

A Guide to Safe Routes and Zero Deaths Initiatives

NEW JERSEY
Safe Routes



www.saferoutesnj.org

What are Zero Deaths Initiatives?

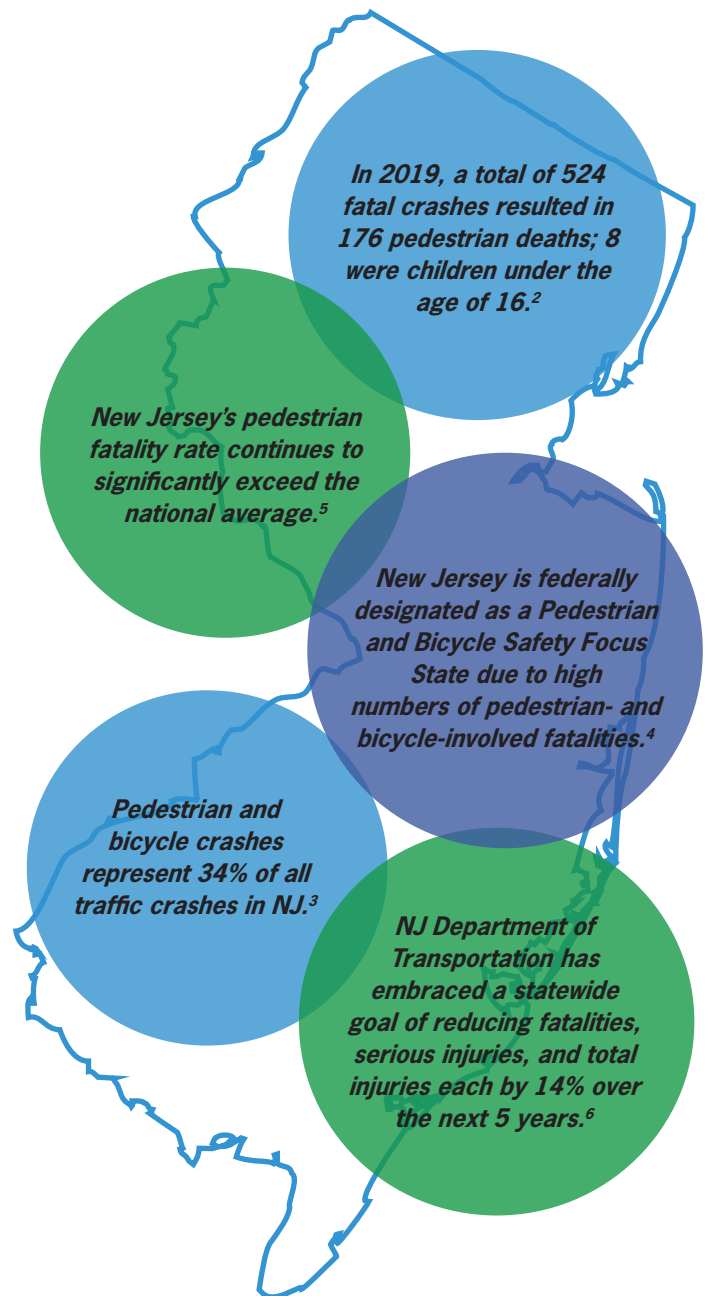
Vision Zero, Road to Zero, and Toward Zero Deaths are the three initiatives at the national, state, and local levels focused on eliminating traffic-related fatalities across the United States. Zero Deaths Initiatives offer a comprehensive strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all.¹

Zero Deaths Initiatives:

- Provide clarity that crashes are preventable and there is no acceptable level of death on our streets.
- Create a plan to eliminate serious and fatal crashes.
- Move beyond blaming individuals for mistakes when better road design that prioritizes safety over speed can prevent injuries and fatalities.
- Recognize road safety as a social equity issue where data-driven decisions prioritize people who have greater risk of injury and death.

A Zero Deaths outlook differs from other approaches to road safety by addressing “upstream” systemic issues with infrastructure design. If safety problems persist, the responsibility returns to the system designers and policymakers to ensure safe conditions. Individuals should still follow the rules, laws, and policies to help create safer travel conditions. However, when a Safe Systems approach is taken, the inevitability of human mistakes is anticipated and accommodated, resulting in less severe injury crashes. Creating child-friendly infrastructure, policies, and educational messages based on that premise is a major focus of the Safe Routes program.

Why This Matters:



2. New Jersey State Police, https://www.njsp.org/info/fatalacc/pdf/swfcs2_19.pdf

3. New Jersey State Police, https://www.njsp.org/info/fatalacc/pdf/swfcs2_19.pdf

4. FHWA Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Focus States and Cities, https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/ped_focus/

5. Pedestrian Traffic Fatalities by State: 2018 Preliminary Data, <https://www.ghsa.org/resources/Pedestrians19>

6. NJ Strategic Highway Safety Plan 2020, <https://www.saferoadsforallnj.com/>

1. Vision Zero Network

What is Safe Routes?

The Safe Routes program is a federal, state, and local effort to improve the health and well-being of children by enabling and encouraging children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school. The goal of the Safe Routes program is to provide safe and equitable access to active transportation for people of all ages and abilities from all backgrounds and neighborhoods in New Jersey.

What do Safe Routes and Zero Deaths have in Common?

Safe Routes and Zero Deaths Initiatives both offer systematic ways to respond to traffic injuries and fatalities by taking a public health approach to addressing poor road design and dangerous road user behaviors. Both initiatives create space for a conversation around safety priorities and identifying populations most at-risk. Safe Routes programs also emphasize children's safety as a priority in Zero Deaths action plans and initiatives through engagement of youth and families in a culture of road safety and creating safer spaces through road design that saves lives and reduces injuries.

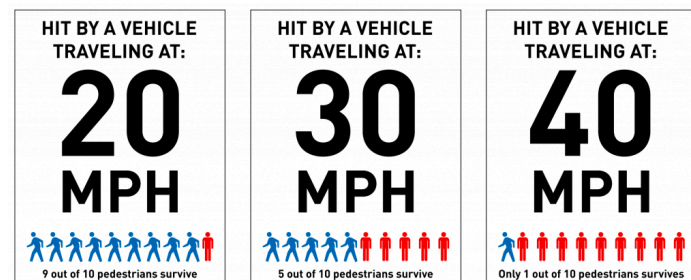
Zero Deaths and Safe Routes initiatives can be used to accomplish mutual goals. Often Safe Routes programs provide a bottom-up approach that starts with parents, students, and community members concerned with dangerous conditions for children, while Zero Deaths initiatives often begin with a commitment from the mayor or other elected officials. Safe Routes and Zero Deaths initiatives address road safety through policies and plans, such as Safe Routes Travel Plans. These plans identify barriers and opportunities for prioritizing improvements for students walking and bicycling to school as well as outline equity-focused and specific, data-driven steps to create transportation systems that prioritize safety, efficiency, and accessibility for all users.



Five Ways to Address Road Safety

1. Safety Over Speed

Roads need to be designed for all users of all ages and abilities. When vehicles traveling at 20 mph collide with pedestrians, fewer than 10% of those struck are killed. At 40 mph, more than 80% of the pedestrians are killed and the remaining 20% are severely injured.⁷ There are several approaches to reducing speeding, especially in school zones. New York City used crash data to prioritize school zones for traffic calming measures such as installing curb extensions, flashing beacons, and speed cameras. In NJ, municipalities have lowered speed limits in school zones below 25 mph to improve safety for children, parents and crossing guards. Local authorities, with roadways under their jurisdiction, may designate by ordinance a reasonable and safe speed limit that is less than 25 mph after conducting an engineering and traffic investigation [N.J.S.A. 39: 4 -98(c)].



Source: seattle.gov

2. Data-Driven Decisions

Data collection on when and where people walk and bike is lacking. When [analyzing data](#) with locations of serious injuries and fatalities, identifying and prioritizing areas around schools, parks, and other community destinations are critical. Breaking down crash data to include victim age and the times of day that youth travel to and from school is important when determining hot spots and clusters. These clusters can help prioritize school zones for traffic calming improvements. Collecting data on the [number of students who walk and bike](#) to and from school is important to Safe Routes evaluation and can be used as a driving force behind Zero Deaths goals.

7. UK Department of Transportation. (London, 1987) *Killing Speed and Saving Lives*



3. Meaningful Involvement and Youth Engagement

Meaningful involvement means that people are informed about activities that may affect their environment and/or health, and have the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process by expressing concerns about their community and to influence regulations, policies, design and implementation. This public involvement process furthers safety and equity goals to protect vulnerable populations. Inviting youth to participate in decision-making is rare yet youth provide a compelling and knowledgeable voice about safety issues and changes needed in their community. Youth will tell you their experiences about where they walk, or where they avoid walking and why. This is often not the adult perspective, however is important to understand. Involving youth in walk/bike audits is one way to create a fun and engaging event that can spark community support for broader reforms. Engaging them early and often is key to successful projects. Youth-oriented groups and organizations could be aligned to have a more direct tie to Safe Routes and Zero Deaths efforts.

4. Policy

To make meaningful change, we need to change policies. School [policies that support walking and bicycling](#) and municipal policies that create safer streets for all are key to sustainable change. Supportive walk and bike to school policies that are formally adopted by school districts standardize expectations, prevent negative or harmful bans from being placed, and encourage active transportation. Policies can help lay the groundwork for better and safer behaviors. Two important policies include Complete and Green Streets. Complete Streets are designed and operated with the safety, mobility, and accessibility needs of users of all ages and abilities in mind. Green Streets is a newer concept that adds vegetation, soils, permeable pavement and other infrastructure designed to capture stormwater runoff and minimize flooding to provide health and safety benefits. The [Complete and Green Streets Policy and Guide for New Jersey](#) highlights a broad range of benefits, promotes equity, recognizes positive economic, environmental and public health outcomes, and presents a path from policy to implementation. Safe Routes to School can provide the catalyst for implementation.

5. Equitable Funding

Safe Routes to School can help prioritize Zero Deaths projects so that no group of people bears a disproportionate share of negative environmental consequences. Funding safety improvements around schools can mean advancing safety, not only through infrastructure improvements, but also through engagement, education, and enforcement strategies. Both Zero Deaths and Safe Routes to School strive to build fairness into transportation funding by prioritizing schools and communities with the highest need for safe walking and bicycling conditions. Both programs pay particular attention to ensuring safe, healthy, and fair outcomes for low-income students, students of color, students of all genders, students with disabilities, and others. Dedicating authority and/or funding to a Safe Routes to School liaison or manager is a way to maximize communication between the municipality, school district, and the regional [NJ Transportation Management Association Safe Routes to School Coordinator](#) in order to coordinate program initiatives and to provide technical assistance, training and outreach to increase walking, bicycling and transit use with a focus on underserved communities.



What can we do?

There are several ways to make sure Zero Deaths and Safe Routes Initiatives are used to accomplish mutual goals. A common first step for both initiatives is to address road safety through policies and plans:

- A *Safe Routes Travel Plan* identifies barriers and opportunities for prioritizing improvements for students walking and bicycling to school. [Completing a Plan](#) builds partnerships between schools, school districts and municipalities and aids in applications for grant funding. Safe Routes Travel Plans should include a vision and action steps to eliminate traffic injuries.
- A *Zero Deaths Action Plan* outlines specific, data-driven steps to create a transportation system that prioritizes safety, efficiency, and accessibility for all users. Focusing safety improvements around schools can mean advancing safety, not only through infrastructure improvements, but also through engagement, education, and enforcement strategies and actions.

What Would New Jersey Look Like if Roadway Deaths Were Eliminated?

Roadway deaths are preventable if we work together to create infrastructure, policies, action plans, and educational messages based on the premise that no child should die on a New Jersey road. Whether you are a municipality, school district, or other organization, we all have an obligation to create a safer future for our kids. We do not have to accept these fatalities and injuries as inevitable. Together, Safe Routes and Zero Deaths programs can make our roads safer for all users.

New Jersey Resources

Visit saferoutesnj.org



To Learn More, Contact:

NJ Safe Routes Resource Center
SRTS@ejb.rutgers.edu
848-932-7901

To find your local Safe Routes coordinator, visit:
saferoutesnj.org

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