



Boston has 'vision' for zero fatal traffic crashes



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Last year, 354 people died on Massachusetts roads.

In Boston alone, about 20 people die every year in traffic crashes, according to [city data](#).

Safe streets advocates are calling for officials to do more to reduce the human toll of traffic crashes. In a vigil held Sunday to call attention to the victims of traffic crashes, participants placed hundreds of yellow roses and white cardboard silhouettes on the steps of the State House to offer a tangible representation of the lives lost.

The vigil was one of many held across the globe on World Remembrance Day.

"Each cut-out represents a person who was killed," Andrew McFarland, of Livable Streets Alliance, said.

Silhouettes pepper Boston streets to call attention to the locations of fatal crashes. One silhouette was placed beside a Washington Street crosswalk in Roslindale in memory of Silvia Acosta, a 78-year-old woman who was killed trying to cross the street.

They are meant as symbols to remember those who have lost their lives, and also to inspire change, Rebecca Wolfson, executive director of the Boston Cyclists Union, said.

"Since our first World Day of Remembrance last year, some progress has been made in the Boston area," she said. "Unfortunately, we've seen an increase in traffic fatalities this year over 2015. We need a commitment from all of our elected officials in order to eliminate traffic fatalities."

That progress is the city's commitment to a future with zero traffic-related deaths. The program, called [Vision Zero](#), is a promise to eliminate — or at least dramatically reduce — the number of traffic fatalities on city streets by 2030.

Boston sees 1,300 traffic incidents a year requiring emergency medical services.

"While only a handful of these crashes are fatal, every tragedy leaves a trail of grieving family and friends, and the despair of unfulfilled potential. As mayor, I see the real people behind these statistics; I share the grief, pain,

and sense of loss that every crash report represents," Mayor Marty Walsh said in a news release.

Boston is one of several Massachusetts cities to have recently reduced the speed limit on city streets. In August, city councilors dropped the speed limit from 30 mph to 25 mph, a move advocates say will save countless lives.

At 30 mph, the likelihood that a crash will result in a pedestrian fatality is about 50 percent, according to a [2011 AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety study](#). At 20 mph, there is about an 88 percent chance of survival.

"Speeding plays a crucial role when it comes to safety on our streets," said Safe Roads Alliance President Emily Stein, who lost her father in a crash in April 2011.

Somerville and Cambridge have also made commitments to lowering citywide speed limits, with Somerville dropping its speed limit to 25 mph on Nov. 7.

"The data show that slowing down saves lives and prevents serious injuries," Somerville Mayor Joseph Curtatone said. "More than 16,000 people commute by foot in Somerville, including school children, and 12.5 percent commute by bike. We've made it a priority to make infrastructure changes to keep them safe, and lowering the speed limits is another crucial element of that effort."

Somerville is working toward adopting other measures to make city streets safer. In March, Cambridge announced that it is also committed to Vision Zero. A detailed action plan is expected to be released in the coming months.

"We need to see cities and towns across Massachusetts stepping up and signing on to Vision Zero," Richard Fries, the executive director of MassBike, said. "Communities need to work together to share best practices and coordinate projects that ensure safe streets for all in the Commonwealth."