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June 8, 2022

Public Safety and Health Committee
City Hall
200 East Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Chair Ald. Jo Casta Zamarripa,

Thank you to the Chair and Public Safety and Health Committee for their important work in making and keeping Milwaukee safe.

I am writing in support of the substitute resolution committing the City to become a Vision Zero Community. Achieving zero road deaths is possible and it is important that the City actively support and strive for this goal.

The key concepts of Vision Zero are worth highlighting.

First, as a community it is important to acknowledge that death and serious injuries are unacceptable. The goal of Vision Zero is not to eliminate all crashes, but to ensure that when crashes do happen, they do not result in death or serious injury.

Second, crashes are rarely accidents. Accidents imply that nothing could have been done to prevent the incident and/or no one is at fault. We should strive to eliminate the term “accident” from our vocabulary when talking about vehicle crashes. Relatedly, we should work to avoid language that suggests that the vehicle somehow caused the crash all on its own.

Third, equity should be at the forefront. Black, Brown, Indigenous, and low-income communities are disproportionately impacted by dangerous streets and traffic violence. These communities must be prioritized. Vision Zero must not result in over-policing of these communities, which is why engineering and design-based solutions are nearly always preferential to enforcement-based solutions.

Fourth, slow speeds save lives. A person hit by someone driving a car at 20 MPH has a 90% chance of surviving, at 30 MPH the chances of survival drip to 60%. Relatedly, large SUVs and pick up trucks are also more likely to hit and kill pedestrians. The City has many levers to discourage these oversized vehicles within the city.

Fifth, Vision Zero requires the commitment and work of multiple departments, agencies, and stakeholders, and people living and visiting Milwaukee.

Sincerely,

James Davies,
Executive Director