

August 30, 2021

Alderman Michael Murphy
Chair, Finance and Personnel Committee
Milwaukee Common Council
200 E Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

RE: Request for Milwaukee Common Council to provide initial funding for a Comprehensive Vision Zero Program

The Coalition for Safe Driving MKE appreciates Mayor Barrett's initial proposal to fund a \$6.15M "Reckless Driving Initiative" using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. We believe this is a good start to help address Milwaukee's reckless driving epidemic, but we ask the Milwaukee Common Council Finance and Personnel Committee to strengthen this proposal.

Specifically, we request the Mayor and council to allocate an additional \$1.0M (either through ARPA or through the City's budgeting process) to provide initial funding for a Vision Zero program, which would provide a comprehensive framework for traffic safety efforts. We request this initial \$1.0M of Vision Zero funding for the next fiscal year with the potential for more sustained funding into the future.

Vision Zero policies establish *comprehensive* approaches to traffic safety and are being adopted in communities across the country to ultimately eliminate deaths and serious injuries from traffic crashes (<https://visionzeronetWORK.org/>). For example, the City of Madison (with less than half the population of Milwaukee and a lower traffic fatality rate) initially allocated \$500,000 toward Vision Zero. The Mayor's "Reckless Driving Initiative" proposal touches on several important components of Vision Zero, but it does not offer an overarching comprehensive framework. To create sustained momentum behind the many valuable but disparate efforts being done by city agencies to address reckless driving, we recommend:

1) Create a Vision Zero Office within the Mayor's Office. The new Vision Zero Office should have new, dedicated, full-time staff. This office would spearhead traffic safety efforts, ensuring collaboration between departments (e.g., Department of Public Works, Milwaukee Police Department, Milwaukee Health Department) and key community stakeholder groups. This office would coordinate and create targeted planning documents and monitor progress on reckless driving and other traffic safety goals.

2) Dedicate funding toward the following Vision Zero areas:

- *Engineering.* Safer streets require engineering improvements (redesign travel lanes, intersections, and street crossings for slower speeds). Specifically, we support the Wisconsin Bike Fed's "Call to Action: Safer Streets with ARPA Funds" (<https://wisconsinbikefed.org/local-advocacy/call-to-action-safer-and-healthier-streets-with-arpa-funds/>), which asks the City to:
 - a) Implement critical pedestrian focused infrastructure (make improvements to the Pedestrian High Injury Network).
 - b) Lower speed limits and narrow roadways (reduce speed limits to 25 mph, narrow crossings, and repurpose lanes for physically separated bike lanes, wider sidewalks, and/or dedicated MCTS bus lanes).

- c) Expand the City’s “all ages and abilities” protected bicycle-lane network and bicycle boulevard system (in conjunction with updating the City’s Bicycle Master Plan).

The overall goal of engineering efforts to address reckless driving should be to build self-enforcing streets, where dangerous behaviors are mechanically difficult if not impossible to perform.

- *Education.* Ensure drivers and all street users know rules and consider the needs of other people.
 - a) Provide more funding for driver education. While Milwaukee Public Schools is offering driver education classes, other organizations also provide driver education to people across a range of ages and experience levels. Many Milwaukee drivers have not received training and/or are unlicensed, and educational organizations need more resources to conduct outreach and offer classes.
 - b) Implement a media blitz (including sports stars and other leaders) to inform community members about efforts to combat reckless driving and reduce traffic injuries and fatalities (help more people understand that action is being taken to address this serious problem).
- *Enforcement.* Reduce unsafe behaviors and develop a shared culture of looking out for other street users. The current “Reckless Driving Initiative” proposal includes \$1.15M for the Milwaukee Police Department (including police motorcycles, mobile computers, and overtime). Recognizing ongoing efforts to build stronger relationships between law enforcement and community members, we recommend that this funding be provided with several expectations:
 - a) Support police time/overtime to walk the 10 most dangerous corridors of Milwaukee’s Pedestrian High Injury Network with community members (experience these streets from the perspective of pedestrians).
 - b) Purchase e-assist bicycles so that officers could more comfortably experience the streets from the perspective of Milwaukee’s cyclists.
 - c) Where and when enforcement is used as a tool to reduce reckless driving, the Milwaukee Police Department should be required to provide quarterly reports on the effectiveness of enforcement efforts. These publicly available reports should document total numbers and types of tickets, warnings, and other traffic stops made for the purpose of traffic safety. They should summarize traffic stops by geographic location, time of day, and day of week. Importantly, the reports should also summarize effectiveness by showing trends in crashes (injuries and fatalities), speeding, and other behaviors following enforcement activities.

The Vision Zero Office should also engage with members of the judicial system to discuss possible methods of restorative justice for people who are stopped for traffic violations (<https://visionzeronetWORK.org/restorative-justice-strategies-for-safe-streets/>). There are other ways besides ticketing to encourage driver accountability. For example, people could do community service as a bike and walk safety instructor or as a school crossing guard. People could also participate in harm-reduction counseling, where offenders detail their experience and how they impacted others and themselves.

- *Equity.* Meet the diverse needs of all groups. The Vision Zero office, in collaboration with city departments, should engage with community members about strategies to address reckless

driving and improve traffic safety and potentially use different approaches in different neighborhoods. Investments should be prioritized in areas of the city with the greatest traffic safety needs.

- *Evaluation.* Establish performance targets that can be monitored over time. The City should set clear, numeric goals to a) reduce annual traffic fatalities and serious injuries, b) reduce behaviors that lead to crashes, such as speeding, red-light-running, and passing on the right in bike lanes and parking lanes, and c) improve public perceptions of traffic safety.

3) Anticipating progress from initial funding, we recommend establishing sustained funding in Milwaukee's Budget for Vision Zero. Vision Zero engineering, education, and enforcement efforts are likely to be most effective if they are sustained over time. Other strategies that should be considered for funding in the long term include more resources for emergency responders, more support for victims of traffic-related trauma (including family and friends), new resources to pilot-test automated traffic enforcement, and more support for economic opportunities in Milwaukee's most distressed neighborhoods (e.g., fund entrepreneurs starting businesses, attract new businesses, create public-sector job opportunities). We applaud the initial "Reckless Driving Initiative" funding, but it represents a temporary, one-time, band-aid. We appreciate your efforts to take action and address this systemic and long-term problem.

Sincerely,

The Coalition for Safe Driving MKE

The Coalition for Safe Driving MKE includes representatives from Community Insurance Information Center, Dominican Center, Employ Milwaukee, Froedtert Hospital, Grasslyn Manor Block Association, Milwaukee Safe & Healthy Streets, Near West Side Partners, Northwest Side Community Development Corporation, Running Rebels Community Organization, Safe and Sound, Sherman Park Community Association, UW-Milwaukee Department of Urban Planning, United Methodist Children's Services of Wisconsin, Urban Underground, VIA Community Development Corporation, Villard Avenue Business Improvement District, Wisconsin Bike Fed, Wisconsin Community Services, and Wisconsin Justice Initiative, as well as other citizen members.