

Memorandum

To: New Westminster City Council

Date: February 9, 2026

From: Mayor Patrick Johnstone

Re: **Backgrounder: Advancing a Vision Zero Approach to Road Safety**

Globally, more than half of all road traffic deaths occur among vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists, and two-thirds of road traffic fatalities occur among people of working age (World Health Organization). In the ten-year period between 2014 and 2023, there were 2895 fatalities and an average of 292,700 ICBC reported crashes per year in BC¹.

Transport incidents rank as the third highest injury costs in BC. The economic burden of traffic violence is often overlooked with the traditional approach to roadway design. In 2019, the direct healthcare costs for transport injuries in BC was \$526.7 million². This includes direct costs, like health care expenses, and indirect costs, such as lost productivity. Road crashes also take a significant toll at a societal level from the trauma experienced by First Responders to the victims and their families, and even those witnessing traffic violence. At the same time, an increasing amount of First Responder resources – costs borne by local governments – are related to motor vehicle incident response.

Improving safety on our streets and roads makes people feel more comfortable, regardless of their travel mode. Making investments in road safety is a long-term contribution to the health and wellbeing of British Columbians and supports CleanBC. The BC Road Safety Strategy 2025 set the goal of Vision Zero².

Vision Zero is a philosophy that road fatalities and serious injuries can and should be eliminated. These measures also increase safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all. A Vision Zero strategy requires cooperation and coordination between levels of governments and partner agencies because it goes well beyond engineering and road design.

Vision Zero is the “what”, while the Safe System Approach is the “how”. The Safe System Approach is an integrated and comprehensive process to improve the safety performance of the transportation system that makes allowance for errors, and aims to eliminate predictable and preventable serious injuries and fatalities.



Figure 1: Vision Zero and the Safe System Approach, courtesy of the Transportation Association of Canada

The Principles of the Safe System Approach are:

- Deaths and serious injuries are unacceptable
- People make mistakes
- People are vulnerable
- Responsibility is shared
- Safety is proactive
- Overlapping measures are critical

RoadSafetyBC is one of the key provincial agencies responsible for road safety and focuses on addressing high-risk driving behaviours (speeding, distracted driving and impaired driving). Although there is agreement among various levels of government that the goal is zero traffic fatalities and serious injuries³, current gaps in accurate data collection and sharing, and a paucity of sustained provincial funding for road safety improvements at the local level⁴ make it challenging for municipalities to make substantial advancements in road safety.

¹ RoadSafetyBC (2024). *Motor Vehicle Related Crashes, Injuries and Fatalities 10-year Statistics for British Columbia, 2014-2023*. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/driving-and-transportation/driving/roadsafetybc/data/bi-2848_roadsafetybc_annual_summary_2.pdf

² *BC Road Safety Strategy 2025*. Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General and Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

³ City of Vancouver sponsored UBCM Resolution Number B7 (2019) *Safer Slower Streets: 30kmh Residential Street Pilot*.

⁴ City of White Rock sponsored UBCM Resolution Number B80 (2007) *UBCM Funding for Road Safety*.

