

MASSACHUSETTS VISION ZERO COALITION

November 19th, 2021

Senator Walter Timilty
Chair, Joint Committee on Public Safety and
Homeland Security
Statehouse, Room 213-B
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Carlos González
Chair, Joint Committee on Public Safety and
Homeland Security
Statehouse, Room 167
Boston, MA 02133

Representative William Straus
Chairman, Joint Committee on Transportation
Statehouse, Room 134
Boston, MA 02133

Senator John Keenan
Vice Chair, Joint Committee on Transportation
Statehouse, Room 112
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Representatives Straus and González, Senators Keenan and Timilty, and members of the legislature:

The [Massachusetts Vision Zero Coalition](#) was formed in the fall of 2015 to advocate for the elimination of traffic injuries and deaths across Massachusetts. The Coalition is composed of nonprofits, community-based organizations, and individuals representing communities across the state. **Since our Coalition's formation in 2015, there have been 910,149 crashes in Massachusetts—2,463 of which resulted in tragic fatalities, and 15,700 of which resulted in serious injuries.** This is a public health crisis that requires urgent action from the legislature.

In advance of the upcoming [World Day of Remembrance](#), an international day honoring victims of traffic violence, we are asking you to take action and advance bills that will measurably reduce traffic fatalities across Massachusetts.

The following two bills will save lives and reduce crashes while reducing opportunities for inequitable and dangerous interactions between people and police, and we are eager to work with you to pass them into law this session:

"An Act to reduce traffic fatalities" (H.3549): an omnibus bill that would require additional mirrors, side guards, and backup cameras for certain trucks and other large vehicles; define vulnerable road users and set a safe passing distance at certain speeds; allow the default speed limit on state-owned roads

to be lowered to 25 mph; and create a standardized crash report form for people walking and biking. Defining “vulnerable road users” is pertinent to the safety of all road users, including construction workers at job sites and tow truck drivers, in addition to those on foot and bike. This preferred House version of the bill includes important truck safety regulations. It also maintains the current law requiring a person biking to use either a rear red light or reflector, instead of adding a requirement to use both a rear red light and a rear reflector; minor bike violations like this one have been proven to lead to racial profiling and inequitable enforcement [in other states](#).

“An Act relative to automated enforcement” (H.2426, H.2541, S.1545): would allow municipalities to opt in to installing cameras that would issue tickets for speeding, failure to stop at a red light, failure to stop at a school bus stop arm, blocking the box, and parking or driving in a dedicated bus lane. Automated enforcement would be an important addition to municipalities’ toolkits to effectively manage speeding and reduce serious crashes, while removing direct policing and traffic stops from the equation.

While we have many important policy priorities as a Coalition that would make considerable improvements to traffic safety, we have been advocating for these two particular bills for several legislative sessions. It’s time they move forward. We believe that both bills would create demonstrable increases in traffic safety by reducing speeding and creating safety improvements for vulnerable road users.

For too long, traffic deaths and severe injuries have been treated as inevitable. While often referred to as “accidents,” these tragedies are preventable if we take a proactive, preventative approach that prioritizes traffic safety and speed management as a public health issue. We ask you to advance these bills in your respective committees and work in collaboration with your colleagues to pass these bills into law this session.

This year alone, 353 more Massachusetts families have an empty seat at their table because their loved one was killed in a traffic crash. We implore you to use your legislative powers to save lives and eliminate tragic and preventable deaths on our roads.

Sincerely,

The Massachusetts Vision Zero Coalition

Adam Shutes, WalkUP Roslindale

Alex Epstein, Somerville Alliance for Safe Streets

Anna Leslie, Allston Brighton Health Collaborative

Becca Wolfson, Boston Cyclists Union

Emily Stein, Safe Roads Alliance

Galen Mook, Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition

Jarred Johnson, TransitMatters

Josh Ostroff, Transportation for Massachusetts

Julia Wallerice, Institute for Transportation and Development Policy

Nate Fillmore, Cambridge Bicycle Safety

Stacey Beuttell, WalkBoston

Stacy Thompson, LivableStreets Alliance