

April 11, 2018

2017 Vision Zero Progress Report for Boston
Letter from the Coalition

Three years after the launch of Vision Zero, the City of Boston is making incremental progress towards eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries by 2030. The work of dedicated individuals is making an impact, but the City is far from the systematic response and rapid implementation needed for real, sustained change. Each serious injury and life lost on Boston streets continues to be an occasion to reflect on the urgency of the Vision Zero goal.

Mayor Walsh's recently announced commitment of \$5 million additional funds for transportation staffing and projects for FY19 is a major step in the right direction, and the proposal to add two planners and two engineers tasked with Vision Zero efforts will directly contribute to increasing traffic safety. This investment comes with a commitment to implement 15 miles of protected bike lanes, 15 total Neighborhood Slow Streets zones, and 15 high-crash intersection improvements by 2022. We applaud Mayor Walsh's show of support and believe that these additional resources can boost the City's capacity to transform Boston's transportation system, with a central emphasis placed on ensuring safer streets.

In order to make these investments as effective as possible, greater coordination is now necessary. As the Transportation Department looks to increase its staff capacity in FY19, creating clear organizational structures will be needed to establish how new staff positions will be integrated into the department and how projects will be managed and executed. Now is the time for all city agencies to step up their involvement in Vision Zero. For example, the Police Department's crash data analyst staff position, which was temporarily grant-funded and is now vacant, urgently needs to be funded on a long-term basis and filled immediately. Vision Zero is a data-based approach, and it will not be successful in Boston if we do not have clear data-sharing practices and policies among city staff across departments.

Further, it is time for Boston to develop a comprehensive strategy for equitable enforcement. While enforcement has a role to play in traffic safety efforts, it should not be a primary strategy and should be approached thoughtfully. The Coalition has included several recommendations in this Progress Report that have been put forth by the Vision Zero Network aimed at supporting Community Policing approaches, building public trust in traffic enforcement, and providing opportunities to educate the public about the importance of road safety. We acknowledge that developing a strategy for equitable enforcement will look different in each city, and we encourage the City to start this dialogue with officials and residents to better understand what it could look like for Boston and its Vision Zero initiative.

In 2015, steps were taken to integrate the Public Works and the Transportation Departments, however, gaps remain when it comes to implementation. Every time a Boston street is repaved it should be an opportunity to implement simple, safe Vision Zero design principles, but

all-too-often this is not the case. This past year, opportunities were seized on Kneeland Street in Chinatown and Beacon Street near Audubon Circle, but they were missed on Congress Street in Downtown and Farragut Street in South Boston. Gaps between these two departments must be sorted out if investments in safety improvements are going to be well spent.

Finally, to ensure that the City is on track with its zero fatalities by 2030 goal and the recent FY19 commitments, an updated action plan is needed to detail how the City will incrementally realize projects year by year in a manner that prioritizes equitable investments in Boston's streets and residents.

Sincerely,
Massachusetts Vision Zero Coalition