

I hope your campaigning is going well and your communication with residents has been rewarding. It's been great to follow your campaign on social media and really encouraging to see how the safe streets commitment is developing.

This is your third installment of the Safe Streets Survival Guide. If you haven't received the previous installments and would like to view them, please let us know.

This installment concerns Halifax's commitment to Vision Zero. This is a really crucial safe streets topic and will hopefully be handy as part of your campaign toolbox.

Nurturing good policies is really crucial, as these are the primary method Councillors have to ensure Halifax makes progress with safe streets. It is often not possible, for example, to address safety issues through specific requests to traffic staff for a new crosswalk or intersection at a particular location. Council-led progress is primarily through their constructive involvement in robust policies and funding commitments.

I hope you find this helpful and would welcome feedback from you.

## **PART 2 (continued): What policies are in place to support safer streets?**

### **(b) Vision Zero**

[Vision Zero](#) is a methodological approach to road safety where key causes and locations of incidents are mapped and categorised, and appropriate engineering

**countermeasures** are identified and deployed to reduce or eliminate the underlying causes of common incidents and road user errors.

It may involve a change in the use of streets, for example reducing space for vehicles in areas where there are most people, such as downtown or shopping streets.

Vision Zero meets vulnerable road user requirements fully with appropriate traffic control and physical measures that minimise driver error, reduce conflict and provide robust protection from dangers caused by moving vehicles, especially in locations with multiple and/or wide lanes.



[Equity is a vital component of Vision Zero](#) - ensuring our roads meet everyone's safety requirements, including seniors, people with disabilities, children, and people of colour. In Halifax, that commitment is so very often neglected - recent examples [here](#) and [here](#).

***(i) Isn't the issue with pedestrians, cyclists and drivers making mistakes and behaving dangerously? Why not fix this with education and enforcement?***

Vision Zero recognises that education and enforcement make little impact if the fundamental road conditions don't prevent dangerous driving and incidents.

The legal requirement to yield does not sufficiently provide pedestrians with the predictable environment they require to cross the road safely; seen clearly from Halifax's incident mapping, also from data showing causes of pedestrian incidents at page 32 of this [2007 report on Crosswalk Safety in Nova Scotia](#).

Likewise, the one metre law does not provide reliable safety for cyclists and e-bike users who share an arterial road or busy intersection with heavy and fast moving vehicles.

The only tried and tested means of ensuring dangerous behaviour is mitigated without the unsupportable cost of long term and constant enforcement is through the Vision Zero approach to road safety.

***(ii) What is a "countermeasure" and why is it needed?***

Countermeasures address common causes of road user errors, for example;

- [pedestrian refuge island\(s\)](#) to narrow traffic lanes and make looking for traffic easier for pedestrians



- an adjustment to traffic lights which stops traffic and provides a [dedicated phase for pedestrians and cyclists to get through the intersection without the hazard of moving vehicles](#). This works well on any size intersection.

***(iii) Will we need to redesign our streets? Sounds expensive!***

A common myth about Vision Zero is that it requires our roads to be re-designed, and it is therefore expensive and a very long term project - for example by replacing intersections with roundabouts. That is not the case. When world-leading experts Gehl [advised Halifax on the Cogswell plans](#), they said; “*the presence of two roundabouts indicate the efficient movement of vehicles is prioritized over people walking or biking*”.

Intersections can be safely adapted for use by vulnerable road users with simple traffic light adjustments that may cost just [staff time to reprogram lights](#), not thousands or millions of \$.

Road space need not be re-designed but instead re-allocated, for example swapping surplus traffic lanes (which can encourage dangerous overtaking and speeding) for use by sustainable transport only. This is called a “road diet”.

***(iv) Don't we have a Vision Zero plan?***

Halifax's [Vision Zero Framework](#) was approved by Council in July 2018. However, it did not include a specific action plan.

A Vision Zero road safety plan should identify key causes and locations of incidents (referred to as “[High Injury Networks](#)”), the safety countermeasures or road adaptations that will address them, where these should be deployed and when, and how much they will cost.

This level of detailed analysis and long term action planning does not seem to have yet been developed. An [annual update](#) was presented recently to Regional Council which states what is being completed in 2020, however Walk n Roll, the Crosswalk Safety Society and [Martyn Williams](#) have questioned whether the Framework genuinely meets Vision Zero Criteria and even whether it amounts to a plan at all, as claimed by staff.

***(v) What do we have in place now, and where?***

The safety countermeasures that have been implemented are limited in scope and location, and do not address the road safety issues that cause incidents adequately enough to make any meaningful impact.

For example, [leading pedestrian intervals reduce pedestrian incidents by 13%](#). This is inadequate given they are present at only thirteen intersections, and signalized intersections account for 40% of pedestrian incidents in HRM. More effective countermeasures are required, and in more locations.

***(v) What needs to be fixed?***

The following key issues must be addressed to increase safety and reduce incidents;

- Many of Halifax's roads, traffic lanes and intersections are wider than strictly required to effect the safe and efficient movement of vehicles and people. Urban artery roads are designed and used like Highways due to multiple, wide traffic lanes - for example Lacewood Drive, Dunbrack, Pleasant Street, sections of Quinpool Road and Main Street Dartmouth. These could be adapted through an inexpensive reallocation of space, such as (for example) trading a traffic lane for use only by buses (potentially for use by Park and Ride bus services) emergency vehicles and sustainable transport, or by adding cycle/micro-mobility lanes.



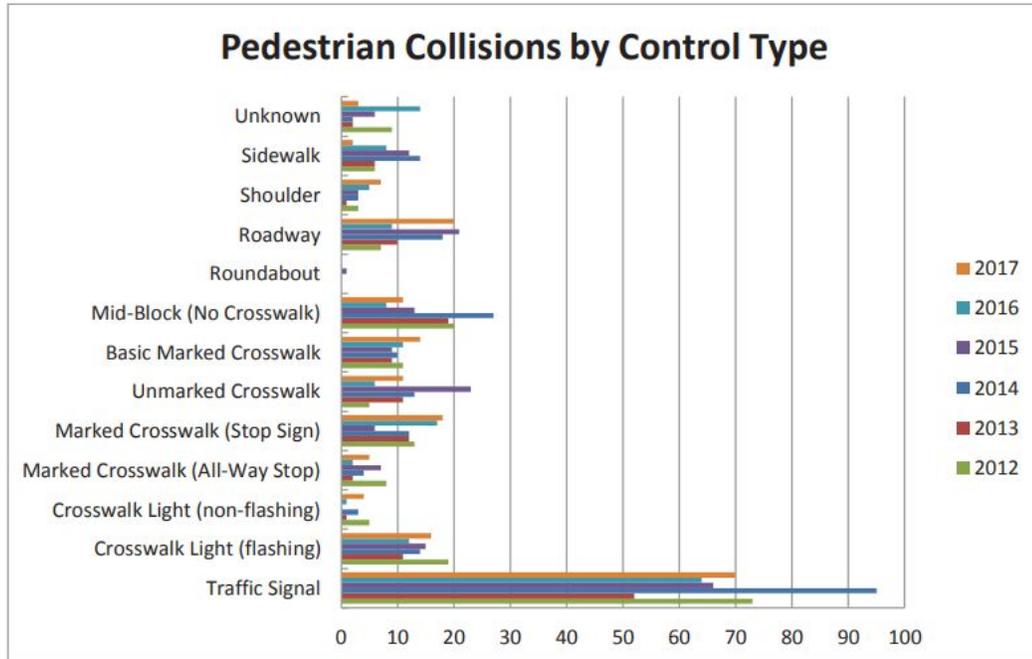
- Pedestrian incidents are very often clustered on our wider urban roads and intersections and downtown shopping/service areas - see this [pedestrian incident map from November 2019](#) and this [recent research](#) by Simon Fraser University. Danger at these locations could be addressed with suitable safe-by-design crossing points for pedestrians, and adaptations which slow traffic, such as the lane/space reallocation mentioned above.



- Traffic lanes are often far wider than the 10 feet width recommended by NACTO for urban roads, which prevents space for installation of simple protected bike/microbility lanes or bus lanes.
- Intersections are often very wide and so allow drivers to turn at high speed in a way that is dangerous to vulnerable road users. These require inexpensive adaptations to create bump-outs that both reduce crossing distances and slow turning speeds, and/or pedestrian refuge islands.

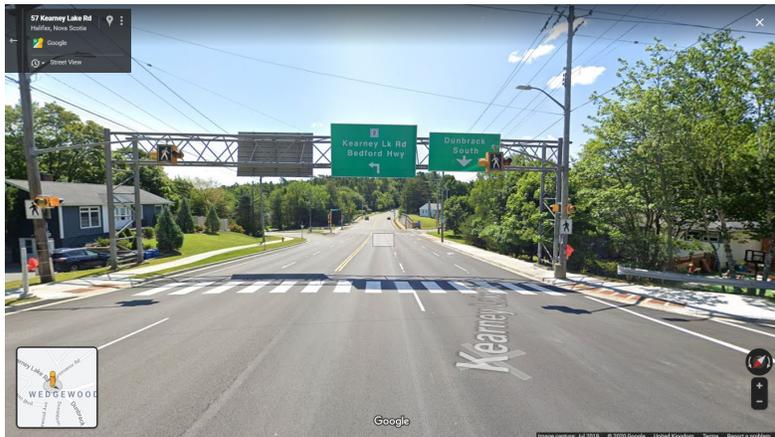


- Though pedestrians do have a legal right of way on signalized intersection crosswalks, they do not offer any safety measures or traffic controls that stop or slow vehicles. Consequently, they account for around [40% of all pedestrian incidents in HRM](#). Every year, left turns on green are the most common cause of pedestrians being hit. The most recent severe example of pedestrians hit by a left on green turning driver [was in June](#) on Convoy Run. In April, a 68 year-old lady was [struck and killed by a driver turning right on green](#) on Portland Street. Pedestrians are hit on signalized intersection crosswalks in Halifax sometimes up to several times a week.



- Mid-block crosswalks on artery roads are often not suitable for people of all ages and abilities. Safely

negotiating four or five uninterrupted traffic lanes is unrealistic and very dangerous. Drivers approach the crosswalks at high speed, and often fail to see the overhead flashing lights. These crosswalks must be safety assessed and adapted for safe use by all by (for example)



measures such as pedestrian refuge islands, advance yield lines and raised crosswalks or pinch-points where the fast approach of drivers and multiple lanes is an issue.

Given the incident data has now been compiled and analyzed, Council needs to foster the creation of a road safety action plan that meets genuine [Vision Zero requirements and format](#) and provides clear information on what will be done when, how much that will cost, and why it's needed. Councillors can propose that such a plan is developed using external specialist assistance from [Vision Zero engineering consultants](#).

Vision Zero is far more than a robust road safety plan. It requires a completely different approach to priorities on our roads, and both continuous involvement and commitment by multiple public agencies and the public, including community groups.

To be successful, Vision Zero should be driven and decided by multiple stakeholders, not solely traffic staff. Councillors may wish to heed the detailed advice provided by the [Crosswalk Safety Society of Nova Scotia](#) and Martyn Williams [here](#) and look to regain control of Vision Zero planning at an early stage to ensure Halifax's Vision Zero aspirations are a genuine commitment.