

# Vision Zero Plans: A Systems Perspective to Planning

The purpose of this brief is to assist practitioners, who may be developing or updating Vision Zero Plans, in understanding how previously published Plans have included a systems perspective or approach.

A systems perspective often involves moving from observing crash events and patterns to surfacing the underlying structures that drive those events, meaning the interconnections between people, resources, policies, and norms/culture.

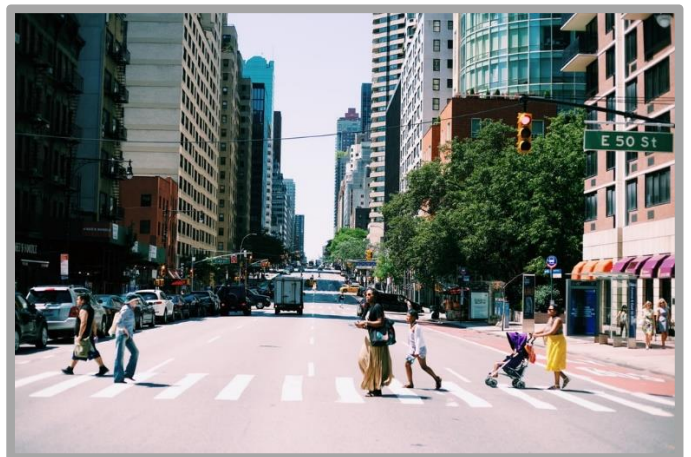
This requires an intention to view a situation more fully, to recognize that our transportation safety problems are driven by interrelated factors, to recognize that the choices we make may impact other parts of the system, and to think critically about how and where to most effectively intervene, often expanding ideas beyond traditional approaches.

A systems perspective involves collaborative problem-solving and working together to develop a shared vision of these structures and interrelationships.

We analyzed thirty-three US Vision Zero plans published between 2014 and 2019 for evidence of integrating a systems perspective to Vision Zero planning.

We searched for several elements indicative of a systems approach, including demonstrating an awareness of technical and contextual aspects of the problem and potential unintended consequences.

We highlight example features of a systems perspective in Vision Zero planning in the **Table** and discuss how systems perspectives might be better incorporated into future Vision Zero plans.



Example Features of a Vision Zero Systems Perspective in Plans	Findings, Examples, and Recommendations
<p>Considers social, political, or cultural aspects that may be affecting road safety outcomes</p>	<p><i>Overall, 58% of plans included some consideration of the larger context contributing to road safety outcomes (e.g., media role, access to social services to reduce risk behaviors, land use regulation).</i></p> <p><b>Example:</b> “Development patterns may also have a connection to some of our most vulnerable populations. Research reveals disparities in safety for minorities, people with lower income, and for those with less education. These groups are increasingly priced out of Austin’s most urban neighborhoods, which often have shorter blocks, narrower street widths, trees, and a gridded street network, all of which contribute to slower and safer streets. Traffic deaths and injuries may be colorblind, but Black and Hispanic communities are disproportionately affected, and many of the corridors with high numbers of injuries and deaths are located in areas with higher poverty rates.” (<a href="#">Austin, page 18</a>)</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> When describing the community, consider the larger context and environment (e.g., social, political, cultural) contributing to serious traffic-related injuries and deaths to inform more effective strategies to reach the goal of Vision Zero.</p>
<p>Changing “system structures” through relevant Vision Zero interventions</p>	<p><i>Overall, 91% of plans included at least one action targeting structural interventions (e.g., new communication channels, breaking down siloes, information flow, and data sharing, coalitions and task forces, advocacy initiatives).</i></p> <p><b>Example:</b> “Clear, usable data that is available to both the City and to the public is essential to progress, not to mention the secondary benefits like telling a compelling story on progress and outcomes. We will take these actions.” (<a href="#">Denver, page 22</a>)</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> Attention to developing, adapting, or expanding cross-sector partnerships and opportunities for collaboration may promote more influential interventions within “system structures”.</p>
<p>Anticipates potential challenges to intervening in the system</p>	<p><i>Overall, only 42% of plans explore potential challenges to implementation (e.g., funding, legal challenges of automated enforcement, policy hurdles to reduce speed limit, cultural prioritization of speed over safety, managing development without displacement).</i></p> <p><b>Example:</b> “Additional challenges and opportunities that lie in the path of Vision Zero are ... managing growth and development in the City without suffering the negative effects of displacement and gentrification. The benefits of a safer, more walkable and bike-friendly community must be shared equitably among Jersey City’s diverse populations.” (<a href="#">Jersey City, page 54</a>)</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> Vision Zero plans should consider potential challenges, obstacles, and negative consequences to the planned actions. Understanding and anticipating potential system reactions to a new action can allow for more informed responses in the future and better planning in the present.</p>