

From: [Kirk Westphal](#)
To: [Briggs, Erica](#); [Akmon, Dharma](#); [Taylor, Christopher \(Mayor\)](#); [Watson, Chris](#); [Mallek, Jon](#)
Cc: [Hutchinson, Nicholas](#); [Brydon, Trevor](#); [Dohoney Jr., Milton](#); [City Council](#); [Lucy Gibson](#)
Subject: Vision Zero
Date: Monday, October 6, 2025 1:56:06 AM

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Dear Council (cc: staff),

Like many in the community, I'm frustrated and saddened by the failure to meet your Vision Zero commitment by 2025. Worse yet, this is already the most dangerous year to be a pedestrian in the past decade — and the year isn't over.

I happen to be typing this message as I overlook Plymouth Road east of Green, where I just saw a group of pedestrians crossing this 6-lane segment of Plymouth with no crosswalk, exactly where a grandmother was tragically killed by a driver earlier this year. I have seen people crossing here on multiple occasions, as well as witnessing a vehicle crash and several near-misses.



This is a long message. I'm attaching previous emails as well.

Summary

I hope you take the following actions without more delay:

- **Direct staff to spend the \$500,000 you allocated on *proven "quick build" physical safety improvements before the end of 2025, such as dieting Stadium temporarily.*** We cannot allow danger to continue on literally all of our most dangerous roads while we wait for yet another study. This funding was allocated in May.
- **Direct AAPD to conduct targeted crosswalk enforcement immediately.**
- **Communicate to the public the City/MDOT timeline for trunkline negotiations.**
- **Redirect Toole Design to realign their multilane analysis with Vision Zero.**

Lack of urgency

You have passed repeated resolutions and plans that communicate your commitment to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries. However, several years, fatalities, and life-altering injuries later, staff has shown that words are not enough. The lack of progress falls squarely on you, as your primary duty is to direct the administrator who in turn directs staff.

American cities the size of Ann Arbor and larger have people in leadership and on staff who have eliminated road deaths for multiple years within the past decade. Many of them have developed the skill of installing pilot projects, like [mini-roundabouts in Jersey City](#), NJ where staff *"installed small-diameter 'mini-roundabouts' at two intersections, using whatever materials the city had handy: traffic cones, planters, barrels, plastic delineators, paint. The instant traffic circles — the city's first — forced drivers to slow down as they negotiated the crossings with pedestrians and other vehicles... The city found that traffic volumes increased even as speeds came down about 10%, and the feedback from surveyed residents was overwhelmingly positive: 72% of respondents supported making the circles permanent."*

Why aren't we doing this as a matter of course? There are no laws or liabilities that prevent the city from piloting safety devices on our roads. Governmental immunity broadly protects City Hall when it attempts to solve problems. Road changes happen all the time: you did it with Healthy Streets during COVID; developers eliminate lanes year-round throughout the city for weeks or months at a time for construction; and for several weeks, I see that DTE has closed the third eastbound lane in the deadly stretch of Plymouth I referenced above — *for a utility project*. We can and must do this every time we know a road is too wide and deadly.

As one example, hundreds of your constituents have [signed a petition](#) to reconfigure Stadium Boulevard. The city has radar data showing that excessive car speeds currently endanger children in the three schools along Stadium. You were allocated the money to do a "quick build," five months ago. Why haven't you acted on it? And if not on Stadium, then why not *somewhere*?

Consultant misalignment

Many of us have high expectations for the "multilane reconfiguration study," which is finally underway two years after you requested it. In the [resolution](#) kicking off this study, you unanimously agreed to the following: "RESOLVED, City Council reaffirms the City's Vision Zero commitment to eliminate all road deaths and serious injuries by 2025 and to transition to a carbon neutral transportation system by 2030." However, the presentation by the consultant in the Transportation Commission meeting two weeks ago did not reflect this commitment and instead was full of red flags.

As background, I alerted many of you in December 2024 and April 2025 that your RFP (and subsequently your contract) with Toole Design failed to match your (reaffirmed) commitment to *eliminate serious injuries and deaths*. As I share in my email below, I was informed that council doesn't meddle with staff RFPs. (I disagree with this view.)

I was subsequently reassured that the contract would in fact deliver Vision Zero-compliant designs. And I appreciate that at the April 7, 2025 City Council meeting, you said on record that the consultant will be required to articulate the design speeds of crosswalks and intersections. (Most of you know that the main tenet of Vision Zero is that all road users must be expected to make mistakes and the transportation system must allow for mistakes without causing serious injury or death. Therefore, in places where cars and vulnerable road users interact, car speeds must be at non-lethal levels — 20mph or less, as the popular graphic in our transportation plan clearly shows.)

(I submitted a FOIA request after not receiving responses to my requests for the new contract.)

As for the 9/17 Transportation Commission meeting, the consultant started off the meeting by recapping what she believed was her assignment from you. Her first slide read as follows:



Overall Project Purpose:

Evaluate ten (10) of the City's multi-lane roads to consider road reconfigurations that can:

- Reduce speeds
- Better organize traffic
- Address systemic safety issues for all road users
- Incorporate future planned transit and bicycle infrastructure

TOOLE
DESIGN

Why doesn't this mention Vision Zero? Why doesn't the purpose include your stated, re-stated, and re-affirmed goal of *eliminating fatalities and serious injuries*?

Adopting Vision Zero means that everything is done through this clear lens. "Reducing speeds" is not the point, as it is completely inadequate if speeds go down somewhat but largely remain lethal. And what exactly does "addressing safety issues" mean? If the consultant were tasked with adhering to Vision Zero, this kind of language would not appear in the presentation. Why is it here?

For example, the consultant looked at some existing speed data for the 5-lane section of Packard, where literally nobody was driving at safe speeds. In fact, 99% of drivers were traveling at speeds indicating a 40% or higher fatality/serious injury rate. Merely "reducing"

speeds is unacceptable through the lens of Vision Zero — speeds at crosswalks would need to be 20mph. There is no "balancing of priorities" acceptable here.

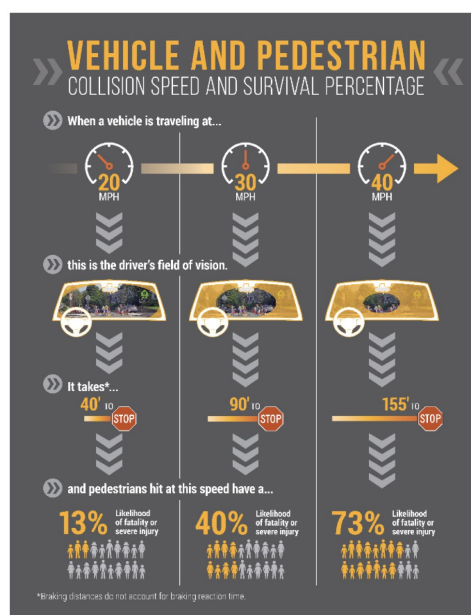
SAFE SPEEDS

Packard Street East of Easy Street Speeds

	Eastbound
Posted Speed Limit	35 mph
85th Percentile	47 mph
Average Speed	41 mph
Percent traveling up to 20 mph	0%
Percent traveling between 21 and 30 mph	1%
Percent traveling between 31 and 40 mph	32%
Percent traveling over 40 mph	66%

TOOLE
DESIGN

Tefft, B.C. "Impact Speed and a Pedestrian's Risk of Severe Injury or Death." Accident Analysis and Prevention, Vol. 50, 2013, pp. 71-878



There were a couple of hopeful signs in the presentation, such as the recognition that transportation behavior is known to change significantly given changes in the infrastructure, e.g., drivers resort to trip-chaining or shifting travel times when confronted with delays, and cities have removed entire highways without causing congestion.

But sadly, the rest of the presentation proceeded as expected: everything was predicated on measuring car count baselines, "balancing priorities," pondering "acceptable congestion" levels, avoiding "gridlock," [faulty assumptions about the relationship between the number of lanes and capacity](#), investigating "person throughput" to see if other modes could replace the current trips (inferring a forced mode shift is a counterproductive framing at best and a poison pill at worst).

I may have missed it, but in my viewing, there was *nothing* said about 1) the adopted goal of cutting VMT in half (which would eliminate or at least deprioritize the current fixation on counting cars), 2) roundabouts as a highly effective safety countermeasure to replace signals, or 3) eliminating deaths and serious injuries. The approach didn't just not center Vision Zero, there was not ONE SINGLE MENTION of eliminating deaths and serious injuries!

If you wish to salvage this consultant analysis and make an honest attempt to adhere to the goal of Vision Zero, I believe you must intervene now to correct course.

What to do now?

In addition to remedying the multilane reconfiguration study, advocates have come up with several good ideas for what to do in the time that remains in 2025. I strongly agree with using the dedicated \$500,000 "quick build" funding for an impactful road diet pilot (such as on Stadium/Maple), focusing AAPD enforcement on targeted crosswalk compliance (which has a track record of improving crosswalk compliance throughout the city), and determining what the timetable is for negotiating MDOT trunkline transfers.

Thank you for reading, and as always I welcome further conversation.

Kirk Westphal
[REDACTED]

On Tue, May 27, 2025 at 12:47 PM Kirk Westphal <[REDACTED]@gmail.com> wrote:
Hello CMs and staff,

I am following up to request a copy of the amended contract with Toole Design. You may recall that staff agreed on 4/7/25 to require that Toole's corridor redesign analysis will include target/design speeds at all places where nonmotorized travelers intersect with motorists. Design speeds of ~20mph in these areas are a prerequisite for Vision-Zero-compliant improvements.

(My hope is that the default assumption for intersections will be the "inscribed roundabout" treatment that has been so successful on Earhart Road, unless there are other countermeasures that are able to achieve nonlethal speeds at a green signal.)

Please let me know if this can be forwarded to me, or let me know when a suitable time to FOIA it would be.

Kirk Westphal

On Tue, Apr 8, 2025 at 12:57 PM Kirk Westphal <[REDACTED]@gmail.com> wrote:

Thank you for agreeing to amend this contract, and thank you, CMs, for proposing it. In my haste this weekend, I neglected to copy the same folks who I wrote to in December about this same issue. Forwarding below.

I'd like to receive a copy of the contract after it is amended, or otherwise please let me know when it's been amended so I can FOIA a copy.

Thank you for your work to implement Vision Zero. As always, I'm happy to talk about this individually.

Kirk Westphal

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Kirk Westphal** <[REDACTED]@gmail.com>

Date: Mon, Apr 7, 2025 at 12:41 AM

Subject: CA-11: Multilane reconfiguration proposal isn't remotely "Vision Zero"

To: CityCouncil <[REDACTED]@a2gov.org>

Dear Council:

As I communicated in my December email (below) that I sent to many of you, staff, and Transportation Commission, the City's RFP for multilane reconfigurations did not set out to solicit proposals that complied with the City's commitment to Vision Zero. It was indicated to me at the time that Council does not review RFPs, and so my concerns could be handled when there were responses to the RFP.

Here we are, and, despite giving lip service to Vision Zero, unsurprisingly the proposal now in front of you does not even pretend to achieve the elimination of traffic deaths and serious injuries within its work scope. And so it is now necessary to heavily amend this contract if you wish to have a Vision Zero compliant analysis.

This contract should not be approved unless its goal is Vision Zero. You are already set to miss your 2025 deadline; a year-long analysis that does not set a Vision Zero goal will just result in delays and more deaths — and come with a "sunk cost" obligation to follow its recommendations. Please do not throw money at another failure of a plan like the costly Lowertown Mobility Study.

If it is even possible to amend this contract, it would require replacing every mention of staff or consultant language such as:

“reducing speeds”

with

“achieving vehicular target speeds of 20mph at all places where motorists and vulnerable road users interact.” (This is not dependent on fitting the “community context.”)

“reducing crashes/injury crashes”

with

“eliminating all fatal and serious injury crashes”

Language such as “Motor vehicles are the most common mode of travel in the City and the continued functioning of basic vehicular circulation will be part of the tradeoff considerations informing the concepts”

or

“Emphasizes the use of person trips rather than vehicle trips as the core unit of analysis”

or

“Considering how these commuters can get to their destinations safely and reliably will be integral to this study”

with

“‘Measurements of vehicle throughput,’ ‘capacity,’ ‘road overcapacity,’ or ‘person trips’ will only be considered when choosing between equally Vision-Zero-compliant configurations that will eliminate fatal and serious injury

crashes.”

There is a heavy emphasis on (and associated cost for) modelling in this contract. Traffic engineering models are directly responsible for this country’s road violence, not to mention car dependency, sprawl development, and pollution. They should not be used to inform any city’s future car transportation “needs,” let alone a city like Ann Arbor that seeks to stop the carnage and pollution that we invite with every traffic “study” or “forecast” that’s conducted. Even for car-focused purposes, these models have been proven wrong time and again, as they ignore human adaptability and economic factors. With every major highway or bridge shutdown, human behavior results in a demand shift or consolidation beyond what any “traffic engineer” imagined. What a waste. We know better.

See: <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2019/1/31/car-pocalypse-not-now-why-predicted-gridlock-in-seattle-was-again-a-no-show>

Language like this is particularly worrisome: “The total capacity of the corridor to carry people during the peak hour will be assessed, making reasonable assumptions on transit ridership, bicycle mode share for short trips, and pedestrian trips.” This communicates that, “If we cannot demonstrate that enough mode shift can happen to replace vehicle trips or compensate for motorist delay, then we should question the appropriateness of creating congestion.”

Any contract you approve should also not reference staff’s “speed management toolbox”; as I mentioned in last year’s email, this website is riddled with errors and incompatible recommendations (eg the only tool for Stadium Boulevard is “curb extensions”).

This rhetoric has no place in a project that purports to further Vision Zero.

I’m also troubled by the willingness to spend \$500k on “near miss cameras” when we have decades of data showing what the contributing factors to injury crashes are. What do you expect to do when these cameras show near-misses at high speeds?

Kirk Westphal
Ward 2

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Kirk Westphal** <[REDACTED]@gmail.com>
Date: Wed, Dec 18, 2024 at 5:43 PM
Subject: problematic lane reconfiguration RFP
To: <[REDACTED]@a2gov.org>
cc:

Dear All,

I was recently made aware of city RFP # 25-03 ("Multi-lane Road Reconfiguration Evaluation").

https://www.a2gov.org/departments/finance-admin-services/purchasing/Documents/RFP_25-03_Document.pdf

It was published to satisfy council resolution R-23-415 ("Resolution to Accelerate Safety Improvements on Multilane Roads").

<https://a2gov.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6403222&GUID=9DFF681B-9CAC-4E09-88DC-20B4EA882C42&FullText=1>

Below please find the discrepancies between what City Council asked for and the deliverables of this RFP. To deliver what Council requires, the RFP language should be amended because it neglects or contradicts three key parts of City Council's resolution, in addition to the requirements of Vision Zero. These corrections need not extend the timeline of the RFP.

What Council said:

"Eliminate all deaths and serious injuries by 2025... Lower car speed is a critical component of Vision Zero, as there's a 95% survival rate if a pedestrian is involved in a crash with a vehicle traveling 20 mph but only a 10% survival rate when the vehicle is travelling 40 mph"

What the RFP says:

Mentions "safety" and "lowering speeds" in the objective statement, but contains no requirements to achieve nonlethal target speeds, which is the determinant zero deaths and serious injuries.

Recommendation:

This is a critical failure of the RFP; target speeds must be added to the RFP.

What Council said:

"Develop a plan for evaluation of reconfiguring **all** existing multilane roads under the City's jurisdiction"

What the RFP says:

"Develop a methodology and use it to evaluate city-owned multi-lane roads for **potential** roadway reconfigurations. The purpose of these evaluations is to analyze and identify **opportunities** to reprioritize roadway space... Evaluate and identify road segments that demonstrate **opportunity** for reconfiguration and develop sketches of alternative concepts for typical segments and critical locations along a segment, **should road reconfiguration become feasible**."

Recommendation:

The Council directive asked to evaluate reconfiguration of all multilane roads because of their inherent danger and speed. This is the default directive; the language in the RFP is weak. Inclusion of target speeds in the RFP would help mitigate this.

What Council said:

"Promote a 50% reduction in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) by 2030" and explicitly repealed the requirement in an older resolution to provide "current traffic volume data including peak hour volumes... and traffic delays," as Vision Zero does not contemplate motorist convenience over safety.

What the RFP says:

"Identify road segments that demonstrate challenging operational performance under existing travel demand. Estimate the peak hour volume reduction needed to reduce a [sic] repurpose a through vehicle travel lane."

Recommendation:

This language is unacceptable and should be removed, as it

- contradicts Vision Zero's core principal (motorist convenience at peak hours does not outweigh safe operations)
- exhibits an incomplete understanding of trip reduction and puts the onus on the consultant to justify lane removals when City Council has already justified them on safety grounds. (Traffic engineers consistently overestimate the "negative" impacts of lane removals, which in turn has caused their communities to experience more roadway deaths and injuries. Removals cause peak and/or overall volume reductions; they do not need to be justified by volume reductions or capacity replacement.)
- further strengthens the inference that reconfigurations may not apply to all segments

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It's also problematic that the RFP directs the consultant to the city's "speed management" website, which is inadequate and may limit the consultant's ambition. For example, the only speed management countermeasure indicated for Stadium Boulevard near Pioneer is "curb extensions." The reference to the city's speed management program should be removed.

These are just the inconsistencies that jumped out at me at first glance. I don't know if any of you had a chance to look at it before it was issued; the RFP asks the consultant to heed the direction of the Transportation Commission but I'm unaware of the TC were advised of the RFP's scope to begin with.

Because of the city's inability to achieve "quick build" improvements, this effort appears fundamental to achieving Vision Zero. Unlike previous efforts like the Lowertown Mobility Study, it must center Vision Zero, achieve specific target speeds everywhere vehicles and vulnerable road users interact, and not fall into the typical American traffic engineering trap of maintaining peak throughput.

Sincerely,
Kirk Westphal



Guided by the vision that everyone should be able to live and meet their daily needs in the neighborhood of their choice

