**WELCOME!**

*Vision Zero Cities* is your space to learn, share ideas, and push forward the effort to save lives. This is the communal stomping ground of a worldwide movement.

But what is a Vision Zero city?

In Sweden’s earliest version of Vision Zero, a code of morality governed – “life and health can never be exchanged for other benefits within society” – along with a 2020 deadline for eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries.

Today, that definition of Vision Zero is changing. New traffic safety programs are being enacted around the world. In the United States alone, 15 cities have launched Vision Zero efforts in the past two years.

That’s a growth trajectory worth celebrating, but also a cause for concern. As Vision Zero spreads, let us be wary of spreading thin.

Already, we are seeing broad interpretations of Vision Zero: a focus on education over engineering in some places, an isolated concern for pedestrians in others. Here in New York City, when Vision Zero is mentioned, the goal of eliminating serious injuries is often left out.

My hope is that on the following pages, we can establish Vision Zero’s bedrock.

Historically, traffic safety has been presented as a three-legged stool, with our ability to save lives in traffic resting steadfastly on a platform of enforcement, engineering and education.

I would argue that these “three E’s” are just tactics. In time, new traffic safety tools will be developed and old ones will become obsolete.

Rather, we need to talk less about “how” and more about “why.” The tools in the toolbox are not as important as the moral brand on the outside – that for our movement, human life matters above all else. There is nothing more meaningful than preventing this brand from being watered down, and no more significant work for you and me than protecting our common definition of Vision Zero.

In the following pages, you will hear from Vision Zero experts of every stripe, from the grassroots to the highest echelons of government, from Mexico City to Sweden to San Antonio, about their unique efforts to save lives.

They all agree on one thing: the need to ensure that what Vision Zero means today is what Vision Zero means tomorrow. In every city, in every language, we must be prioritizing human life.

Embarking on Vision Zero has become a trend around the world. I believe the collection of thinkers and doers featured here is proof-positive that the growth of this global movement will accelerate local progress, especially if we keep talking and collaborating, and we continue to make our own criteria for the authenticity of Vision Zero.

I hope you enjoy this first issue of *Vision Zero Cities*. Please keep up the good work.

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**BIO**

Paul Steely White is Executive Director of Transportation Alternatives, New York City’s leading advocate for bicycling, walking and public transportation. Before joining Transportation Alternatives in April 2004, he served as Africa Regional Director for the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, a non-profit group based in New York City. In 2011, Mr. White was selected to receive the Rockefeller Foundation’s Jane Jacobs Medal, which recognizes those whose creative uses of the urban environment build a more diverse, dynamic, and equitable city.

Recently, Paul was recognized by the New York Academy of Medicine for his work to make New York City streets safer and healthier.
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How to Think Big

With an ambitious plan to reduce traffic fatalities and expand access to bicycling and walking in one of the most automobile-centric cities in America, Los Angeles Department of Transportation General Manager Seleta Reynolds chose the city's most iconic intersection as the jumping off point for a wholesale vision of citywide change.
When people think of Hollywood, the first image that pops to mind is movie stars, camera crews, extravagant sets, hair, and makeup. Yes, Los Angeles has lots of this, but Hollywood is in fact a neighborhood where Angelenos live and work every day. And in the heart of Hollywood? There is a boulevard with stars embedded in the sidewalk, where handprints of Hollywood elite still draw crowds of tourists.

Hollywood Boulevard houses many of the city’s impressive theaters, but visiting Hollywood and expecting to see movie magic is like visiting New York City’s Times Square and expecting to see newspapers printed. Instead, what captures your attention are the real stars of Hollywood: the throngs of everyday people providing world-class people watching. Tourists and residents alike flock to Hollywood Boulevard in such startling numbers that at various times of day the sidewalks bulge with activity, often spilling into the street.

While this might sound like a street brimming with opportunities, the fact of the matter is that the sheer volume of people on Hollywood Boulevard creates a challenge – a potential for conflict between people walking and driving. People use Hollywood Boulevard to commute, to go to a show at the Hollywood Bowl, or even just circle the block looking for parking. Upon arriving at this unpredictable environment, drivers get frustrated and make erratic, and often dangerous movements. The intersection of Hollywood Boulevard and Highland Avenue is home to some of the highest rates of crashes in Los Angeles, with 38 pedestrian-involved collisions from 2002 through 2013, according to collision records from the California Highway Patrol’s Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System.

What should be a centerpiece of our city – one of the most storied boulevards in the nation – is really a chaotic mess from any users’ perspective. Not exactly the red carpet we’d like to roll out for visitors.

This has been an enduring issue for generations, and no one understands this tension better than Councilmember Mitch O’Farrell, who along with Mayor Eric Garcetti designated Hollywood Boulevard one of 15 “Great Streets” in Los Angeles, with targeted attention, resources, and partnership from the city.

The story of how the L.A. Department of Transportation (LADOT) worked with the City Council Office and the community to install a basic pedestrian safety improvement – a scramble crosswalk – under the banner of a fresh new Vision Zero initiative sounds simple. But what sounds simple is much more complex than meets the eye. Our story presents a few universal lessons for any city looking to build success for a Vision Zero project. Roll tape!

You should start big.

The intersection of Hollywood and Highland is iconic. At the northwest corner, the Dolby Theater and the Hollywood & Highland Entertainment Center draw residents for shopping, tourists for selfies, and business people for conferences. This mega-complex sits atop a Metro Red Line station, with an average monthly ridership of over 180,000 people. In the 900 feet between Highland Avenue and Orange Drive, there are three major theaters, a Hard Rock Café, and a Madame Tussauds wax museum. Of all the streets in Los Angeles, Hollywood Boulevard is likely the one that Angelenos know the best.

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**BIO**

**Seleta Reynolds** is General Manager of the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) under Mayor Eric Garcetti, responsible for implementing Great Streets for Los Angeles, a plan to reduce traffic fatalities, double the number of people riding bikes, and expand access to integrated transportation choices for the region. Ms. Reynolds has over 17 years of transportation experience throughout the United States, and is President of the National Association of City Transportation Officials, a board member of the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals, and participant in the Women’s Transportation Seminar and Transportation Research Board.

**Nat Gale** is Senior Project Coordinator for Vision Zero at LADOT.
In cities, there is a tendency to shy away from changing iconic locations like Hollywood & Highland, and instead focus on “low-hanging fruit” projects. Especially with the constant threat of opposition, or even litigation, it is easier to choose projects that don’t have any potential for challenges. However, the big scary, problem areas – which are often the iconic ones – demand attention for three reasons. First, everyone is familiar with the issues at these locations. Every city has a Hollywood Boulevard; just think of the street that most people love to hate, where people share stories about getting stuck in traffic, or what to avoid during rush hour. It’s likely that part of the issue is conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles. If you can frame a project around solving these conflicts, you’re off to a good start.

Second, success at a highly visible location tees you up for even greater change, because people are familiar with the project’s success and accustomed to the changes. If it can work at one of the most problematic intersections in Los Angeles, it can certainly work elsewhere.

Last, by focusing on locations where data demonstrates there are major issues, you will be able to have the biggest impact. In Los Angeles, we have a short-term goal of 20% reduction in traffic deaths by 2017, and we won’t get there if our to-do list is only low-hanging fruit. We must tackle the areas where the data demonstrates a need, no matter how potentially sticky the topic.

Find your catalyst, and capitalize.
Critical to the success of implementing a scramble crosswalk at Hollywood and Highland was taking advantage of a catalytic moment. The clear catalyst here is Councilmember O’Farrell, who set the course for this important pedestrian safety project. The only reason the LADOT was given the opportunity to make this monumental change is because of his leadership. In fact, the “launch” of the pedestrian scramble project happened at a community meeting where he shared plans to install the scramble. That seemingly small announcement made news the next day, and our team was off to the races.

Every project needs a champion. It may not always be an elected official who helps set the course for improvement, although it certainly helps. Similar projects are set in motion due to community leaders, residents and businesses alike. No matter what, don’t let your moment go to waste, and be prepared to take big, bold steps once your catalyst surfaces.

Make it benefit everyone.
The not-so-secret sauce of our industry is just how much transportation is tied to happiness and quality of life. If a transportation »We must tackle the areas where the data demonstrates a need, no matter how potentially sticky the topic. «
project is truly successful, it should benefit everyone. With this in mind, our engineers got to work. First, this project was good for the LADOT. We got to experiment with new concepts, and continue to still tweak intersection elements based on observed operation and collected data. Of course, the scramble was designed with state and national standards for pedestrian safety in mind, but we also wanted the intersection to still work for vehicle phases. This led to a special set of detector loops at a few nearby locations to prevent gridlock. This project will set a new standard for how our department tracks the success of a safety project.

Redesigning the intersection of Hollywood and Highland was also good for our partners in the city of L.A. We worked directly with the Council Office, the local business community, and the Los Angeles Police Department to craft an effective education and outreach strategy, including traditional outreach methods: flyers, local media, and LADOT Traffic Officers on hand during the first few days of operation. We also asked Police Cadets to walk the beat in the area, helping to educate people on the coming changes. On the day the intersection opened, we even brought out a marching band to call attention to the event.

Including every possible partner had two lasting impacts. First, it demonstrated a pent-up demand for safety improvements. Since Hollywood & Highland, we’ve received several requests from other Council offices to consider scrambles in their districts. We are now developing a process for implementing more of these across the city. This is a great opportunity to standardize a system for the installation of these much-needed safety improvements.

And second, it is just the tip of the iceberg. Before and after the installation of the scramble, we weren’t the only folks focused on improving safety on Hollywood Boulevard. As recently as December 2015, the Los Angeles Times ran an op-ed calling for the complete pedestrianization of Hollywood Boulevard. Imagine how a project of this magnitude could be good for everyone, and would build a red carpet worthy of Angelenos and tourists alike. From an unplanned announcement at a community meeting to parading diagonally through the most iconic intersection in Hollywood, this is how starting with the transformation of an iconic street can set the tone for remarkable change in any city. Today, we have an intersection in L.A. that toasts the real stars of Hollywood – the everyday people using the streets. If Los Angeles, or any city around the world, is going to be successful at Vision Zero, these are our heroes to keep in mind. By thinking big, capitalizing on a catalytic moment, and making the project work for everyone, we can make sure that these everyday heroes are safe, protected and live long, happy lives on truly extraordinary streets.
MARCO CONNER

Racial Inequity in Traffic Enforcement

With the Black Lives Matter movement encouraging a hard look at police enforcement nationwide, Marco Conner proposes that equity is inseparable from Vision Zero and presents a framework for taking up the challenge of racism in traffic enforcement.
The message of the Black Lives Matter movement has permeated institutions across America, but in large part, transportation planners have opted out. It’s time for that to change.

As Vision Zero policies are adopted by cities and countries around the world, equity, or a lack thereof, is a major challenge to successful implementation.

Racial Inequity in America

Equity in Vision Zero is the fair and just implementation of transportation safety measures across all populations, including race, age, gender, geography and socio-economic condition. Where inequities exist in cities, there is also the greatest and most disproportionate rates of traffic deaths and injuries. In U.S. cities, 89% of high-income communities have sidewalks, while only 49% of low-income communities do. At the same time, black and Latino Americans, who live in low-income communities at higher rates than white Americans, are twice as likely to be killed while walking. These deaths are not accidents, but the result of inadequate and inequitable engineering and transportation policy. They represent the biases that Vision Zero has inherited, and which we must address.

There is an urgent need for transportation planners to apply a broad equity analysis to “the three E’s” – engineering, education and enforcement – coupled with policy implementations that are similarly guided. A mandated equity analysis will force engineers, police and educators to consider, and make an effort to correct, historic wrongs of race, age, gender, geography and socio-economic conditions as they work toward Vision Zero.

Today, the most pressing challenge is enforcement as it relates to race in the United States. Here, institutional racism and individual bias against minority groups, particularly black and Latino people, is omnipresent, and traffic enforcement is no exception. A 2015 report in The New York Times found that black drivers across the country are up to five times as likely as white drivers to be stopped and searched while driving, even though police find illegal items less often in black drivers’ vehicles. Black Americans are arrested for drug-related crimes at twice the rate of white Americans, despite white people using drugs at comparable rates and selling drugs at similar or higher rates. From before the point of arrest through adjudication and criminal sentencing, a history of biased, racist and draconian practices have devastated generations and entire communities. In New York City, 12 of the 15 neighborhoods with the most criminal court summonses for bicycle riding on the sidewalk are primarily black or Latino, while 14 of the 15 with the fewest are predominantly white.

The Role of Enforcement

Yet, despite these devastating racial inequities in transportation, enforcement remains a crucial tool in saving lives. The annual number of U.S. drunk driving deaths decreased from 25,000 in 1980 to fewer than 10,000 today due to increasing the frequency and certainty of enforcement. Enforcement by automated speed cameras in New York City has changed driver behavior significantly enough to reduce speeding by up to 60%.

Individuals and institutions dedicated to Vision Zero cannot summarily dismiss enforcement as a tool, or ignore systemic injustices. There is hope, however, in a nuanced approach to enforcement, where areas like automated cameras, data-driven safety summoning, or the emergency response to a traffic-injury

BIO

Marco Conner is Legislative and Legal Manager at Transportation Alternatives in New York City, where he manages the organization’s legislative agenda, provides internal legal support, and monitors the City of New York’s traffic safety enforcement and vehicular prosecution efforts. He is a member of the board of the NYC National Lawyers Guild, the nation’s first national bar association open to African-American attorneys since its founding in 1937. Marco holds a J.D. from Cardozo School of Law and studied politics and international relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science.
crash do not exhibit racial bias. Here, cities can find a framework for increasing certain traffic enforcement measures, and by applying comprehensive institutional changes, overcome existing inequities.

Enforcement should be considered in three major categories: traffic-injury crashes, traffic safety violations, and investigatory traffic stops. Additionally, there are two stages to all enforcement: first, the initial police response up to, but not including, arrest or ticketing of the driver; and second, the point of arrest or ticketing, including prosecution, adjudication, and penalties.

Traffic-Injury Crashes
In a traffic-injury crash, a victim has been harmed, frequently by a driver who made a conscious dangerous driving choice, and police take action in response. For drivers involved in causing these crashes, little or no racial disparity exists within the first stage of enforcement. However, bias does occur in the second stage of enforcement, with black and Latino people far more likely to be arrested, receive less favorable plea offers, and harsher punishments than similarly situated white people, across all types of crime. 7

Traffic Safety Violations
For a driver caught committing a traffic safety violation, like speeding or failure to yield, little racial disparity is seen in summoning by police in either stage of enforcement. Because moving violations and their penalties are clearly defined there is little room for subjectivity.

“The driver’s race, age and gender has no relevance to the likelihood of being stopped,” write Charles Epp, Donald Haider-Markel, and Steven Maynard-Moody in Pulled Over: How Police Stops Define Race and Citizenship. Rather, it is driver behavior that determines police enforcement of most traffic safety laws.8 Using automated camera enforcement wholly removes racial bias.

Investigatory Traffic Stops
By contrast, investigatory traffic stops see the most blatant racial disparities, from before arrest or ticketing through adjudication and sentencing. Investigatory stops are typically discretionary police stops for strikingly minor violations like driving too slowly or failing to signal a turn. “Virtually all of the wide racial disparity,” the researchers note in Pulled Over, “is concentrated in one category of stops: discretionary stops for minor violations of the law.” 9

Investigatory traffic stops mimic stop-and-frisk tactics common in major U.S. cities, part of a policy of so-called “broken windows” policing, where minor offenses are targeted under the theory that this prevents major crimes. Indeed, these traffic stops have become known as “broken taillight policing,” where a violation relatively insignificant to safety is aggressively and subjectively enforced. The results are the
disparate stopping, ticketing and arresting of drivers and bicyclists in predominantly African-American neighborhoods. Broken taillight policing criminalizes nonviolent and non-criminal behavior, and thus risks creating opposition to enforcement against dangerous driving. Further, because the summonses and arrests that result are tried in a racist criminal justice system, investigatory traffic stops are inherently inequitable. Without addressing this bias in enforcement, we will be unable to reach Vision Zero, because all-important traffic enforcement resources will be misdirected, perpetuating linked cycles of racial bias and ineffective traffic enforcement.

Equitable Solutions
Today, remarkable technology and a deep pool of data allow cities to reduce traffic fatalities while avoiding the biases that exist in their police systems. Data-driven enforcement, which targets the most dangerous driver behaviors in the locations where they are causing the most harm, is a focused road map for law enforcement. Automated camera enforcement effectively protects against racism, removing the subjectivity of police officers, which is common in investigatory traffic stops. Cities that wish to reach Vision Zero are also responsible for helping enforcement agencies reach a less biased horizon. Educating officers on the moral significance of focusing on the most dangerous driver behaviors, providing anti-racism training and education, and reaffirming that a specific and articulable danger connected to a specific driver is the only standard for a traffic stop are all necessary first steps.

To help address racial disparities following arrest, minor offenses like bicycling on the sidewalk should be decriminalized. Additionally, police, prosecutors and courts must be fully transparent and provide aggregate demographic and case data to help accurately define problem areas and measure progress. To clear the slate, and set a strategic plan for easing inequities, cities should commission third-party assessments on the role that race plays in their enforcement and establish community-based restorative justice programs. Finally, police departments must have meaningful independent civilian oversight to create accountability and help overcome decades of institutional racism.

There is no acceptable form of Vision Zero without these steps. For all cities adopting Vision Zero, an intersectional and inclusionary equity analysis must permanently guide engineering, education and enforcement along the lines of age, gender, geography and socio-economic condition as well as race. Equity must become a fourth “E,” applied in a recurring process of analysis, implementation, and evaluation. Achieving equity in Vision Zero is not only a moral obligation; equity is a tool and tactic requisite to reach our goal.

CITATIONS
9 See citation 8.
PEATÓNITO

The Wrestler’s Pedestrian Uprising

With a pedestrian killed every day in Mexico City, the masked character often spotted defending people's right of way has become a local hero. The man behind “Peatónito” is a mystery, but his use of theatrics to change dangerous driving culture is having a very real effect across Mexico.
B y day, I am a mild-mannered citizen of Mexico. At night, I become Peatónito, masked defender of the pedestrians of Mexico City.

Peatónito can be found on the streets most dangerous for people walking. You may find him guiding an elderly person across the street, pushing vehicles backwards out of a crosswalk, or stomping across the tops of cars parked on the sidewalk. Where better crosswalks or road markings are needed, but not present, Peatónito paints his own.

In Spanish, Peatónito means “little pedestrian.” But the character I become is a “luchador” (that’s wrestler) hardly small in stature. Rather, Peatónito is a hero for the little guy. In Mexico City, where a person is killed walking every single day, pedestrians have little power compared to drivers and their cars. I created the character of Peatónito to be a superhero on a quest to restore the human scale to our cities.

Peatónito dresses as a player in the “lucha libre” arena, where the magic of traditional wrestling matches happens and regular men and women can become heroes of the people. By adopting the look of this beloved Mexican spectacle, Peatónito is instantly understood as a vigilante of the streets. I call these tactical interventions “walking urban guerrillas.”

In 1993, when Antanas Mockus was elected mayor of Bogotá, that city was plagued by violent crime and lawless streets. So the new mayor donned a cape and sewed a “C” to his chest. Super Citizen, as he called himself, hoped to inspire Colombians to embrace a needed change in Bogotá’s culture. At dangerous intersections he dispatched mimes to dance and joke, and of course make the traffic laws crystal clear. “Knowledge,” said Mockus, “empowers people. If people know the rules, and are sensitized by art, humor, and creativity, they are much more likely to accept change.”

Like Mockus, my intention was never to create performance art. Rather, I saw how pedestrians were disregarded in the chaos of Mexico City; the lack of safe infrastructure, the very inefficient minibus system, a city where the simple act of riding a bike often becomes an extreme sport. I created Peatónito to show people that it does not need to be this way. Dressing as a superhero became an effective way to engage and empower pedestrians. I wanted citizens to know and feel that they should be able to walk throughout Mexico City without the danger of being hit by a car.

“You’re not a kid,” people have yelled at me while I am in the streets dressed as Peatónito. “You’re ridiculous,” drivers yell to me out the windows of their cars. I just wave. But insults are uncommon. In large part, the effect of a man in a wrestling mask scolding drivers has been remarkable; people smile at me, say thank you.

Today, thanks to Peatónito and a lot of others, Mexico City is changing. Two powerful associations, BICIRED (Bike Network) and the Pedestrian League, have brought pedestrian and bicycle advocates from across Mexico together. In Mexico City, various organizations have formed the Coalition for Vision Zero, declaring that we will not allow any more deaths or serious injuries on our streets. Pedestrian and bicycle activists have influenced the government through protest and other democratic mechanisms.

Due to these efforts, our city is rapidly improving, with new bike lanes, safer crosswalks, better public spaces, improved public transport, and strict traffic regulations. We now have a team of citizens and public officials that

**BIO**

The creator of the “Peatónito” personality is an urban planner who prefers to remain anonymous. In and out of costume, he has advised the government of Mexico City on pedestrian safety and served as Coordinator of Communication for the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy in Mexico. He is currently working on the “Shared City” strategy for Vision Zero at the Laboratorio para la Ciudad, an experimental sector of Mexico City’s government focused on the relationship between the government and civil society.
supports pedestrians’ and cyclists’ right to the city, and wishes to spread democracy in the way that we design our streets. There are cities around the world with streets like Mexico City’s, in need of Peatónito’s pedestrian revolution. It’s a peaceful revolution, and a necessary one. Regaining our cities will not be easy, but corner by corner, intersection by intersection, sidewalk by sidewalk, block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood and, finally, city by city, pedestrians can win this revolution.

Sometimes, it takes seeing someone else’s outrage to inspire yours. That’s what Peatónito does. He gets mad for the people when there are cars in the crosswalk or drivers parking on the sidewalk, so that the next time, people can get mad for themselves.

In Mexico City, the pedestrian revolution looks like a man in a luchador mask; in Bogotá, it dresses as a mime. What mask could the pedestrian revolution wear in your city? Join us! Hasta la victoria siempre!

REFERENCES


The following is an excerpt from *Streetfight: Handbook for an Urban Revolution* by Janette Sadik-Khan and Seth Solomonow, out now from Viking Books. Former New York City Department of Transportation Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan recounts the creation of the largest-ever data-driven plan to protect New Yorkers from dangerous traffic.
AFTER
Early on a Thursday in late February of 2013, six-year-old Amar Diar-rassouba and his older brother approached the intersection of 116th Street and First Avenue in East Harlem, the final crosswalk in their daily walk to Public School 155. When the light turned green, the driver of a tractor-trailer on 116th Street started to turn right onto First Avenue, into the crosswalk where Amar started crossing with his brother. The driver claimed he never saw the boys and didn’t notice anything as he drove through the intersection and over Amar. He continued driving before someone flagged him down two blocks later to tell him what he had done.

The tragedy of Amar is heartbreaking, but not unusual. Amar was one of 177 people in New York City in 2013 killed by drivers while walking. The total was 293 fatalities, including drivers and their passengers. What was unusual in Amar’s case was that the New York Police Department issued two citations to the truck driver, one for failure to exercise due care for his vehicle and the second for failure to yield to a pedestrian in a crosswalk, both punished with fines comparable to parking tickets. A driver’s claim that he “never saw” the person he hit and killed with his vehicle is often all that’s necessary to be excused from criminal prosecution in New York and many American cities.

Another singular feature of the death of young Amar was that it was news at all. The media reports on only a handful of the most upsetting stories, usually the ones with particularly horrific circumstances. Traffic crashes, injuries, and deaths are so routine that they rarely make news. In many ways, traffic violence is viewed the same way as weather: a passing, potentially inconvenient condition over which we have no control. Even the word “accidents” blunts the impact of these deaths and obscures the causes and our responsibility to end them. A closer look at each incident reveals specific human factors that contributed directly to them such that they don’t warrant the euphemism “accident” at all. They are preventable deaths.

Nearly 17,000 American servicemen were killed in 1968, the single bloodiest year of the Vietnam War. In the United States in 2014, an estimated 32,675 American lives were snuffed out – not by war but in ordinary car crashes. Numerically, this death toll is the equivalent of a jetliner packed with 300 passengers falling out of the sky every three days for an entire year. It’s more than three times as many people killed in one year as died on 9/11, and nearly three times the number of Americans killed annually in homicides by guns. Most of these crashes involve simple and preventable actions such as speeding, which was a factor in 29 percent of traffic deaths nationwide in 2013, or drinking alcohol (31 percent). In New York City, failure to yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk was a factor in 27 percent of fatal or serious crashes, and driver inattention 36 percent.

Yet there is no corresponding revulsion or even sustained outrage at the persistence of needless and preventable deaths. It’s unimaginable that such a toll would go almost unnoticed in any other field, industry, profession, or practice.

Just as we don’t notice people walking on the street, Americans don’t see their traffic deaths as an imminent or headline-worthy health threat. The claim that “I never saw” somebody before hitting him or her should be tantamount to criminal negligence.

BIO

Janette Sadik-Khan is one of the world’s foremost authorities on transportation and urban transformation. She served as New York City’s transportation commissioner from 2007 to 2013 under Mayor Michael Bloomberg, overseeing historic changes to the city’s streets – closing Broadway to cars in Times Square, building nearly 400 miles of bike lanes and creating more than 60 plazas citywide. A founding principal with Bloomberg Associates, she works with mayors around the world to reimagine and redesign their cities.

Seth Solomonow was the chief media strategist for Janette Sadik-Khan and the New York City Transportation Department. A graduate of Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, Solomonow has written for The New York Times and his hometown newspaper, The Staten Island Advance.
to an admission of error and responsibility. People – even those who walk – are not invisible. Many crashes could be eliminated simply by the driver’s slowing down, paying attention, and staying sober.

Recognizing that New York’s dense population is a natural traffic-calming asset, we devised strategies to increase the number of walkers and bikers on city streets. We also started doing something the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) had never done before: we resolved to cut city traffic fatalities in half, to 135 by 2030. This goal, the centerpiece of the first chapter of DOT’s 2008 strategic plan, was the first time the transportation department expressed a specific target and metrics for reducing traffic fatalities in New York City.

Measuring safety is the crux of this approach, because what people fear and what actually threatens their lives on the street are rarely the same thing. What people see depends on how they get around, and what they believe makes streets dangerous hinges more on emotion and snap judgments than on data. Media headlines seem to bolster almost any opinion: clueless or drunk pedestrians texting in the street, marauding wrong-way cyclists, crazy cabbies, cracked roads, brake failures. None of these is actually responsible for killing most New Yorkers.

In the same way that people who drive believe more roads can solve traffic congestion, local residents believe that signals and stop signs can solve traffic safety problems. When a young boy like Amar is killed crossing the street on the way to school, people immediately assume that a red light, a stop sign, a school crossing guard, or a speed limit sign will solve the problem and prevent future crashes. Yet signs and signals on their own are bad at regulating anything much more than the right-of-way, and ineffective at preventing tens of thousands of serious crashes that still occur every year. Amar had the green light – and so did the turning truck driver. Instead of assuming that traffic signals and signs will keep the peace, traffic engineers must instead place safety at the center of street designs and change the geometry of urban streets to slow drivers to the speed of life. Knowing how and where to do that takes the right kind of data to prioritize safety improvements according to the danger and not the annoyance.

We attacked the problem by launching the largest traffic safety study of a city ever undertaken. Our action plan targeted not the superstitions, annoyances, or pet peeves about what made streets dangerous, but instead the actions that were actually killing and injuring New Yorkers. The 2010 study looked at seven thousand serious crashes over five years and took a multilayered analysis into where, when, and how they were occurring to find patterns. While New York’s traffic fatality rate is the smallest of any American big city, pedestrians represent half of those deaths, far higher than the rate in many other cities. That’s not surprising considering how swarmed New York’s streets become during the busiest times of day. But the study revealed a different source of blame. As our safety engineers pointed out, most deaths were caused not by a lack of signals and signs; they occurred after people driving vehicles ignored these controls or violated numerous other rules of the road.

Other details in the study were less obvious. The way many transportation departments and the media talk about traffic danger is by ranking the “Top 10 Most Dangerous Intersections” or similar, headline grabbing snapshots. Our report looked beyond this frame for two important reasons. First, safety studies often look at raw crash data that include everything from an incident when one car driver dings another in a parking lot to another where someone on foot is run over by a drunk driver. Both are considered “crashes,” but that’s a false equivalence. Second, looking only at specific intersections can obscure high rates of serious crashes dispersed over many miles of a particular street. Intersection X may have the highest single number of serious crashes, but Street Y has far more people dying and suffering injury.

The transportation department’s report took a corridor view, geo-coding only crashes that resulted in death or serious injury and heat-mapping their locations. These maps turned seemingly less-threatening corridors
into more visible danger zones, and prompted us to take on blocks-long redesigns of streets instead of diluting our efforts on an intersection-by-intersection basis. The safety data are even more definitive on streets with bike lanes, where serious crashes are 40 percent less deadly for pedestrians. In separate studies of streets with protected bike paths, injury rates plunged as much as 43 percent for cyclists, pedestrians, and people in cars. Citywide, the number of bike riders involved in crashes remained virtually unchanged over a decade when the number of people riding exploded. Accounting for the fourfold growth in riders, the rate of people riding who were killed or seriously injured dropped by nearly 75 percent. Despite the explosion in people riding bikes, there was no increase in the number of pedestrians killed or sent to hospitals after being hit by bikers. None were killed in more than four years at the height of the bike boom from 2009 to 2013. The safety data gave us a road map that prioritized the redesign of 6,300 miles of streets. And these targeted interventions worked. At locations where major engineering changes were made citywide, fatalities dropped 34 percent, and the safety results were seen in every borough. Injuries at one of the most dangerous intersections in the city, 33rd Street and Park Avenue South in Manhattan, decreased by 88 percent following a 2008 project that made the Park Avenue Tunnel one way and improved pedestrian crossings. After converting Jewel Avenue in Queens from four lanes to two lanes of vehicle traffic, crashes with injuries decreased 37 percent. A redesign with consolidated lanes and pedestrian islands on the Bronx’s Southern Boulevard reduced injury crashes by 28 percent. On Staten Island’s Luten Avenue, outside of Tottenville High School, where a student was run down in a chain-reaction crash, a traffic-calming project brought a painted median to the street, along with pedestrian islands and turn lanes, helping to reduce speeding by up to one third. As cities design and build safety projects, opponents often make the counterclaim that these same redesigns make the street less safe. Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard, as Manhattan’s Seventh Avenue is known north of Central Park in Harlem, was one of the most dangerous avenues in the city. In the seven years from 2006 to 2012, twelve pedestrians died in motor vehicle crashes along the thirty-
five-block stretch from 118th to 153rd Street. Despite the death toll and local demands to do something about it, the local community board objected to transportation department proposals to remove one of three lanes of through traffic to create a better-organized street. Some claimed that one fewer lane for through traffic would create congestion, frustrating drivers into driving dangerously and contributing to asthma by bringing traffic to a standstill. Community board members claimed they needed more information or proof that the project would work. One resident questioned whether painting a bike lane on the street would strip the street of its historical character – as if twelve people dying alone weren’t enough of an affront to the neighborhood.

Opposition from the community board ran counter to urgent demands from residents’ associations, churches, and senior groups along the corridor to push aside the board’s delaying tactics. After four years of deadlock with that board, we finally moved ahead with the support of this coalition of groups representing the neighborhood. We changed twenty blocks of the street, converting three lanes in each direction to two lanes, with turn lanes at alternating intersections. The redesign delivered the “more information” we needed: Speeding and serious crashes during the evening and nighttime dropped by 33 percent. Traffic moved fine, even better during rush hour. I have no doubt that had we continued with more outreach we would have gotten nowhere, and the street would still be as deadly as it was a decade ago. The project itself was the proof that we needed.

Streets should be safe and simple to use no matter your age or ability. City residents should expect and demand streets safe for people who are eight or 80 years old, and those who walk with canes or use wheelchairs. On top of all the fears people have of their streets, they shouldn’t also be afraid to demand that they be safer. Safety critically depends on public attitudes and expectations. The street is lost when we cease to believe that it can be better.

A few years ago, reorganizing New York City’s traffic was labeled “controversial.” Now you see elected officials, schools, senior centers, business owners, and parents uniting to demand changes to streets, inspired by the street life they’ve seen in pedestrian, bike, and bus lane designs on other streets like First, Second, Eighth, and Ninth avenues. The city’s transportation department has evolved into an entity focused on saving lives. Combining fierce advocacy with smart policy – and using statistics as a weapon to take action on the street – is part of a campaign to get people to understand what really endangers them. The statistics show that bike riders actually protect pedestrians by altering the behavior of drivers. But safety is not simply a matter of numbers. If we don’t fear what is most dangerous – the driver and not the cyclist – we are left chasing public phantoms, fatally compromising the essence of traffic engineering.
Responsibility of System Designers

Building roads that account for human error is central to Vision Zero. In Sweden, when fatalities and injuries occur, the organizations that designed the roads are responsible. Dr. Matts-Åke Belin, Traffic Safety Strategist with the Swedish Transport Administration, explores the government’s effort to figure out the best way to hold them accountable.
In 1997, the Swedish parliament adopted Vision Zero. In terms of road safety policy, this new framework was an innovation and a radical departure from how we have traditionally dealt with traffic injuries and fatalities. Before this, common wisdom said that road traffic injuries were an inevitable consequence of our mobility; a price that we have to pay. Vision Zero challenges this common wisdom and states instead that it is unacceptable that people are killed and seriously injured while using the road transport system. Traffic injuries are a manmade problem which we have extensive knowledge of how to solve. Adopting Vision Zero as a policy emphasizes our common moral obligation to eliminate this problem.

In Sweden, we went one step further, expanding the scope of responsible persons in the case of a fatal traffic crash. Traditionally, responsibility for the tragedy fell on the road user. Our tendency was to say that deaths and serious injuries on our roads are ultimately the moral and legal responsibility of individuals. However, there is a growing awareness among safety researchers that preventing crashes needs to be seen as the responsibility of those who design and maintain the road transport system, the so-called “system designers.” “System designer” is a diffuse concept but it refers to any of the public and private agencies responsible for the design and operation of various parts of a transportation system, including roads, vehicles and public transit services, and those responsible for any support systems, such as laws and regulations, education and public awareness, surveillance, rescue, care and rehabilitation. State and municipal road-maintenance authorities, vehicle manufacturers, driver education programs and schools, private transportation companies and healthcare providers are among the other stakeholders included in the definition of system designer.

We are pioneers in a fundamentally new division of responsibility for traffic safety. While road users should show respect and good judgment, and follow traffic rules, Swedish system designers have the ultimate responsibility for the design, maintenance, and use of the roads, and thereby for the safety of the entire system. Furthermore, if a road user acts irresponsibly, or injuries arise for other reasons, the system designer is responsible for taking further measures to prevent more people being killed or seriously injured. Thus, Sweden’s Vision Zero envisages a chain of responsibility that both begins and ends with the system designers.

In 2007, the Swedish Road Administration together with other stakeholders published the Tylösand Declaration in an effort to codify Vision Zero and lay down citizens’ principal rights to safe mobility, including what to expect from system designers and how they could be held accountable.

According to the declaration, there is a collective obligation borne by those responsible for transportation: every road user has to place trust in both fellow road users and the competence of the system designers. To establish that trust and allow citizens to make informed decisions, the declaration says that road users need information about levels of risk and safety performance. Users should be aware, for example, how safely a transport supplier delivers its services, how much occupant and pedestrian protection a car has to offer, and how “self-explaining” and “forgiving” a road is.

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**BIO**

Dr. Matts-Åke Belin has a long history within the Swedish government, working primarily on overall safety policies, strategies and collaboration with stakeholders. From 2007-2009, Dr. Belin worked for the World Health Organization to develop global road safety strategies and partnerships. Dr. Belin also chaired Technical Committee 3.1 of the National Road Safety Policies and Programme for the World Road Association. Currently, Dr. Belin is traffic safety strategist at the Swedish Transport Administration and responsible for the development of the Vision Zero Academy. Dr. Belin is also a researcher at Mälardalens University in Sweden, the Swedish delegate to the UN Road Safety Collaboration and the international representative for the U.S. Transportation Research Board Standing Committee on Transportation Safety Management.
Lastly, the declaration states that any system designer should have to work systematically and set in place corrective actions as soon as treatable safety problems are detected. The road user should expect that such actions are based on scientific evidence. Moreover, transport users should be able to report safety problems and be informed about actions taken to deal with them.

Yet today, with a few exceptions, the road transport system does not justify trust; it does not forgive human error; it does not indicate the level of safety provided. Until all stakeholders accept their individual responsibility, we will not reach Vision Zero.

In one bright example, the European Union’s Directive on Safe Infrastructure formalizes responsibility for safety by establishing management procedures that ensure the network of transportation infrastructure is safe. For the trans-European road network, the directive is mandatorily applied, and EU Member States can extend its scope on a voluntary basis.

Otherwise, Vision Zero, and Sweden’s new approach to defining responsibility, is a policy statement that needs practical implementation. The Tylösand Declaration is a moral framework, not a law. Efforts have been made to transfer these policy statements into regulations, and thereby formally account for system designers’ responsibility to prevent fatalities and serious injuries in the road transport system. However, it has turned out to be a very complicated process, heavily dependent on international agreements. Thus far, efforts to reinforce this responsibility largely exist outside of formal regulation.

However, the lack of formal regulations to define system designers’ responsibility for safety has not hindered other initiatives that support system designers living up to their responsibility on a voluntary basis. Formal legislation is only one policy instrument among many, and laws might not be the most appropriate way to secure a higher degree of responsibility from system designers.

One instrument being employed by the Swedish Transport Administration is conducting in-depth studies of all fatal traffic crashes and analyzing the information as a basis for raising the level of road safety. An important starting point for these studies is to map out the series of events that resulted in a fatality. Where could the chain have been broken?

Another effective way that Sweden has found to support system designers in their effort to prevent fatalities and serious injuries without legislating their responsibility is to influence their attitudes toward safety through education and economic incentives that encourage local road authorities implementing Vision Zero solutions. Eager municipalities can get up to 50% funding for Vision Zero projects from the government.

Globally, system designers need organizational structures and the allocation of relevant resources to fulfill expectations of Vision Zero.
policies. Developing a sound safety culture begins with implementing management procedures that focus primarily on safety. To that end, in 2012 the International Organization for Standardization published a new management standard, 39001, for managing a road safety system, an intervention with the goal of supporting system designers who take up their safety responsibility. Vision Zero is a policy innovation and in many ways it differs from our traditional tools for handling safety in the road transportation system. One of the most important aspects is a fundamentally new approach to the allocation of responsibility.

In other technical systems, like aviation, railways and nuclear power, we see an advanced safety culture. Vision Zero seeks to introduce that culture to road safety, too. But our road transportation systems are open and complex. The question is: Are we ready to take responsibility for this advanced culture of safety?

CITATIONS
SHIRLEY GONZALES

The Political Will to Save Lives

San Antonio Council Member Shirley Gonzales explains the need for culture change at the core of Vision Zero, and how the dedicated political will of elected officials can enact policies that bring forth that change.
Streets are not safe in any large U.S. city, but equally troubling is that significant disparity exists between cities with the least and most dangerous streets. According to the Centers for Disease Control, U.S. cities with the most dangerous streets have traffic fatality rates 400% greater than those with the least dangerous streets. Disparity exists not because of some natural, immitigable risk, but because of public policy. Public policy that prioritizes the rapid movement of automobiles over the safety of people walking, cycling, and even driving has tremendous societal impacts that extend far beyond dangerous streets, degrading air quality, public health, equity, fiscal sustainability, and livability. By shifting our priorities, and our public policy to follow, Vision Zero is absolutely achievable. To get there, cities will need elected officials who see Vision Zero as a moral imperative, and the will to rethink the very fabric, and culture, of our urban centers.

**Speed Management**

Traffic deaths and serious injuries occur on city streets not because of intoxicated driving, inattentive driving, or any other human error. Those factors are troubling, but they contribute more to crash probability than crash severity. It is crash severity that kills and maims. The Federal Highway Administration and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recognize speed as the crucial factor in crash severity. Achieving Vision Zero does not require some unresolved engineering challenge, or education to teach people how to walk safely. As expressed by the Commander of Joint Base San Antonio when explaining the outstanding traffic safety record on U.S. military installations in San Antonio, achieving Vision Zero requires speed management. There is a distinction between speed management and managing speeding. Speeding is a major problem, but more significant are travel speeds that exceed safe crash speeds. The target speed that is considered a safe crash speed may be debated, but research and experience from Europe, Japan, U.S. military installations and even New York City suggest safe travel speeds do not exceed 25 mph in urban areas, and may be lower. Experience from cities with the safest streets in the world demonstrates that compliance with safe travel speeds is essential to achieving Vision Zero. Other elements may also be necessary, such as a large-scale shift from automobile use to safer transportation modes like walking, cycling and transit, but compliance with safe travel speeds remains the greatest obstacle to Vision Zero today.

**Culture Change**

Although the path to Vision Zero is clear, traveling that path remains difficult. Slowing traffic requires transformative change in American cities. Not just transformative changes to our street networks, but to the way policymakers view transportation and land use. Vision Zero challenges the very assumptions we make as a society about how our cities are built. Most importantly, Vision Zero challenges modern culture. These problems are difficult, but they are not insurmountable. Achieving Vision Zero in any city requires an elected official to champion the idea. But a single public leader cannot alone deliver on that vision; committed staff, public support and other elected officials are also critical. I believe any city with an elected official willing to champion Vision Zero will find the support they need.

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**BIO**

Shirley Gonzales was born and raised in San Antonio, Texas, where she owns and operates a small business with her mother Eloise Gonzales. She has been working in her family-owned business for 20 years and enjoys being a strong corporate leader by supporting educational institutions and organizations making a difference in her neighborhood. She is the Council Member for San Antonio’s District 5. Shirley earned both a bachelor and master’s degree from the School of Business at St. Mary’s University in San Antonio. She has two children, Ian and Zachary, and is married to Dr. Kevin Barton.
There is great inertia behind the way modern cities and transportation systems are built. The transformative change required to achieve Vision Zero will require more than one election cycle. To elicit support from decision-makers and the public, skill and steadfastness are needed because change is incremental, especially cultural change. Elected officials who champion Vision Zero must approach that incremental change in a way that makes meaningful progress, but also builds support for the long haul.

Building Consensus
In San Antonio, I worked with state legislators to make the most dangerous road in my district safer; gave municipalities a greater authority to reduce speed and use alternative roadway design standards; and most importantly, built awareness that traffic injuries and fatalities are a product of public policy decisions. I have found success by first building broad consensus on the vision and the outcome.

Consistent, honest messaging that Vision Zero is achievable, requires transformative change, and is linked to prosperity and quality of life is foundational to building consensus. Seeking endorsement from as many groups and organizations as possible is also constructive. I have brought universities, public schools, planning organizations, community advocacy groups, government and private employers, and nonprofits on board with Vision Zero. These endorsements are powerfully persuasive to other elected officials, especially in a city that lacks prominent transportation advocacy groups.

Achieving Vision Zero will require policy changes, legislative changes, and redesigning our dangerous streets. It will require solutions that are not palatable to the public. Marching forward with those solutions before consensus has been built is politically risky. The most ardent and courageous elected official cannot advance Vision Zero if they do not have sufficient public support.

Relative to the policy, legislative, and engineering solutions needed to achieve the vision, communicating and gaining acceptance of Vision Zero is both less difficult and politically risky. However, building acceptance still re-
quires persistence and patience. The deliberate effort to build consensus on Vision Zero will pay dividends when practical solutions are proposed, debated, and implemented.

A Movement Rises
Today, we are part of an important and powerful phenomenon. Vision Zero is becoming a national movement. The auto-dominant culture prevalent in San Antonio is not unique to San Antonio. It is deeply entrenched in U.S. cities of every size where pedestrians are required to yield the right-of-way to motorists by default. This unquestioned bias, that prioritizes motorists’ interests above all other road users, reflects our culture. However, culture can change.

A parallel is often drawn between adoption of seatbelts and Vision Zero, but the scale of change required for Vision Zero is far greater than seatbelt laws. The adoption of seatbelts did not require fundamental changes in society’s value system. The movement for Vision Zero is not the equal of the civil rights movement, but the cultural changes required for Vision Zero are closer in magnitude to civil rights than seatbelt laws.

Achieving Vision Zero requires public leaders to recognize that decisions made about land use and transportation over the past 70-plus years are killing and maiming people; that continuing to make the same decisions today will continue to kill and maim people; that leaders are culpable in tens of thousands of deaths every year. Achieving Vision Zero is dependent on the public recognizing that traffic fatalities and serious injuries in our cities are not inevitable, but the result of bad public policy. Achieving Vision Zero requires the public to see the connection between their transportation choices and the safety of their neighbors and families.

The coalition of cities adopting Vision Zero policies is beginning to build counter-inertia to the status quo. The progress being made in cities like New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles; the experiences from Europe and Tokyo; and the longstanding success from U.S. military installations are accelerating Vision Zero’s momentum. I firmly believe we are moving toward a watershed moment that will result in a national movement, possibly the greatest historical event of our generation. In our lifetime, if we want it, Vision Zero will be achieved.

REFERENCES


»Vision Zero challenges the very assumptions we make as a society about how our cities are built.«
After a driver killed three-year-old Allison Liao while she crossed the street holding her grandmother’s hand, public prosecutors refused to charge the driver with a crime. With the help of an attorney, her parents used the civil court system to obtain a modicum of justice.
It was a clear October day in 2013 when we received a message that every parent fears. Our daughter is in the emergency room, the message said; we should head over there now. Our three-year-old daughter, Allison Hope Liao, was with her grandmother on their way home from the corner supermarket when an SUV driver ran her over. The driver claimed he did not see Allison and her grandmother as they walked in the crosswalk, hand in hand with the walk signal, when he made a left turn onto Main Street. The SUV knocked over her grandmother and pulled Allison under the car, running her over with both the front and rear tires. We know this because the dashboard camera of an oncoming vehicle captured it all.

At the time, we did not know what would happen to the driver. Naively, we thought that the New York Police Department would at least impound the car as part of their investigation.

In reality, the police and public prosecutor never pressed any charges. The driver was permitted to drive back home and be with his family just hours after running over and killing our child. He smelled of alcohol and told the police that he drank two glasses of wine before driving from his home in Brooklyn to Queens, but his blood-alcohol level was not over the legal limit by the time the police administered the breathalyzer test. The police issued the driver two minor summonses for traffic violations: failure to yield and failure to use due care. For both violations, he pleaded “not guilty.” A judge dismissed both violations in a 47-second hearing without ever questioning the driver’s behavior or watching the video of our daughter’s death.

At a second hearing, which lasted less than one minute, the judge decided to revoke the driver’s license for a measly 30 days. It dawned on us then for the first time that we could not rely on our current justice system to punish Allison’s killer or our news media to point out his guilt. The criminal courts failed our family, so we turned to the civil court system in hope of finding any meaningful consequence for killing our daughter. We had to think outside the box, and with the help of our lawyer, we came up with some ideas uncommon in civil cases.

This lack of justice encourages a culture of blaming the ones who are hurt or killed. If police did not arrest the driver and prosecutors did not charge him or her with a crime, people say, the victim must be at fault.

After the crash, some news stories blamed Allison and her grandmother. Rumors spread of Grandma’s neglect, or Allison breaking away. We even had a friend get into an argument with a co-worker who implied that Allison’s grandmother was irresponsible, saying our daughter was eating a watermelon a few steps away from her grandmother right before the driver ran her over.

One of the greatest harms done by these news reports was that the driver never reviewed any of the evidence, believing what the press reported. We were only able to remove our own doubts about the cause of our daughter’s death because a dashboard camera recorded the whole incident. Other families are not so fortunate. We would hope that in all traffic crashes, a full investigation is completed before conclusions are drawn.

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BIO

Hsi-Pei Liao and Amy Tam-Liao became street safety advocates after their three-year-old daughter, Allison, died in a car crash. They are founding members of Families for Safe Streets, and live in New York City with their boys, seven-year-old Preston and 18-month-old Aidan. Amy is a licensed social worker practicing in Queens, New York. Hsi-Pei provides technical support at a software agency.
Traditionally, winning a judgment in civil court will only bring financial compensation, which is never enough for any parent who lost a child. For us to reach a somewhat meaningful consequence for the driver, we wanted to do what the news media and criminal courts failed to. We wanted him to understand the magnitude of what he did and to send a message that drivers need to take responsibility for their actions. We also wanted to force him to remember the events of that fateful autumn day that has come to be nothing short of a nightmare for us.

As we considered a settlement that would be meaningful for us, we needed to remind ourselves constantly that winning a decision in a civil court hearing, just to have a final say, will not bring our daughter back. This is easier said than done, and the emotional process diverted our decision and attention many times. With the help of our lawyer, Steve Vaccaro, and some creativity, we were able to use the civil courts in a way most did not consider. We were able to open up the possibility of what a settlement could mean, and even provided some suggestions.

In the end, our lawyer negotiated a fixed financial compensation, which the driver claimed was 75% of his net worth. As importantly, the driver wrote a letter of apology, and promised to refrain from driving for five years, and pay $100,000 if that promise is broken. The driver losing his license had meaning to us. The challenge was how to enforce this, and to create a verification system to spot check. We decided on an annual background check and occasionally hiring a private investigator to confirm that the driver was staying off the road.

“I was not looking where I should have been when I turned my car,” the driver wrote in his letter to us, “and that is the sole reason why she is dead. I have watched the video recording of the incident and I now understand that I am entirely at fault for Allison’s death, and that she and her grandmother were blameless.”

In the end, we still do not feel like justice was served. Our daughter’s death was preventable, and because of someone else’s inattention on the road, she was taken from us. It is surprising and sad to see that there is so little criminal justice and that our minor civil negotiations are getting so much attention. We hope that our case inspires other people to pursue the possibilities in seeking justice for themselves or their loved one, whatever that means to them.
The Power of Automated Enforcement

Introducing automated enforcement to any municipality is a challenge, but for the technologists behind the scenes, cameras are the ultimate tool to reduce traffic violations. American Traffic Solutions’ Charles Territo argues that cameras’ critics are largely wrong, and that Vision Zero provides an opportunity to reclaim the debate.
In 1987, the founders of American Traffic Solutions deployed the first speed safety camera in the United States in Paradise Valley, Arizona – a small town in metropolitan Phoenix sandwiched between much larger, bustling neighborhoods unable to curtail increasing traffic-related collisions. At the time, we were a small company with a passionate belief that technology could make roads safer. The Phoenix area was growing rapidly and law enforcement was struggling to deal with the challenges of speeding on local roads, which were not designed for highway-style driving.

Not surprisingly, the nation’s first speed cameras were met with skepticism. Some questioned the ability of the technology to accurately match the speed of a vehicle with an image of the license plate. Others were angered by the reality that the law would now be enforced 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Gone were the days of the officer on the side of the road and the quick flash of the headlights from oncoming traffic warning speeders to slow down. Now, technology was being used to change driver behavior, and it was working.

In the first year in Paradise Valley, we saw a 30% decrease in speed-related crashes. Not long after, New York and Philadelphia began experimenting with cameras at intersections to enforce red-light running. In New York, red-light running declined over 70% at camera locations. Philadelphia saw much the same, with red-light running violations falling 48% at camera locations in operation for 12 months and crashes declining 24% at locations with cameras in use for three years.

Today, there are more cameras being used to enforce traffic laws in the U.S. and around the world than at any other time in history. What began as a tool focused on speed and traffic signals spread throughout the country, with the variety of automated enforcement expanding as quickly as its use. Today, automated cameras are used to enforce against red-light running, passing a school bus stop arm, driving in bus lanes, violating pedestrians’ right of way in the crosswalks, blocking the box, parking in bike lanes, passing stop signs, as well as violating the speed limit of a city or highway, in intersections, school and construction zones.

The technology is at an apex, but prioritizing safety has costs, and for companies, individuals and municipalities, that often stands in the way of introducing new tools. Any urban center that has introduced automated enforcement knows that criticisms follow a well-trod and largely inaccurate path: we hear accusations of privacy invasion and profit-driven enforcement again and again.

The fact of the matter is that the revenue generated from safety cameras is rarely significant enough to make a dent in the fiscal health of a city, large or small. And the data collected by cameras is a key tool for designing safer streets in the future.

According to the National Safety Council, the cost of traffic collisions in the U.S., including medical expenses, wage and productivity losses and property damage, will eclipse $152 billion in 2015. These costs pale in comparison to the toll that tens of thousands of fatalities take on society. But the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has listed red-light and speed safety cameras as one of the leading and most cost-effective interventions available for reducing traffic deaths. In California, the CDC found that outside of increased use of seat belts and motorcycle helmets, widespread installation of red-light and speed cameras would have a greater cumulative safety effect.

BIO

Charles Territo is the Senior Vice President of Sales, Marketing and Public Affairs at American Traffic Solutions (ATS). He has been with the company since 2010. Prior to joining ATS Charles worked as both a congressional staffer and as Senior Director of Communications at the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers in Washington, D.C. ATS is the nation’s leading provider of red-light, speed, and school bus stop arm cameras and is honored to partner with some of the largest and most innovative cities in America, including New York, Seattle, Washington, D.C., Memphis, Miami, San Francisco, Atlanta, Austin, Chicago, New Orleans, and hundreds of others, to help them achieve their road safety goals.
than any other type of enforcement, estimating the prevention of 170 fatalities, more than 14,000 injuries, and a combined economic savings of more than $500 million. Nationwide, road design and traffic enforcement strategies have come to rely on the data that enforcement cameras naturally provide. When a municipality turns on a safety camera, it receives reams of data on traffic volume, vehicle speeds, the commonness of violations at certain days and times, and the impact of weather conditions. For law enforcement and traffic engineers, this is a guide to understanding the symptoms and root causes of local traffic fatalities. In New York City, speed, red-light and bus lane cameras, as well as data integrations with the Taxi and Limousine Commission, were attributed to a 10% reduction in traffic-related fatalities in one year, a reduction that’s expected to climb.

The critics of automated enforcement are not quiet, but Vision Zero provides an opportunity to hit the reset button and reclaim the debate. More than 30,000 Americans are expected to lose their lives in preventable collisions in the next year. With this sobering statistic in mind, Vision Zero is a moral obligation.

For Vision Zero to work, everyone from transportation engineers to individual drivers must contribute to the effort to save lives, and in the private sector, we are no exception. For American Traffic Solutions, the undeniable, statistical success of automated enforcement has defined our trajectory. As business owners in the U.S. transportation network, like fleet managers, car manufacturers, or asphalt producers, we are responsible for prioritizing safety. If we are truly serious about reducing and eventually eliminating road deaths and serious injuries, we have an obligation to try to use every technology available to achieve that goal.

This nation’s appetite for technology is insatiable, and an unprecedented era of innovation has revolutionized how we live in less than a generation. From the smartphone and Wi-Fi in the tech world, to the mapping of the human genome and life-saving drugs in the medical world, these advances help us to live better, and longer, lives. Traffic safety cameras and sensors have the potential to save thousands of lives. They can and should be the technological centerpiece of any Vision Zero initiative.

**CITATIONS**


Vision Zero by the People

Vision Zero originated in Sweden, a turn-off for American municipalities that see few corollaries between the disparate nations. Leah Shahum proposes that this difference is actually a strength, and looks at cities around the United States pioneering a uniquely American brand of Vision Zero.
As new U.S. cities commit to Vision Zero, there is a trend in the arising skepticism; let’s call it “the Swedish problem.” The problem is not the nation itself, of course, but the American interpretation that Vision Zero originated in a nation where everyone follows the rules. Americans’ doubts about Vision Zero being possible have their roots in the fact that, in the U.S., problem-solving is a lot more diverse, a lot less government-dictated and, quite simply, a lot messier than it is in Sweden. And, the skeptics are right. No U.S. city will succeed in reaching Vision Zero by replicating the exact steps of the Swedish Vision Zero program.

In Sweden, Vision Zero is governed by a top-down approach with strong leadership from the federal government. In the U.S., transforming “business as usual” in the world of traffic safety has been anything but centralized. Instead, it is sprouting from the most local level, as cities as diverse as Fort Lauderdale, Chicago, and Seattle are changing the game from the ground up.

In a democracy founded in revolution, and rather recently in geopolitical terms, America’s Vision Zero will be populist. Today, the best Vision Zero ideas are soaked in that U.S. entrepreneurial spirit, taking a proven concept that is cutting the traffic fatality rate in half halfway around the world and transforming it to reflect our needs, our culture, and our society’s values. It won’t be as tidy and methodic as in Sweden, but it will be Vision Zero for the people and by the people, exactly what it needs to be to succeed in America. With community input, a market-savvy influence placed on culture change, and inherent inspiration from advocates, U.S. cities are creating a decidedly American version of Vision Zero.

**Seeking Community Input**

Already, we are seeing a Vision Zero that requires extensive debates and community consensus. Boston’s Visioning Lab moved beyond the constraints of the public meeting last year, engaging people in interactive “Creation Stations” to visualize how they want to get around Boston in the future, using not just community mapping but also collages, models, poems and more. On bikes or in bright colored trucks, city staff traveled to different Boston neighborhoods to gather questions and ideas from community members where they actually live, work and play. They collected people’s stories to better understand their travel experiences through their personal perspectives, including following a blind man on his commute to understand his unique challenges. His story was shared, along with hundreds of others, with residents and decision-makers citywide.

In Washington, D.C., city officials are producing, analyzing and sharing more traffic safety data than ever before, but they are also intent on balancing that data-driven approach with personal experiences in an effort to be more proactive than reactive. District staff asked residents to identify those problem areas that may never show up on heat maps of collisions. These are the unreported crashes, close calls, and intimidating areas where people fear to travel in the first place.

These community engagement efforts are time-consuming but critical to success in a country where “everyone matters” is written into the national bylaws. By allowing the public to shape components of Vision Zero, we create a support system that will help it succeed.

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**BIO**

Leah Shahum is the founder and director of the Vision Zero Network, a campaign supporting cities working toward Vision Zero – zero traffic fatalities and severe injuries. The Vision Zero Network helps communities develop and share best practices for safe mobility for all road users. As a German Marshall Fund Fellow, Leah researched Vision Zero strategies in Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands. Prior to that, she was the Executive Director of the 10,000-member San Francisco Bicycle Coalition, which promotes bicycling for everyday transportation. Leah formerly served on the boards of directors of the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway & Transportation District and of the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency.
Marketing Culture Change

In the nation that stretches from Mad Men on the East Coast to Hollywood on the West, the need to sell culture change is obvious. From attentiveness to language – like the campaign to shift from traffic “accident” to “crash” – to glossy marketing campaigns against drunk driving, we see a novel focus on how our movement looks and sounds. Unlike in Sweden, where culture change is expected to trickle down from changes to engineering and policy, Vision Zero leaders across the U.S. are consciously and dramatically shifting the way we talk, and ultimately think, about traffic safety.

In a paradigm shift unimaginable in America just a few years ago, cities from Bellevue, Washington, to San Jose, California, to Washington, D.C., are adopting resolutions and advancing plans that recognize traffic crashes as “unacceptable” and “preventable.” In Fort Lauderdale, transportation manager Debbie Griner made the distinction clear; “We are committed to changing the mindset that traffic deaths and injuries are ‘accidents.’ Instead, they are incidents that can be avoided.”

Mainstream media is following suit. Last year the editorial board of the Boston Globe wrote that, “The culture of driving has changed over time, and so can the widespread acceptance of motor vehicle fatalities as an unavoidable fact of life.” News outlets from the Associated Press to Wired to Slate to the Washington Post have questioned whether, journalistically, “accident” is an appropriate choice of word anymore.

Last year, the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency publicly announced that “the words we use can have a powerful influence on the way we view traffic injuries, and calling them ‘accidents’ implies that nothing can be done to stop them,” pledging to ensure, “that our language reflects our core belief that no traffic fatality is inevitable or acceptable. By making this small change in our everyday vocabulary, we can all help spark a change in the way we talk and think about traffic crashes.”

Vision Zero will require a seismic shift in American culture, and words matter a lot in moving the needle. Given the outsized influence that the U.S. culture machine has on much of the world, affecting culture change here has the potential for ripple effects well worth the effort.

Leading with Grassroots

The silver lining to a less top-down approach is that in the U.S., well-organized social movements do indeed influence change. In New York City and Portland, Oregon, people who lost loved ones in traffic crashes are organizing under the banner of Families for Safe Streets. Last year, families and others impacted by

>It won’t be as tidy and methodic as in Sweden, but it will be Vision Zero for the people and by the people, exactly what it needs to be to succeed in America."
traffic violence organized in more than half a dozen cities to commemorate the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims, the widest-ever U.S. recognition of the 20-year-old international event.

In New York City, these same families led a successful charge to introduce automated speed enforcement cameras and to lower the citywide speed limit to 25 mph. Thanks to their against-the-odds successes, communities across America are considering similar efforts, often led by, and giving voice to, the people who have suffered direct losses.

In Seattle, a group of citizens calling themselves Neighbors for Vision Zero regularly organize memorial walks and bike rides, drawing political and media attention to preventable tragedies on their streets. These somber social gatherings coalesce a demand for change, and often result in direct interventions from elected officials to address streets where people are being injured.

Vision Zero will require a slew of small changes to Americans’ daily lives, from the width of their streets to the likelihood of their dangerous driving being punished. Those changes will be an easier pill for Americans to swallow if they know they are products of protest rather than government decree. The respect for people rallying together to advocate for what they believe in is as American as apple pie, and it is also inherently a barometer that Americans trust when change is down the road.

**Vision Zero 2.0**

Today, in Sweden, some officials are even looking to American cities for ideas about how to move Vision Zero forward. Thanks to a unique approach, led by multitudes, rooted in culture change, and founded by the outcry of the most affected in every urban center, the U.S. is providing a real example for how to save lives around the world.

Those who are skeptical about importing a Swedish traffic safety program are right about one thing: Vision Zero is an audacious idea. When we’re done Americanizing it, it will be a revolutionary reality that saves the lives of tens of thousands of people every year.

Getting there won’t be as simple as copy-cata
ing across the pond or enacting a federal law outlawing unsafe streets and dangerous driving. Rather, the road to Vision Zero in the U.S. will be complicated, people-powered, and deeply democratic. It will be full of potholes but inspired and advanced by people ready and willing to help fill them.