zero in 2020 through the adoption of Resolution No. 40559, committing to Vision Zero and the goal of zero traffic fatalities and serious injury crashes in Tacoma by 2035. The commitment continued with the completion of the Vision Zero Action Plan in 2022, which outlined strategic steps to achieve this ambitious target.

The Inaugural Vision Zero Annual Progress Report provides an update on progress toward the actions outlined in the 2022 Vision Zero Action Plan, including crash analysis, progress, challenges, partnerships, and next steps. In line with the Vision Zero Action Plan Transformative Action 1.2, the report will be provided to the City Council, the Transportation Commission, the Bicycle Pedestrian Technical Advisory Group, and the public. Sharing the progress and insights aims to foster transparency and accountability as efforts to enhance road safety across Tacoma continue. This report is considered the first, covering the period from September 2022 to September 2024. Moving forward, the report will be created and distributed annually.

Vision Zero and the Safe Systems Approach

Vision Zero utilizes the Safe System Approach. Unlike traditional traffic safety methods that might tolerate a certain level of risk, Vision Zero acknowledges that while human error is unavoidable, death and severe injury are not. The Safe Systems Approach involves five overlapping elements. Relying on just one element alone to prevent death and serious injury is not sufficient. This approach emphasizes shared responsibility and proactive measures across all aspects of road safety—ranging from roadway design and vehicle technology to the roles of policymakers, planners and engineers, state agencies, and road users.



Pivotal components of the Safe Systems Approach are Safer Roads and Safer Speeds. This involves designing roadways that reduce crash severity, account for human error, and provide physical separation among vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. It also includes implementing infrastructure that slows vehicle speeds and minimizes conflicts between different road users. The ultimate goal is to make roads more forgiving so that when mistakes happen, they are less likely to result in serious injuries or fatalities.

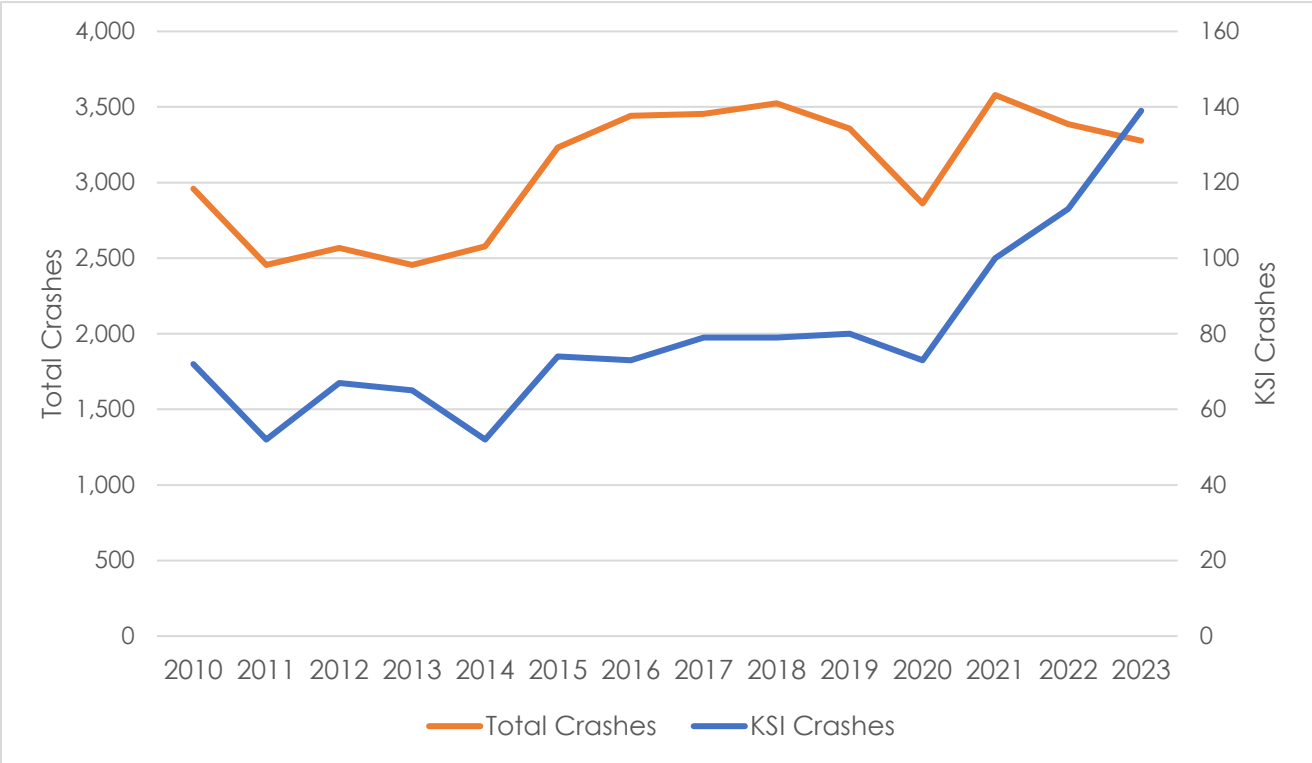
Data and Analysis

The City of Tacoma closely monitors the number and locations of crashes to identify trends and measure progress toward achieving zero fatal or serious injury crashes. This data, provided by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), is updated annually, with each year's crash data becoming available in April. For this Inaugural Report, complete crash data is available only through 2023.

Crash Rates Over the Years

In recent years, Tacoma has experienced a relatively stable total number of crashes, consistently averaging between 3,000 and 3,500 annually. However, there has been a noticeable shift in the severity of these crashes. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an upward trend in killed and serious injury (KSI) crashes, with **2023 marking the highest number of KSI crashes recorded in Tacoma in the past decade.**

Figure 1: Total Crashes Compared to KSI Crashes 2010-2023



Five-Year Crash Trends (2019-2023)

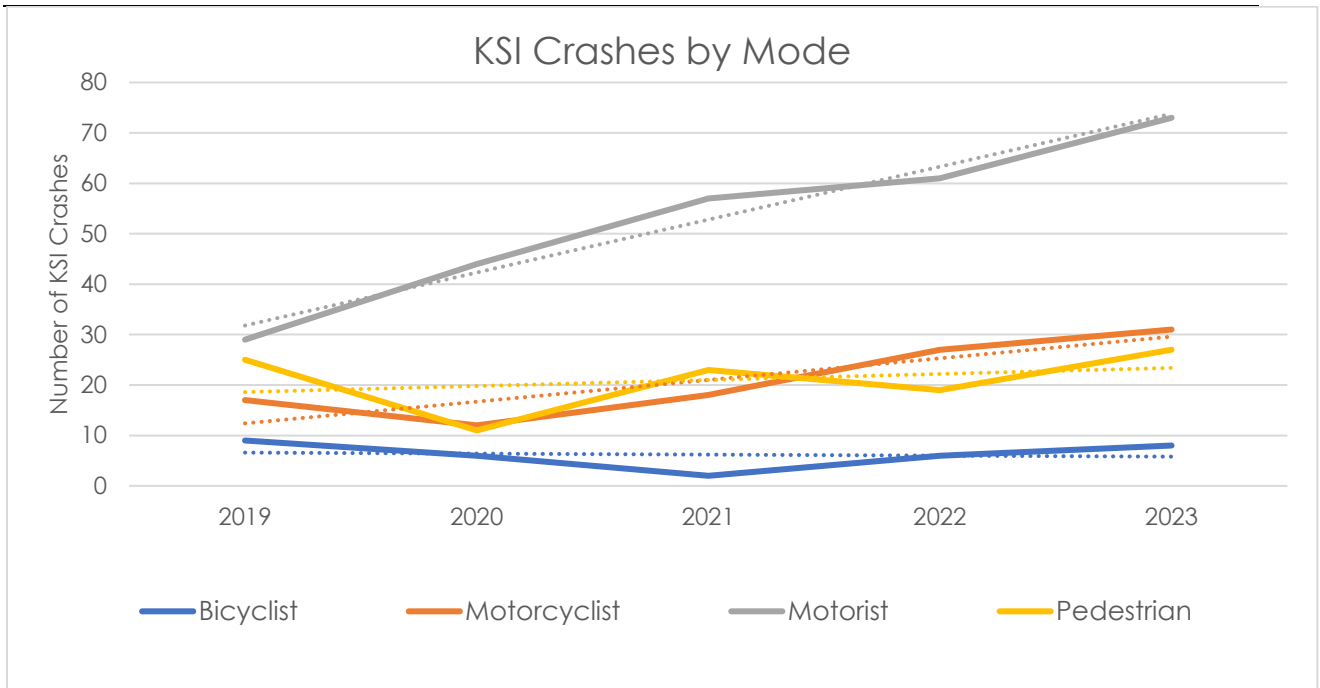
Analyzing five-year crash periods provides the City an opportunity to identify meaningful trends and make informed decisions while accounting for recent changes in traffic patterns, infrastructure, and safety measures.

Crash Rate by Mode

Figure 2 breaks down KSI crashes in Tacoma by mode of transportation from 2019-2023. Here, "mode" refers to the type of transportation used by the most vulnerable party in the crash. For instance, if a crash involving both a bicyclist and a motorist result in a KSI incident, it is classified under the bicyclist mode.

The data reveals a significant increase in KSI crashes involving motorists in recent years, while crashes involving pedestrians and motorcyclists have also risen.

Figure 2: KSI Crashes by Mode Between 2019-2023



Note: "Mode" refers to the road user who is most vulnerable in a particular crash. For example, if a crash involves a bicyclist and a motorist, the crash would be classified under "bicyclist" because the bicyclist is the more vulnerable road user in this scenario.

Active Transportation Crash Trends

While the majority of KSI crashes involve motorists, KSI crashes involving active transportation users are notable because these roadway users are more vulnerable and the percentage of crashes leading to serious injury and death is greater. Active transportation crashes, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and micromobility users, continue to rise with crashes occurring more frequently on certain streets:

- Approximately 30 percent of bicycle KSI crashes have occurred on Pacific Avenue, South Tacoma Way, Portland Avenue, South 96th Street, and North Narrows Drive.
- Approximately 40 percent of pedestrian KSI crashes occurred on Pacific Avenue, South Tacoma Way, and Portland Avenue.

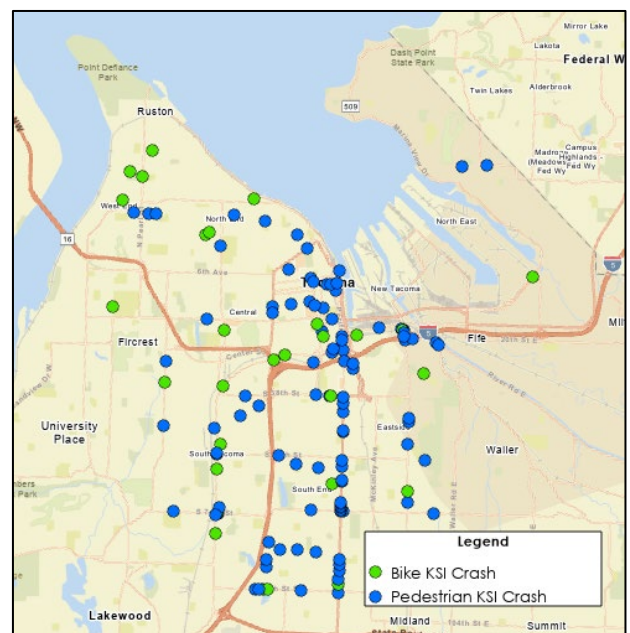
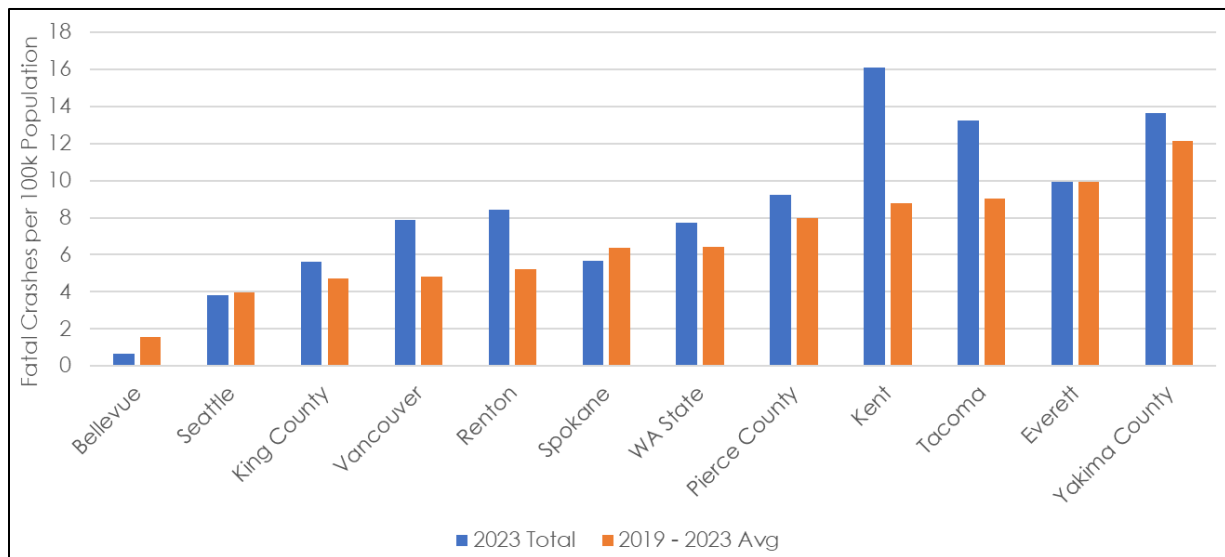


Figure 3: 2019-2023 Active Transportation KSI Crash Locations (Bike = Green, Pedestrian = Blue)

Comparative Crash Rates

Tacoma's fatal crash rates are notably higher than the state average. Figure 4 compares crashes involving a fatality per 100,000 residents across Washington State cities and counties, including Tacoma and the state average. It displays average annual crash fatality rates from 2019-2023 in orange and 2023 crash fatality rates in blue. Data is from census records and the Washington State Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC), and it excludes fatalities on Interstates and US highways.

Figure 4: Fatal Crashes per 100,000 Residents



Council District-Level Crash Patterns

The distribution of KSI crashes across Tacoma's Council Districts reveals significant differences. District Five has a notably high rate of KSI collisions, indicating that this district experiences a disproportionate number of severe crashes.

Table 1: Number of KSI Collisions by Council District

District	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Avg	%
1	5	5	9	4	7	6	6%
2	17	15	23	25	33	22.6	22%
3	11	19	19	21	27	19.4	19%
4	22	14	23	25	29	22.6	22%
5	24	21	26	40	43	30.8	31%
Total	79	74	100	115	139	101.4	100%

Equity Analysis

The majority of KSI crashes continue to occur in areas categorized as Very Low and Low Opportunity according to the City's Equity Index, accounting for 64 percent of all KSI crashes. In comparison, when the 2022 Vision Zero Action Plan was created, 75 percent of KSI crashes occurred in these areas (based on 2016-2020 data). While areas with Very Low and Low Opportunity still account for the largest share of KSI crashes, there is a trend of increasing crash severity citywide.

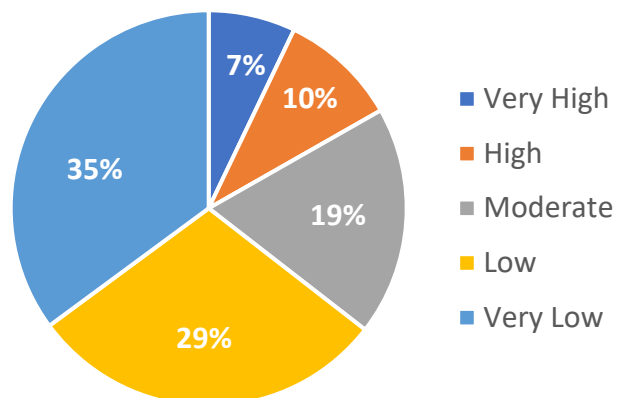


Figure 5: KSI Crashes by Equity Index Category

High-Risk Network

Previous work done with the completion of the Vision Zero Action Plan identified a High-Risk Network: corridors and intersections determined through crash data analysis and selected risk factors to be high risk locations for future KSI crashes.

The City of Tacoma manages over 740 miles of streets, of which the High-Risk Network comprises approximately 70 miles, or 9.5 percent of Tacoma's overall street network. Despite its relatively small size, the High-Risk Network accounted for 59 percent of all KSI crashes in Tacoma between 2019-2023. Notably, Pacific Avenue/SR-7, accounted for approximately 15 percent of all KSI crashes in Tacoma.

Analysis

The data analysis underscores an increase in KSI crashes post-pandemic, with Tacoma experiencing higher fatality rates compared to the state. The data also indicates an opportunity to make improvements by focusing on the High-Risk Network: targeted and concentrated efforts on these specific streets could significantly reduce the overall rate of KSI crashes. Some of these focused initiatives have begun and are detailed in the following section.

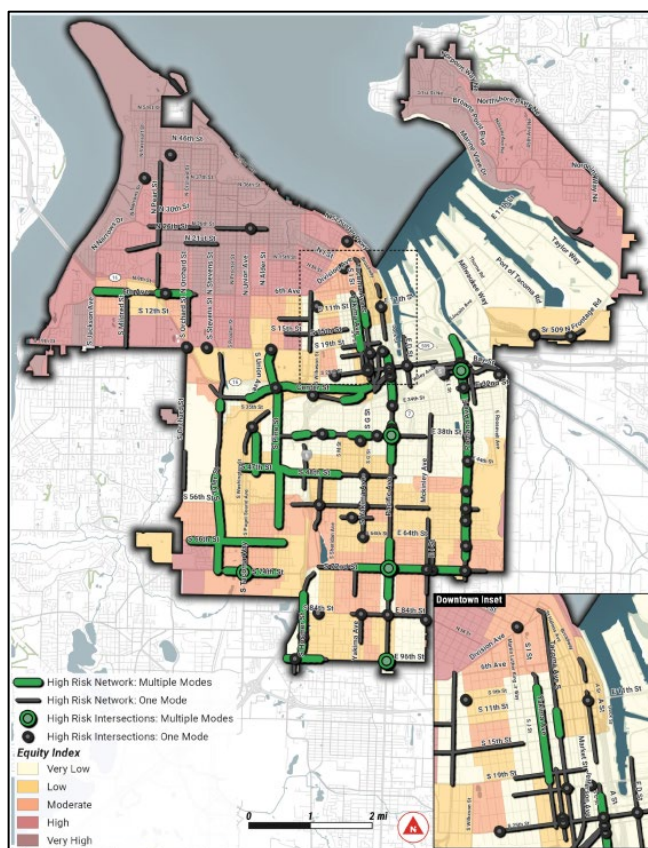


Figure 6: Vision Zero Action Plan's High-Risk Network

Progress and Challenges

Since completing the 2022 Vision Zero Action Plan, the City has focused on laying the groundwork for adopting the Safe Systems Approach to traffic safety. Key steps include hiring a dedicated staff member, enhancing transparency with a public crash data dashboard, and initiating speed limit reduction measures to improve road safety.

The Vision Zero Action Plan identifies eleven Transformative Actions and fourteen Supporting Actions. Transformative Actions are defined as actions with the greatest potential to reduce KSI crashes, while Supporting Actions are those that work alongside and complement Transformative Actions. Progress has been made toward many of the actions. A detailed account of progress towards Transformative Actions can be found in the Appendix.

The following is an overview of progress that has occurred from September 2022 until September 2024. This initial progress has not come without its challenges though. Improving safety on some of the most complex corridors in the city takes time, focused staff resources, and funding.

Progress

Speed Limit Reduction

Effective January 1, 2023, the speed limit on Tacoma residential streets was reduced to 20 MPH. Additionally, the speed limit on arterial streets in four Neighborhood Business Districts—Old Town, Lincoln, McKinley Hill, and 6th Avenue—was reduced from 30 MPH to 25 MPH, aligning with South Tacoma and Proctor, which already had 25 MPH limits.

Initial results indicate a decrease in drivers' speeds, particularly among those exceeding the speed limit by 10 MPH or more. Staff will continue to collect and analyze data while also continuing education efforts on the lower speed limits to promote broader community awareness and compliance. Lowering driver speeds remains a key goal of Vision Zero efforts. Future speed limit reduction initiatives will continue to be data-driven and are likely to include physical improvements to further enhance safety.



Monthly Crash Report

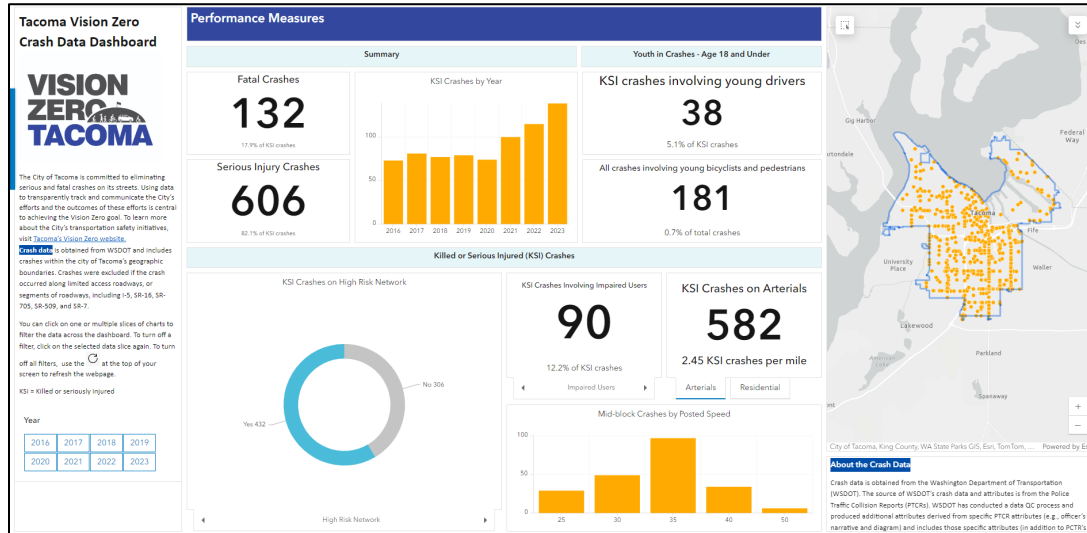
A monthly Vision Zero crash report has been developed, detailing fatal and serious injury crashes for the month and highlighting emerging trends. This report is featured in the City Manager's Weekly Report to the City Council and shared with the Transportation Commission.

Hiring a Vision Zero Coordinator

The 2022-2023 Biennial Budget included a full-time dedicated position to implement the Vision Zero Action Plan. This critical position was filled in January 2024 and is doing the important work of transitioning the organization to addressing traffic safety using the Safe Systems approach.

Vision Zero Data Dashboard

A key tenet of Vision Zero is transparency and accountability. A Vision Zero data dashboard was created to track fatal and serious injury crashes and trends. The publicly accessible dashboard is updated annually and available directly from the [Vision Zero website](#).



Safe Routes to School Action Plan Update

To strengthen coordination between Vision Zero and Safe Routes to School goals, the 2023 Safe Routes to School Action Plan update included the Vision Zero high-risk network as a safety consideration when prioritizing school infrastructure projects.

Leading Pedestrian Interval

Public Works has begun implementing Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPIs) at select signalized intersections to enhance pedestrian safety. LPIs give pedestrians a head start by allowing them to enter the crosswalk a few seconds before the vehicle signal turns green. This early walk phase improves visibility and reduces the risk of conflicts with turning vehicles, providing pedestrians with a better chance to be seen by drivers and promoting safer crossing experiences.

Statewide Traffic Safety Legislation

During the 2023 and 2024 state legislative sessions, the City of Tacoma commented on proposed updates to automated enforcement legislation, advocating for measures that support Vision Zero goals and address speeding on the high-risk corridors.

Internal Crash Review Process

An internal process now monitors fatal and serious crashes in Tacoma on a weekly basis. Fatal crashes undergo detailed reviews that include site visits, crash history analysis, and assessments to determine if any beneficial modification within established budget can be implemented. This review process aims to identify emerging trends and issues early, enabling timely responses and interventions. As of November 2024, all fatal crashes for the year have been reviewed.

Road Safety Audits

Three Road Safety Audits (RSAs) were completed in 2024:

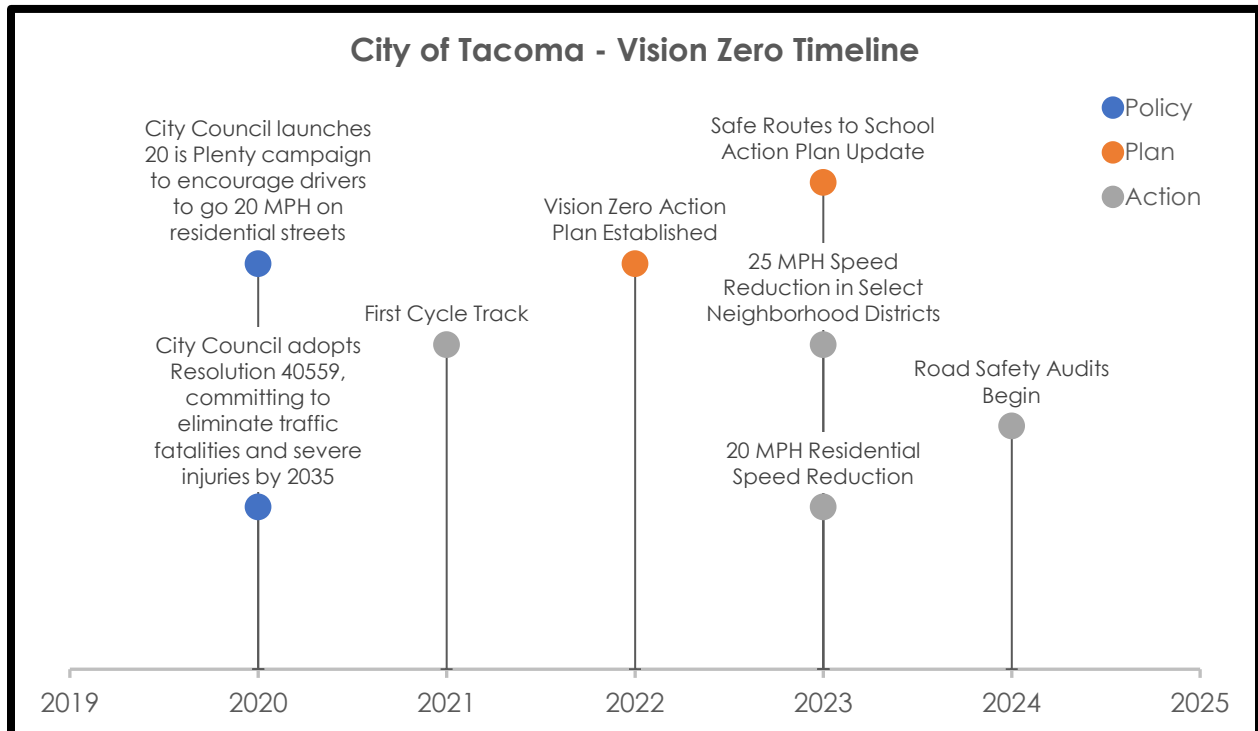
- South Tacoma Way (from S 47th St to S 66th St),
- South Yakima Avenue (from S 8th St to S 25th St),
- South Pine Street (from Center St to S 47th St).

This work involved a diverse team, including representatives from the Public Works Department, the Planning and Development Services Department, the Fire Department, the Police Department, and Pierce Transit.

The RSAs aimed to identify safety issues and opportunities for improvement for all road users. After an RSA is complete, the next step is to identify near-term improvements, systemic improvements, and begin planning, engagement, and design if a redesign of the corridor may be determined to improve safety outcomes.



Timeline of Key Vision Zero Events



Challenges

Despite initial progress in embedding the Vision Zero program within the City, Tacoma has faced challenges in fully implementing its goals. Improving high-risk intersections and corridors requires significant investment, comprehensive planning, and time. While many cities have successfully utilized “quick-build”

projects as a cost-effective and timely solution for improving safety in key areas, Tacoma has not yet determined a model for effective implementation. Funding limitations and an efficient mechanism for installation has made it difficult to deploy and maintain these types of projects at the necessary scale.

Moving forward, continuing to conduct RSAs will be important to identifying safety needs and necessary improvements. Securing necessary funding, including through grants, will support both systemic safety improvements and the initiation of corridor studies, particularly when a road redesign is needed to enhance safety for all travel modes. Finally, establishing processes for rapid interventions will also be key to advancing Vision Zero goals and addressing safety concerns efficiently.

Ongoing and Future Projects

The City of Tacoma is poised to continue its Vision Zero safety-related projects in the coming year. Below is a snapshot of the initiatives that are either underway or will soon be launched.

Portland Avenue Vision Zero Project

Portland Avenue is included in the High-Risk Network and has the second-highest annual average of total KSI crashes, making it a priority corridor in the Vision Zero Action Plan. The City won a planning and design grant in 2023 to work with the community to redesign the corridor to make it safer for all road users. The project is anticipated to kick-off in spring 2025.

Road Safety Audits – Continuation and Next Steps

Implementation of countermeasures will commence, as funding allows, for the recommendations from the three RSAs completed in 2024. Additionally, three more RSAs will be completed in 2025. The identification of these future corridors will consider the established High-Risk Network and ongoing data analysis.

Automated Enforcement Expansion

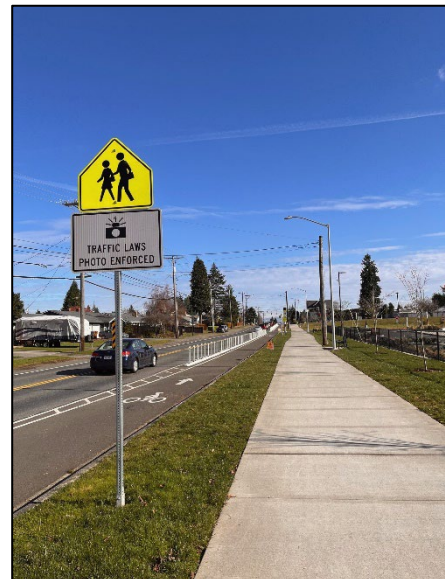
With the passage of HB 2384 by the 2024 Washington State legislature, municipalities now have more ability to expand their automated enforcement programs. The City of Tacoma is currently assessing how to expand the program, focusing on both effectiveness and equity beyond the requirements of the new legislation.

Pilot Project: Video Analytics

One intersection from each RSA corridor will be selected for detailed analysis using video analytics. Footage captured at these intersections will record the movements of pedestrians, motorists, and bicyclists over several days. This video will be analyzed with third-party software to identify trends and near misses, helping to better identify effective safety countermeasures to enhance intersection safety.

Transportation Master Plan Update

The City is updating its Transportation Master Plan and will strengthen Vision Zero efforts by embedding safety as a key criterion in project prioritization. The updated plan will include policies and strategies that focus on reducing vehicle speeds, improving pedestrian and bicyclist safety, and addressing the High-Risk Network.



Right-of-Way Design Manual Update

The Right-of-Way Design Manual is being updated to better align with the Safe System Approach, with completion on track for 2025. Key changes will include updating how design speeds are set, enhancing guidance on how to select an appropriate cross-section to support safety and multimodal access, and expanding the toolbox of traffic calming devices. The updates will consider the latest research on roadway safety design. This manual will be referenced in the development of future infrastructure projects, supporting the City to take an even more proactive approach to safety.

Grant Funding Opportunities

Safety is an expanding area for grant funding at both state and federal levels, offering crucial resources to achieve Vision Zero goals. The RSAs completed this year and planned for future years are anticipated to facilitate future grant projects, though meeting grant match requirements remains a challenge.

Education and Outreach

There is a need to continue educating the community about the 20 MPH speed limits. To continue this education, Public Works is utilizing the artistic skills of the Public Works Artist in Residence to develop outreach materials. Additionally, using grant funding from the WTSC, a future campaign will be created to address pedestrian and bicycle safety laws, including the importance of stopping for pedestrians.

Partnerships and Collaboration

Traffic safety is a shared responsibility that involves multiple sectors and stakeholders making partnerships essential to achieving Vision Zero. Government agencies, community organizations, internal city departments, and residents must work together to address the complex factors contributing to crashes. Collaborative efforts enable the pooling of resources, expertise, and local insights. Without these partnerships, the goal of eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries becomes much harder to achieve.

City of Tacoma Planning and Development Services Neighborhood Planning

The Vision Zero program collaborated with Neighborhood Planning on two projects. For the McKinley Neighborhood Plan, the partnership focused on installing a quick-build bulb-out at a key intersection, designed to slow down drivers and improve pedestrian safety. For the South Tacoma Way Neighborhood Plan, the collaboration involved conducting an RSA along South Tacoma Way, assessing conditions and identifying specific interventions to enhance safety for all road users.

Sound Transit and Pierce Transit

The City of Tacoma works closely with Pierce Transit and Sound Transit to enhance access and safety at key transit locations and corridors. As part of Sound Transit's South Tacoma Station expansion, funds are being allocated to improve safety and access. Tacoma's collaboration with Pierce Transit aligns with its long-term planning to improve bus service, aiming to boost overall transit safety and efficiency. Additionally, Pierce Transit has contributed valuable insights during RSAs to support transit-related infrastructure improvements.

Pierce County

Pierce County is in the process of developing a Vision Zero Action Plan. Tacoma's Vision Zero Coordinator is in a Leadership Group to provide guidance on Pierce County's Plan, working to align their plan with Tacoma's Vision Zero Action Plan.

King County and Other Washington State Municipalities Peers

Tacoma's Vision Zero Coordinator meets monthly with King County's Target Zero team and Vision Zero practitioners from other cities. These gatherings facilitate the exchange of resources, ideas, and lessons learned. In June 2024, King County hosted a conference focused on state-wide safety initiatives, which Tacoma's Vision Zero Coordinator attended.

Washington Traffic Safety Commission

The City of Tacoma is supporting the state's goal of reaching Target Zero by hosting the Pierce County Target Zero Manager position. The position is focused on improving traffic safety culture and encouraging safe travel behaviors through public messaging that emphasizes positive community norms.

The WTSC is in the process of updating the state's Target Zero Plan. Tacoma's Vision Zero Coordinator has contributed comments on updates to the Target Zero safety action plan, ensuring alignment with local needs. Additionally, the WTSC is a key partner in Tacoma's Vision Zero efforts. They provide essential grant funding for various safety projects and initiatives in the city.

Federal Highway Administration

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is a partner in Tacoma's Vision Zero efforts, offering valuable resources and training. This year, FHWA-sponsored Tacoma's Vision Zero Coordinator to attend a peer-to-peer exchange, connecting government workers and organizations nationwide to share ideas for achieving Vision Zero.

Conclusion

The City of Tacoma's Inaugural Vision Zero Annual Progress Report reveals a sobering reality: while our dedication to eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries is unwavering, the rise in such crashes—now at its highest level in more than a decade—reinforces the importance of this work.

Between September 2022, when the Vision Zero Action Plan was completed, and September 2024, the extent of this Inaugural Report, 56 people have been killed on Tacoma's streets in a traffic crash.

Communities that have made the most progress towards Vision Zero have relied on a collective approach, partnerships, and a sustained, focused commitment to investments that reduce driver speeds and prioritize vulnerable road users.

This first progress report on Tacoma's efforts toward Vision Zero highlights key steps taken to build a solid framework for the program. By fostering strong partnerships and working collaboratively toward the Safe Systems Approach, Tacoma can continue making progress toward the goal of eliminating traffic deaths and serious injuries, creating safer streets for everyone.

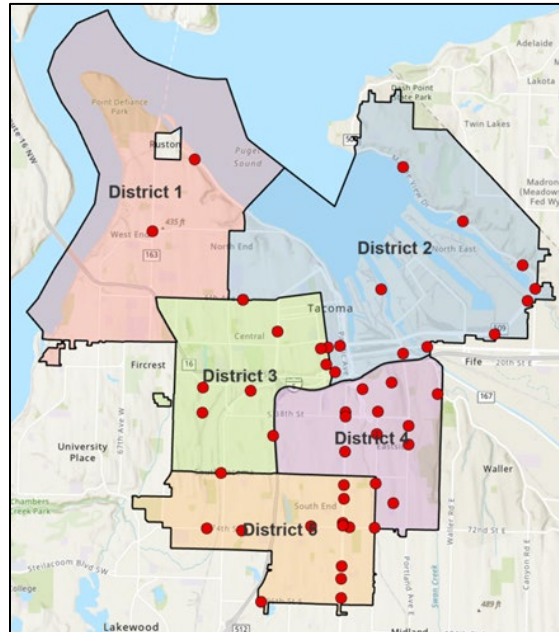


Figure 7: Location of traffic fatalities between September 2022-September 2024

Appendix

The Vision Zero Action Plan includes actions organized by Transformative Actions and Supportive Actions. Transformative Actions are seen as having the greatest potential of reducing fatal and severe crashes throughout Tacoma. The following table provides an update on the progress of the Transformative Actions.

ACTION #	DESCRIPTION	UPDATE	ANTICIPATED COMPLETION DATE
1	Update Tacoma's Vision Zero Action Plan	Updates are anticipated approximately every five years. No update available for this report.	12/31/27
1	Update Tacoma's Local Road Safety Plan	Updates are anticipated every two years. No update available for this report.	12/31/25
1	Vision Zero Annual Progress Report	Underway	12/31/25
1	Prioritize projects in areas with the highest fatal and serious injury crashes	Ongoing	Ongoing
2	Secure Funding: City funding focused on Vision Zero strategies	\$900k (2022-2023)	Ongoing
2	Secure Funding: Full-time dedicated position	Completed	January 2024
2	Grant Applications Awarded	Portland Avenue: Planning and Design 11th and Sprague Traffic Signal: Construction	Ongoing
3	Lower Speed: Arterial Traffic Calming	Three RSAs were completed in 2023 along South Tacoma Way, South Yakima Avenue, and South Pine Street.	Ongoing
3	Lower Speed: Five Signal Modifications Per Year	Five or more traffic signals on the High Risk Network (HRN) were modified as part of safety improvements, including: - S Yakima Avenue Traffic Signals - S 19th and Fawcett – Pedestrian Crossing - S 56th/I-5 Interchange - S 96th and S Steele Streets	Ongoing
3	Lower Speed: Provide Progress Update	Presentation to the Council, Transportation Commission, Bicycle and Pedestrian Technical Advisory Group, and other relevant groups during Winter 2024.	12/31/2024
4	Update Right-of-Way Design Manual	Work on the Right-of-Way Design Manual, with a focus on enhancing safety, started in early 2024 and is on track for completion by late 2025.	12/31/25
4	Update Traffic Control Handbook	Underway	12/31/26

5	Develop a Vision Zero/Complete Streets Checklist	Underway	12/31/25
5	Use Complete Streets Checklist on Projects	No update available for this report.	TBD
6	Establish Internal Post-Crash Review Process	Under development	Ongoing
7	Create Data Dashboard	Dashboard available at cityoftacoma.org/visionzero .	Completed
7	Bi-Annual Update Dashboard	Dashboard updated annually	Ongoing
8	Coordinate with WSDOT about Safety Improvements	Coordination regarding State Route 7 (Pacific Avenue) ongoing as part of the Pacific Avenue Sub-Area Plan	Ongoing
9	Deploy Automated Traffic Safety Cameras	Working to update City code and policies based on WA State Legislatures HB 2384. Will work with Vision Zero Task Force to identify additional locations for expansion.	12/31/2025
10	Host a Vision Zero Task Force Summit	A Task Force is being created to guide expansion of automated enforcement expansion.	06/31/2025
11	Develop a Vision Zero for Youth Demonstration Project	No update available for this report.	12/31/2026
11	Create Peer-to-Peer Messaging Campaigns	No update available for this report.	12/31/2027