

October 7th, 2020

Dear Mayor Elicker,

We are the **Safe Streets Coalition of New Haven**, a citywide group of pedestrians, cyclists, public transit riders, and drivers who advocate for just, safe, accessible, and sustainable transportation in New Haven. We write to you today in the wake of a series of tragic and entirely preventable deaths in our city. Three people were hit in New Haven just yesterday, and there have been 3 pedestrians and cyclists killed by vehicles in the last month.

Milton Williams  
Kevin Anthony Cunningham  
Gilberto Molina  
Anthony Little  
Eric J. Pechalonis  
Arthur Bastek  
Amber Neal

Govinda Kandel  
Celeste Staten  
David Toles  
Julio Ruiz  
Maurice Messier  
Keonho Lim

These are the names of the 13 members of our community who have been needlessly killed by motorized vehicles while walking or biking in our city *this year alone*. It is particularly angering that these deaths could have been prevented had the city adhered to its own laws. 10 years ago, the Board of Alders unanimously approved the Complete Streets Ordinance, which "requires the accommodation of the safety and convenience of all users of the transportation system using a Complete Streets hierarchy of users, which begins with pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users." Needless to say, the city has failed: a decade has passed and our streets are not safe, let alone convenient, for its most vulnerable users.

**The time has come to stop normalizing and ignoring New Haven's traffic violence crisis.** Speeding and reckless driving are major problems in our city. Since 2017, there have been 437 motor vehicle crashes that resulted in either serious injury or death. These life-threatening incidents are enabled and encouraged by infrastructure designed for high-speed motor vehicles and a lack of enforcement. By continuing to cater to cars over pedestrians, bicyclists, and other vulnerable users, we put the convenience of drivers over the safety of everyone. Streets are public spaces and should connect neighborhoods, not act as life-threatening barriers.

Cities across the country are taking action and forming a "Vision Zero Network." Vision Zero is a strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all. **Vision Zero is grounded in the belief that everyone has a right to move safely in their communities** and that all traffic deaths are preventable. We recognize that drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists will sometimes make mistakes, and a Vision Zero transportation strategy will ensure that these inevitable mistakes do not result in severe injury or death.

Though it is long overdue, we demand that the city comply with Complete Streets legislation and move to swiftly implement changes that will ensure the safety of everyone on our streets.

To achieve Vision Zero, we request that the city resolve to:

1. **Become a “Vision Zero Community”** as described by the Vision Zero Network by June 2021:
  - Release a **public statement** acknowledging the traffic violence crisis and **officially committing to Vision Zero** with a clear time-frame and action plan.
  - Create a **Vision Zero task force** to implement infrastructure and legislative changes in line with the city’s Complete Streets Ordinance with high-ranking representatives from the following local departments and divisions: Office of the Mayor, Board of Alders, City Plan, Health, New Haven Police Department, Transportation, Traffic & Parking, and Engineering, as well as key community stakeholders.
  - Create an **emergency fund of \$500,000** to be used at the discretion of the task force in its first 12 months to implement changes toward Vision Zero.
  - Establish **inclusive and representative processes** to ensure an equitable approach to Vision Zero and commit to **publicly reported measurable benchmarks** to provide safe transportation options for all road users in all parts of the city to ensure equitable outcomes.
2. Immediately **implement city policies** and actively **advocate for state legislation** that have been proven to be effective in reducing traffic injuries and fatalities:
  - Actively support **automated enforcement** by calling on state officials to pass legislation and by designing a municipal pilot study at high-incident intersections and around schools.
  - Commit to establishing and enforcing a **strict 20 MPH speed limit** on streets and arterial roads in New Haven deemed appropriate by the task force.
  - Develop and begin implementation of a **city-wide “neighborhood greenway network”**: residential streets designed to prioritize walking and bicycling, which improve safety, keep speeds low, and provide access to parks, schools, shops, and restaurants.
  - Require all city-owned trucks and city-contracted vendors to be equipped with: **side guards, convex mirrors, cross-over mirrors, and blind-spot awareness decals.**
  - **Annually measure and reevaluate traffic safety initiatives** with the goal of reducing the number of traffic-related injuries and fatalities on city streets and arterial roads by 50% by 2021, 75% by 2022, and 100% by 2023.

From the Safe Streets Coalition of New Haven

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