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WHY CONVENE A VISION ZERO STAKEHOLDER GROUP?

Statement of Purpose *(Adopted by the Coalition in September 2023)*

Vision Zero community advocates have long pointed out that public transportation is an essential tool in achieving zero deaths and serious injuries on our streets. [According to VZN](#), “[c]ities with public transit systems keep cars off the road by providing options to get around. This is especially helpful for those considered high-risk drivers, including very new drivers, older drivers and impaired drivers. This translates to safer conditions for all road users, even those who are not riding public transit, as their risk of being injured by another driver is reduced when more people use transit.”

Moreover, according to an analysis by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), [traffic fatality rates can decrease by 10%-40%](#) when we prioritize transit and accessible, pedestrian-friendly infrastructure.¹

As Vision Zero community advocates, transit riders, and Regional Transportation District (RTD) directors who are passionate about equitable transportation and safe streets, we formed the **RTD Vision Zero Coalition**.

We believe every jurisdiction that is part of our transportation network has a duty to help end preventable traffic crashes. **We believe that RTD—Colorado’s largest regional transportation agency—has a responsibility to incorporate**

¹ “Public Transit Is Key Strategy in Advancing Vision Zero, Eliminating Traffic Fatalities,” American Public Transit Association. August 2018. [PDF link](#)

comprehensive Vision Zero strategies, principles, and policies in every area of planning and implementation.

Through a series of workshops and small-group meetings from fall 2023 to spring 2024, the **Coalition will create a Vision Zero framework for the consideration of adoption by the RTD Board of Directors and the General Manager and CEO.**

"Investing in transit is investing in Vision Zero. It is an investment in saving lives."

STAKEHOLDER WORK

Statement of Work *(Adopted by the Coalition in October 2023)*

- Collaborate and draft concrete recommendations for adoption by RTD that would meaningfully advance the goal of Vision Zero

Draft completed 2/6/24 and sent to RTD 2/15; **Survey Results & Final Report due early July**

- Draft Vision Zero resolution/s for the consideration of the Board of Directors, which is the policy-setting body of RTD

Discussion Item Before Safety, Security, and Operations Committee on 6/12/24; Action Item scheduled for July following additional outreach

Over 36 participants joined an intensive stakeholder process. The Coalition met as a whole nine times between October 10th and January 30th, with other individual stakeholder meetings held as necessary. Over 60 hours of meetings were logged prior to submitting preliminary recommendations to RTD in February.

Participants

- Director JoyAnn Ruscha, District B
- Director Ian Harwick, District L
- Director Michael Guzman, District C
- Director Jaime Lewis, District A
- Denver Streets Partnership
- Pedestrian Dignity
- Denver Bicycle Lobby
- Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition
- Greater Denver Transit
- RTD Riders Alliance
- ATU Local 1001
- Independent riders

Visiting Subject Matter Experts

In addition to reading existing research materials and looking into local crash and incident data, the Coalition also liaised with Denver Department of Transportation and Infrastructure and DRCOG for additional subject matter expertise in planning. Additionally, Stuart Summers & Betsy Morrison served as agency liaisons from RTD.

Working Groups

In addition to meeting as a whole, the Coalition had two breakout policy groups.

- **Track 1 - Pedestrian Dignity & Multimodal Infrastructure:** Bus stop access for people walking, rolling or cycling (including ADA, location, and amenities); pedestrian & bicycle infrastructure within a one-mile radius - including sidewalks/rollways, curb cuts/ramps and pedestrian signals; reducing car trips (modal shift), TOD, etc.
- **Track 2 - Rail & Bus Safety:** Rail stations, transit facility, Park-n-Ride and maintenance facility site design, preventing rail deaths and injuries (including death by suicide), operator training and support, accident / incident reporting, regulatory oversight, track worker safety, etc.

DRAFTING GUIDELINES *(Adopted by the Coalition in October 2023)*

Recommendations must have a meaningful relationship to Vision Zero and relate to [Vision Zero Network](#) principles.

- It is never ethically acceptable that people are killed or seriously injured when moving within the road transport system (this includes public transit)
- Rather than placing the blame of an imperfect system on individuals, the Coalition will shift the focus towards a systemic approach, emphasizing human dignity and safe streets

- Our ideas will not be limited by anticipated costs - there's no price on a human life

Recommendations are created through an intersectional lens.

- We center disability access, language justice, and racial justice
- The transit workforce is at the forefront of our efforts to end traffic violence and is a key partner in all Vision Zero planning

Recommendations are ethics-based, but still actionable by RTD.

- Recognizes that RTD is also a systems designer and thus a responsible agency for traffic safety
- Offers solutions that can be implemented by RTD (or under joint jurisdiction)
- Compels both infrastructure and systems to prevent incidents that cause harm
- Validates that most people who use transit begin their journey as pedestrians
- Provides dignified solutions for all people who interact with the transit system
- Fosters an open and transparent safety culture that emphasizes innovation over compliance monitoring
- Respects the role of the Joint Labor Management Safety Committee (JLMSC)

RTD's Actionable Vision Zero Plan: *A Clear Path to Safer Public Transit & Safer Streets for All*

(Adopted 2/6/24 and revised for clarity on 2/28/24 and 6/10/24)

CREATE A VISION ZERO COMMUNITY (Board Action)

Make a Public Commitment to Vision Zero

- Lead the nation and hire a dedicated leader to spearhead plan development, implementation, and continuous improvement.

Develop a Comprehensive Vision Zero Plan - with KPIs

- Include the community and the BoD - with riders who are most impacted at the forefront.
 - In planning and decision-making, RTD should center disability access, language justice, and racial justice.
- Establish clear leadership roles, governance structures, and performance metrics aligned with RTD's Strategic Plan. Incorporate Vision Zero into fiscal policy and budget planning.
 - Regularly communicate with the Board and public on goals - including progress and challenges.
- Key Benchmark: **Obtain recognition from the Vision Zero Network as a Vision Zero Community**

INCORPORATE A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO SAFETY CULTURE & STRATEGIC PLANNING

Integrate Vision Zero into *all* Aspects of RTD

- Foster a safety-first culture where employees feel empowered to report issues, learn from mistakes, and actively contribute to safety improvements.
- Don't place *blame* on staff or the public - embrace smarter design, transparency, and systems redundancy instead
 - "Human error" is usually a causal factor - not the root cause.
- Challenge everyone by asking, "What can I/we/you do to save lives?"

Proactively Collect Data, Identify the Risks, & Work on Solutions

- Do not wait for risks to rise to the level of CAPs and/or result in death or major injury before taking action.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VISION ZERO PLANNING

Rail Safety & Grade Crossings

- **Conduct a comprehensive analysis for immediate action:** Identify all at-grade crossings and prioritize the top 20% with highest incident/accident rates and identify measures to mitigate, reduce, or eliminate risks.
- **Address conflicts at high-risk intersections:** Analyze crash data to identify and eliminate likely causes of intersection conflicts between light rail trains and turning vehicles, prioritizing high-risk areas like Stout Street and focusing on signaling, including the use of blank-out signs. (More than 1/3 of LRV crashes are on or at Stout and California Streets.²)
- **Implement safety countermeasures for pedestrians:** Install mini-gate arms, flashing lights, and pavement markings at prioritized crossings to enhance pedestrian visibility and protection.
- **Advocate for safety improvements with local municipalities:** Collaborate on infrastructure improvements like raised crosswalks, protected turn lanes, and signal timing adjustments at high-risk intersections.

Enhanced Communication and Accessibility

- **Improve wayfinding across modes:** Collaborate with other transportation providers to create seamless, multi-modal wayfinding signage and information systems.
- **Upgrade automated stop announcements (ASAs):** Implement clear, high-quality voice recordings and integrate special announcements like elevator outages for improved passenger awareness.
- **Language Access:** Ensure all announcements, signage, and wayfinding information are available in English and Spanish *at minimum*, with plans to expand to additional languages as needed.
- **Develop SOPs for Equitable Access:** Create standardized operating procedures (SOPs) for clear and consistent communication across all stations, promoting equity and inclusivity.
- **Standardize pedestrian crossings and signage:** Implement consistent design and clear messaging across all stations, adhering to commuter rail standards and utilizing universally understood symbols.

² We defined “crashes” as a light rail vehicle making contact with an automobile or pedestrian, surveying RTD data from 2017-2023

- **MUTCD:** Ensure that all signage is MUTCD-compliant where applicable.
- **ADA:** Conduct an internal ADA review and empower our advisory committees in decision-making; have joint advisory meetings with O&S

First / Last Mile & Modal Shift

- **Partner with Lyft:** Implement a first/last-mile program offering discounted Lyft rides to connect passengers to and from RTD stations, encouraging modal shift. (Subject to ADA compliance.)
- **Park-n-Rides:** Update all Park-n-Ride designs to incorporate “kiss n ride” (drop off) areas; eliminate parking minimums or standards
- **Bike-friendly:** Create minimum *bike storage standards*

TOD & Land Use

- **Evaluate all PnRs and assess for TOD use:** Encourage development on unused lots/land; consider a pilot for free parking at certain PnRs like CDOT (to encourage *carpool*)
- **Housing:** Lobby the legislature to permit RTD to sell or lease land for less than its assessed value for affordable housing developers; update current TOD policy to encourage sale of RTD land for the purpose of dense, walkable housing development

Accessible & Safe Pedestrian Routes

- **Address local infrastructure gaps:** Partner with municipalities to improve pedestrian access to stations (particularly in areas adjacent to Peoria Station) - as well as *station design* itself - focusing on sidewalk connections, lighting, and signage. Use data-driven insights for targeted interventions.
- **Adopt DRCOG Vision Zero Guidelines**, i.e.:
 - For signalized intersections, place stops at the far side. (Far-side bus stops are located after an intersection, allowing the vehicle to pass through the intersection before stopping for the passenger loading and unloading a bus.)
 - For non-signalized intersections, place bus stops and pedestrian crossings in close proximity (‘co-locate’) to allow people riding transit to cross the street safely
- **Bus stop study:** Include ADA considerations, lighting, and adjacent infrastructure in RTD’s bus stop amenities study

- **Create a special fund** for bus stop & pedestrian access improvements, focusing on equity

Streamlined Information Access and Reporting

- **Reduce clicks/steps:** Design user-friendly online and digital display interfaces for easy access to safety information, real-time updates, and service alerts.
- **Maximize digital displays:** Utilize digital displays effectively to communicate real-time safety information, wayfinding instructions, and mental health resources in multiple languages.
- **Establish a safety reporting platform:** Implement a user-friendly platform dedicated to reporting safety and maintenance concerns (i.e., risks of slips/trips/falls) separate from Transit Watch - and ensure timely responses.

Culture of Safety and Employee Well-being

- **Implement (or emphasize) whistleblower protections:** Foster a culture of safety and open communication by protecting employees who report potential hazards or safety concerns.
- **Create a mistake-learning mechanism:** Establish safe spaces for employees to discuss mistakes, share lessons learned, and contribute to continuous safety improvement processes.
- **Labor:** Empower represented employees - both in the JLMSC and in practice

Mental Health Support, Training, & Suicide Prevention

- **Data-driven interventions:** Evaluate suicide-by-rail data for patterns and implement countermeasures accordingly
- **Invest in smart(er) technology:** Assess the feasibility and effectiveness of using LIDAR/RADAR, AI, or other technology at high-accident grade crossings, considering both general safety and suicide prevention implications.
- **Partner with mental health experts:** Collaborate with mental health professionals to review policies, procedures, and training materials and ensure they are comprehensive and effective.
- **Evaluate and enhance existing resources:** Assess the effectiveness of existing mental health information materials (small cards) and implement improvements based on feedback and best practices.
- **System-wide mental health information:** Strategically place mental health information and resources across the *entire* RTD system, leveraging existing advertising space and digital displays.

- **Expand and standardize training:** Ensure all RTD staff and contractors receive consistent and comprehensive mental health training, including suicide prevention and crisis intervention techniques.
- **Employee support and feedback:** Regularly assess staff perceptions of RTD's response protocols to mental health incidents and offer opportunities for feedback and improvement.
- **Learn from best practices:** Actively seek out and implement successful mental health support and training programs from other transit agencies and rail operators.

Additional Notes

- Explore partnerships with organizations like STAR/24-hour aid center and RTD's mental health outreach staff to provide additional mental health support
- Further investigate the feasibility of installing camera and LIDAR/RADAR technology on the front of LR
- Identify funding sources to advance Vision Zero (and pursue aggressively)
- To increase modal shift, RTD should set benchmarks and KPIs to reduce barriers to transit access (e.g., make it easier to buy a pass, enroll in LiVE, etc.)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Vision Zero in Colorado

- [CDOT Launches Moving Towards Zero Deaths](#) via CDOT
- [DRCOG Regional Vision Zero](#)
- DRCOG [Taking Action on Vision Zero Guide](#) (pdf)
- [Vision Zero at Denver Streets Partnership](#)
- [Boulder Vision Zero Action Plan](#)
- [City & County of Denver Vision Zero](#)

Vision Zero Planning

- [Resource Library](#) via Vision Zero Network

- [Harnessing Public Health Principles for Vision Zero: Near and Long-Term Strategies](#) via Vision Zero Network
- [What is a Safe Systems Approach?](#) via USDOT

Safety Culture & Worker Safety in Transportation

- [Safety Culture](#) via US Federal Highway Administration
- [Safety Culture](#) via European Union Agency for Railways
- [Working Together to Keep Railroad Workers Safe](#) via US Dept of Labor
- [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking: Rail Transit Roadway Worker Protection](#) via FTA (pdf presentation)

Other

- [Cities With Higher Public Transit Use Can Cut Their Road Traffic Death Rate in Half](#) via APTA at Politico
- [How a Public Health Approach to Road Safety Could Save Lives](#) via Governing Magazine