
Case Study A.3. 2020 Vision Zero: Speed Management—Fremont, California, USA

Key Successes

The city of Fremont, California, adopted a Vision Zero policy in 2015. Fremont's efforts to reduce vehicular speeds resulted in the following safety outcomes (comparing average crashes between 2013 to 2015 with average crashes between 2018 and 2020):

- A 45 percent decrease in fatal and serious injury crashes across all modes
- A 44 percent decrease in crashes involving speeding

The Safe System Approach Highlights

Examples of how elements of the Safe System Approach are incorporated in the Fremont Vision Zero policy are shown below:

- **Death/serious injury is unacceptable:** The city adopted a Vision Zero policy in 2015.
- **Humans make mistakes/humans are vulnerable:** The policy focuses on reducing vehicular speeds to lower crash impact forces.
- **Responsibility is shared:** Vision Zero is a coordinated effort that involves the City of Fremont Public Works Department, the city manager, the community, the police department, local advocates, educational institutions, and elected officials.
- **Safety is proactive:** The policy used a systemic approach to implement speed limit reduction, enforcement, and to reduce vehicular travel-lane width.
- **Redundancy is crucial:** Engineering (street redesign), enforcement, and education (community outreach) measures are part of Fremont's efforts to reduce vehicular travel speeds.

Background

The City of Fremont is located in the Silicon Valley area of Northern California and has a population of 240,000. From 2013 through 2015, Fremont experienced a concerning rise in traffic fatalities and serious injury crashes. The city's organizational focus on traffic safety began in 2015 with the adoption of a Vision Zero policy, followed by an action plan in 2016.¹ Prior to 2015, 70 percent of fatal and serious injury crashes in Fremont happened on streets with a speed limit of 40 mph or higher.

City staff from the Police Department and the Public Works Department prepared a data-driven, fully collaborative action plan for year 2020. As part of the effort to eliminate fatal and serious injury crashes, the City of Fremont has applied a Safe System Approach to street design, operations, and public education.

¹ City of Fremont. (2017). Fremont Vision Zero 2020:. Retrieved from https://mtc.ca.gov/sites/default/files/Fremont_Vision_Zero.pdf.

Implementation

Fremont’s approach to Vision Zero includes modifying organization practices, forming partnerships, using data for high-impact work, updating plans and community engagement, and implementing safety improvements. The City of Fremont’s Transportation Engineering, Pavement Maintenance Program, and Street Maintenance are all organized within the public works department, which reduces barriers to collaboration. Further, the collaboration between the police department, fire department, and public works department resulted in the following:

- Crash locations and near miss locations are evaluated for countermeasures.
- Project planning and design of streets is collaborative to ensure emergency response times are not affected.

The City of Fremont Public Works Department conducts data analysis that includes regular and timely monitoring of detailed crash narratives and reports (in coordination with the police department), mapping of the high-injury network, and recommending both hot spot and systemic countermeasures. Community engagement occurs through task forces before any safety improvements are implemented. The city’s actions to reduce vehicular speeds and improve safety are summarized below:

- **Safe and Complete Streets:** Fremont has adopted a 10 ft travel lane standard, which creates a feeling of greater enclosure and friction for drivers and encourages slower speeds. Since 2015, the City of Fremont restriped approximately 50 percent of its arterial roadways, reducing lane widths from 12–14 ft to 10 ft (Figure 8).



Source: City of Fremont.

Figure 8. Striped median to reduce lane widths in Fremont.

- **Safe neighborhoods:** Fremont has undertaken measures to ensure safe speeds in neighborhoods. The city increased the number of speed humps from 200 to 250 citywide between 2018 and 2020.

- **Speed management:** After engineering streets for safer speeds, the City of Fremont re-surveys streets to assess whether projects resulted in lower operating speeds. Fremont has lowered the posted speed limit on more than 50 street segments, comprising more than 20 roadway miles.
- **Community outreach:** The City of Fremont has launched a “Drive Slowly, Be Healthy” campaign to manage speeds during the national events of 2020 and beyond. The campaign includes 20 mph advisory speeds on all neighborhood streets.
- **Hot spot response:** In addition to implementing systemic improvements (e.g., quick-build crosswalk improvements and installation of pedestrian countdown signals) to prevent future crashes, Fremont implemented improvements in response to crash hot spots. For example, Grimmer Boulevard was a hot spot for fatal and serious injury crashes before 2016. The city restriped the roadway with narrower 10 ft lanes and a buffered bike lane and installed a concrete k-rail in the bike buffer.

Outcomes

The City of Fremont conducted speed surveys on approximately 100 street segments citywide in 2020, in advance of its typical 7-year cycle for citywide speed surveys. In 2021, the city released a safety status report comparing average crashes between 2013 to 2015 (before the Vision Zero policy) with average crashes between 2018 to 2020 (after the Vision Zero policy).² Impacts on crashes included a 45 percent reduction in the number of fatal and serious injury crashes across all modes and a 44 percent decrease in total crashes involving speeding. In addition, no fatal and serious injury crashes have occurred along Grimmer Boulevard—previously a hot spot—since the safety improvements were installed.

Additional Information

The City of Fremont achieved its Vision Zero accomplishments with no new city funding commitments and no new dedicated staff positions. The program entailed reallocating existing funding resources away from projects that did not serve Vision Zero goals and shuffling existing staff assignments. The City of Fremont redirected \$2.5 million in funding that was not aligned with the “safety first” policy, which allowed work to start immediately rather than be delayed by the regular budget allocation process.

The City of Fremont’s next plan includes actions such as encouraging State legislation for safer speeds by enabling speed safety cameras, as well as continuing local actions for safer streets by managing speeds using signal timing and enforcement. For additional information, contact Hans Larsen, City Public Works Director (hlarsen@fremont.gov).

² City of Fremont, CA. (2021). *Fremont Vision Zero: Status Report + 2025 Action Plan*. Retrieved from: <https://www.fremont.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/759/637750212463000000>.