

Active Living Advisory Committee  
City of Omaha

**To:** Mayor Jean Stothert  
**From:** Active Living Advisory Committee  
**Date:** October 4, 2017

**Re:** ALAC Recommendation that Omaha Should Become a Vision Zero City

It is the belief of the Active Living Advisory Committee that any loss of life related to transportation is an unnecessary tragedy. . Though human beings will inevitably make mistakes, fatalities and serious injuries should not be accepted as a normal part of people moving throughout our city. For these reasons, and in furtherance of your deep commitment to public safety, we recommend that you declare Omaha a Vision Zero City.

Vision Zero is a recognition that through a shared commitment to safety, traffic fatalities are preventable rather than inevitable. For Omaha to become a Vision Zero City, we will need to accomplish four tasks under your leadership:

1. Set a clear goal of eliminating traffic fatalities and severe injuries.
2. Have a public and official commitment to Vision Zero from the Mayor's office.
3. Put a Vision Zero plan or strategy into place.
4. Ensure that key government departments including those responsible for police, transportation, and public health functions are engaged in the process.

For achieving each of these four tasks, the Active Living Advisory Committee offers the following additional recommendations:

**1. Clear Goal of Eliminating Traffic Fatalities and Severe Injuries**

The most obvious objection to Vision Zero is the perception that the City is being unrealistic by pursuing a seemingly unattainable goal. While this objection is understandable, we offer the following response:

- **There is no other acceptable standard when it comes to human life.** While achievable interim targets will need to be set in the planning process, it would not be prudent to establish a vision that accepts any number of fatalities. Vision Zero acknowledges our inherent goal of wanting every single person who travels to arrive safely at their destination. Vision Zero also keeps us from becoming complacent about the inherent dangers of driving, bicycling, and walking in our city and prioritizes safety as a top consideration for this necessary and routine part of our lives.
- **A standard of zero deaths creates shared responsibility and commitment.** City Departments as well as many other sectors of society are currently working to improve safety outcomes. Unfortunately, this work often happens independently in silos of interest. A clear Vision Zero policy will help to unite existing individual efforts into collaborative ones, causing greater opportunity for achievement.

**2. Public and Official Commitment**

As a Committee, we believe that Omaha becoming a Vision Zero City is a logical next step in prioritizing public safety efforts and complements the ongoing implementation of our Complete

## Active Living Advisory Committee City of Omaha

Streets policy. To that end, ALAC pledges to publicly support the Mayor in whatever method is chosen to promote this endeavor.

### **3. Vision Zero Plan or Strategy**

To implement Vision Zero, it is our recommendation that the Mayor create a subcommittee of the Active Living Advisory Committee and other Department/Agency representatives to act as a taskforce for developing a Vision Zero strategy. This approach would allow ALAC to remain focused on other topics related to active living while ensuring continued participation in Vision Zero.

We further recommend that the work on a Vision Zero strategy begin with a detailed analysis of local traffic fatality and serious injury causes to ensure any recommendations are well-grounded. Additionally, actions proposed by the taskforce should take into consideration multiple approaches such as education, enforcement, and facility design. We anticipate that the development of the Vision Zero strategy would take between 9 months to 18 months to complete.

### **4. Engagement of Key Departments**

Under Vision Zero guidelines, the Omaha Police Department, Public Works Department, Planning Department, and the Douglas County Health Department are essential partners for the proposed taskforce. ALAC further recommends that additional partners to be invited to participate.

For example, because Vision Zero would apply to all roads within the City's jurisdiction, entities that have enforcement, engineering, or educational decision-making in the design or use of these roads should be engaged. Additionally, we believe the taskforce may benefit by including partners from groups that represent emergency medical services, healthcare, health insurance, safety education, equity/police relations, and economic development. Finally, it is our opinion that representation by the Mayor's office would be key to ensuring maximum participation and cooperation by the various partners. If desired, ALAC would be happy to generate a more formal recommendation on who should be invited to join the taskforce.

In conclusion, the ALAC formally recommends that the City of Omaha join numerous other cities across our great nation in prioritizing the safety of our citizens by committing Omaha to being a Vision Zero City. Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,

Mark Stursma, ALAC Chair