



Madison Bikes

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Madison Common Council

Madison, July 14, 2020

Vision Zero, Racism, and Enforcement

Dear Alders:

We are writing to you regarding item 92 (Legistar 60922) on today's agenda, "Adopting and endorsing a Vision Zero policy to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries that are a result of crashes on streets and paths within the City of Madison by 2030."

Madison Bikes is an all-volunteer advocacy organization with a mission to make our community a place "...where anyone can ride a bicycle conveniently and comfortably to any place, year-round." Despite our emphasis on "anyone" and "any place," our leadership and community base are overwhelmingly white. The relative absence of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) voices in bicycling advocacy, including in our organization, leads to their needs being deprioritized, whether intentionally or not. In the 2019 city budget deliberations, we supported allocating funding for Vision Zero, but did not address the fact that traffic law enforcement can exacerbate violence towards Madison residents already facing the highest risk of traffic injuries and death.

Madison has the opportunity to be a leader in implementing a Vision Zero policy that eliminates serious traffic injuries and deaths without relying on law enforcement. Vision Zero will not achieve its objectives if it does not account for the unique and disproportionate safety risks faced by BIPOC, undocumented, low-income, and LGBTQ individuals when interacting with police. We would like to add our voices to the current conversations on policing and encourage you to carefully weigh these facts when implementing Vision Zero. Traffic enforcement efforts in the name of Vision Zero must not result in disparate treatment of those already facing the highest safety risks in our community.

BIPOC individuals face traffic-related injury and death at rates much higher than white individuals. A legacy of explicit and implicit racist and white supremacist influence in infrastructure, land use planning, and zoning decisions is one cause of this disparity. Vision Zero policy has the potential to address and remedy this injustice. However, a racial-justice based approach to Vision Zero must acknowledge that BIPOC individuals are also more likely to be targets of police enforcement, and that those police encounters too often result in economic hardship, arrest, deportation, violence, and sometimes death. Philando Castille was one of those shot and killed by a police officer as part of a traffic stop.

Serious questions exist about the efficacy and effectiveness of a traffic safety approach that relies on enforcement. There is limited evidence that police enforcement reduces speeds or crashes in a meaningful way, and police enforcement is costly. The City of Madison and the State of Wisconsin both have declared racism a public health crisis. Traffic violence is another public health crisis that last year claimed almost 39,000 lives in the United States, and in Madison 108 people were killed or seriously injured in crashes in 2018. Public health crises require public health approaches that address root causes, not enforcement that treats symptoms.

We support the amendment to the resolution introduced by the Transportation Policy and Planning Board, which asks that the “Vision Zero Action Plan will document the disproportionate effects of traffic enforcement and the impacts of traffic injuries and fatalities on people of color and that a plan is developed that works to reduce and eliminate those harms.” We ask that as part of Vision Zero Action Plan and its overall approach to

traffic safety, the City commits to reducing the reliance on police enforcement and instead focus on street design and infrastructure to create safer streets. Both traffic violence and police enforcement have inflicted harm on BIPOC and other at-risk groups. The city must commit to racial and social justice as a central component of Madison's Vision Zero. Authentic community engagement with BIPOC communities must be at the center of this work in order to achieve this commitment.

Respectfully,

Marybeth McGinnis, on behalf of the Madison Bikes Board of Directors