

# COMMUNITY TRAFFIC SAFETY COALITION

of SANTA CRUZ COUNTY



[www.sctrafficsafety.org](http://www.sctrafficsafety.org) ♦ [www.facebook.com/sctrafficsafety](https://www.facebook.com/sctrafficsafety) ♦ [CTSC@santacruzcounty.us](mailto:CTSC@santacruzcounty.us) ♦ (831) 454-7551

## CTSC Vision Zero Work Plan

### Fiscal Years 2026-2028

#### CTSC Vision and Mission

The Community Traffic Safety Coalition (CTSC) of Santa Cruz County envisions safe, accessible, and equitable transportation for all. The mission of CTSC is to prevent traffic-related injuries and fatalities for all road users, with a focus on people bicycling, walking, and rolling. The vision and mission of CTSC align with Vision Zero, an international policy that aims to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries while increasing safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all.

To help achieve the vision and mission, CTSC supported the cities of Watsonville, Santa Cruz, and Scotts Valley, along with unincorporated Santa Cruz County, in passing Vision Zero policies to eliminate traffic-related fatalities and severe injuries. CTSC adopted the Safe System Approach to help jurisdictions reach this goal more effectively. Many countries have adopted this approach to achieve Vision Zero, including the U.S. Department of Transportation (see appendix A for more information on the Safe System Approach).

#### Vision Zero Needs Statement

Data analysis and community engagement indicates that traffic violence is a serious problem in the county. The high number of reported pedestrian and bicyclist injuries and fatalities over the years led CTSC to Vision Zero. As the coalition and community partners move to increase and enhance active transportation, safety for bicyclists and pedestrians is more important than ever.

#### 2023 Statewide OTS CRASH RANKINGS\*

\*Most current rankings available

According to the 2023 California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) rankings, **Santa Cruz County**, including the cities of Watsonville, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, and Capitola, ranked among the **10 highest (worst) of all 58 California counties** for the below crash categories involving motor vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

The rankings are based on a variety of factors, including **observed crash counts, population size, and total vehicle miles traveled.**

### **Santa Cruz County**

<b>Crash Type (victims killed and injured)</b>	<b>Crash Ranking</b>
Bicyclists	1st
Bicyclists (under age 15)	3rd
Had Been Drinking Driver (under 21)	8th

The Cities of Santa Cruz and Watsonville ranked in the top 10 among 103 similarly sized cities for the categories below.

### **Santa Cruz**

<b>Crash Type (victims killed and injured)</b>	<b>Crash Ranking</b>
Bicyclists	2nd

### **Watsonville**

<b>Crash Type (victims killed and injured)</b>	<b>Crash Ranking</b>
Pedestrians (under age 15)	3rd
Pedestrians	4th

Capitola ranked in the top 10 among 74 similarly sized cities for the categories below.

### **Capitola**

<b>Crash Type (victims killed and injured)</b>	<b>Crash Ranking</b>
Pedestrians (65+)	1st
Pedestrians	5th
Bicyclists	2nd
Bicyclists (under age 15)	2nd
Alcohol Involved (under age 21)	6th
Alcohol Involved	10th

The city of Scotts Valley did not rank in any of the top 10 categories.

[\(https://www.ots.ca.gov/media-and-research/crash-rankings/\)](https://www.ots.ca.gov/media-and-research/crash-rankings/)

The UC Berkeley SafeTREC's Transportation Injury Mapping System (TIMS) shows the number of people killed or seriously injured in Santa Cruz County in the 3-year period from 2021 to 2023 increased to 168 people on average as compared to 155 people on average from 2018 to 2020. Statewide trends for the same 3-year periods (2021-2023 compared to 2018-2020) also show an increasing trend for those killed or seriously injured from 17,236 to 19,122, respectively ([TIMS](#))

## Centering Equity

At its core, Vision Zero emphasizes that all people have a right to move about their communities safely. That goal cannot be met without acknowledging and addressing racial and socioeconomic disparities in the transportation system. These disparities in transportation are evident across communities worldwide.

Throughout the nation, Vision Zero's data-driven analysis reveals a concentration of traffic safety issues that suggest racialized patterns of disinvestment and neglect. Between 2015 and 2019, the Governor's Highway Safety Association found that the rate of traffic deaths per 100,000 was 146 for American Indians/Alaskan Natives and 69 for African Americans compared to 58 for the total United States population ("[An Analysis of Traffic Fatalities by Race and Ethnicity](#)"). A study conducted by Dangerous by Design found that between 2016-2020, people of color, particularly Native and Black Americans, were more likely to die while walking than any other race or ethnic group ([Dangerous by Design 2022](#)).

Locally, the impact of crashes is also not felt equally. A study done by the CTSC in 2017 found that more than half of Santa Cruz County's fatal and life changing injury crashes occur on only 6% of our streets. More than half of these dangerous streets are in low-income neighborhoods ([sctrafficsafety.org](#)).

There is tremendous income disparity in Santa Cruz County. According to the 2018-2022 U.S. Census, 12.5% of Santa Cruz County residents were living in poverty while the median household income was \$104,409 ([census.gov/quickfacts](#)). Santa Cruz County also has high rates of houselessness. The 2022-2023 Grand Jury Report stated that Santa Cruz County "has more homeless people per capita than anywhere else in California; some 2,300 of our residents are without housing" ([Grand Jury Report 2022-2023](#)). Because unhoused individuals often live in dangerous locations, most notably along high-speed roadways, they shoulder a disproportionate share of traffic-related injuries and fatalities ([Sonoma Vision Zero Action Plan, 2022](#)).

CTSC focuses traffic safety efforts on communities that are disproportionately impacted by traffic violence, including lower-income areas and school districts, unhoused individuals, people of color, and migrant and seasonal farmworkers. The coalition will utilize newly developed equity data tools, such as the [Regional Transportation Commission's Santa Cruz County Transportation Equity Plan](#), [USDOT Equitable Transportation Community \(ETC\) Explorer](#) and the [Caltrans Transportation Equity Index \(EQI\)](#), to gain greater insight into the impacts of inequity on transportation in the county. The coalition is now in its ninth year of Vision Zero work, and this plan will continue that work with an emphasis on equity into 2028.

## Vision Zero Work Plan Objectives and Activities for Fiscal Years 2026-2028

**GOAL:** Promote and support Vision Zero policies, task forces, and action plans in all jurisdictions throughout the county utilizing the Safe System Approach.

Four out of five jurisdictions within Santa Cruz County have adopted Vision Zero. The City of Watsonville passed a Vision Zero policy in 2018, formed the Watsonville Vision Zero Task Force in 2020, and developed their first Vision Zero Action Plan in 2021. The City of Santa Cruz adopted Vision Zero in 2019. Unincorporated Santa Cruz County (“the County”) and the City of Scotts Valley passed resolutions in August 2022.

The County received federal Safe Streets & Roads for All (SS4A) funding in 2023 to develop new Vision Zero Action Plans for the County and Scotts Valley. Watsonville is also included in the SS4A grant to update their Action Plan. The County, Scotts Valley, and Watsonville have done extensive community outreach and data collection to effectively develop or update their Action Plans. More recently, Santa Cruz received SS4A funding and is in the process of collaborating with partners and collecting data.

CTSC continues to promote Vision Zero adoption and implementation within jurisdictions. CTSC plays an advocacy role in supporting the jurisdictions in implementing Vision Zero, as well as developing and maintaining collaborative relationships for other grant funded traffic safety programs that support Vision Zero. Unlike each of the county’s jurisdictions, CTSC can neither create nor implement Vision Zero policies, task forces, or action plans (see Appendix B for more information on CTSC’s roles and responsibilities).

CTSC will maintain and enhance countywide Vision Zero collaboration and support across jurisdictions through the below objectives, which align with the five elements of the Safe System Approach: Safer People, Safer Roads, Safer Vehicles, Safer Speeds, and Post-Crash Care.

### Primary Objectives

**Safer People:** Encourage safe, responsible behavior by road users and create conditions that prioritize their ability to reach their destination unharmed.

- Staff programs:
  - Child Passenger Safety (CPS) educates low-income parents and caregivers on properly securing young passengers in their vehicles and distributes car seats through CPS technicians.
  - Bicycle Traffic School (BTS) quarterly classes provide a diversion program for bicycle traffic violators and educate interested members of the public on bicycle safety. Enhance promotion of BTS through school newsletters, flyers, and social media.
  - Ride n’ Stride offers safe walking and biking presentations in English and Spanish to elementary schools and parent/caregiver groups throughout the county, with an emphasis on lower-income school districts.

- Bicycle Helmet Fit and Distribution at schools, community events, and through established helmet fit sites, focusing on communities lacking resources, such as unhoused persons and lower-income individuals and families.
- Staff activities:
  - Share timely traffic safety news, events, PSAs, and education on CTSC Facebook and Instagram platforms.
  - Maintain the CTSC web page to promote traffic safety programs and Vision Zero efforts.
  - Offer educational materials in English, Spanish, and indigenous languages spoken within the community (e.g., Mixteco, Triqui, and Zapoteco) when possible.
- Conduct a county-wide Vision Zero educational campaign, including:
  - Promote education on evidence-based traffic safety strategies, including roundabouts, speed bumps, lane narrowing, separated bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and enhanced lighting and crossings.
  - Develop a Vision Zero social media toolkit for use across jurisdictions to support consistent messaging and broader reach.
  - Develop educational materials promoting the use of “crash” and “collision” instead of “accident” to shift public perception from inevitability to preventability.
  - Produce educational videos on Vision Zero, traffic safety, and CTSC initiatives to increase public awareness and engagement.
- Coordinate an annual Week Without Driving campaign and community event in partnership with Santa Cruz METRO and the County’s Community Development and Infrastructure Department.
- Develop and disseminate educational materials and deliver presentations to promote pedestrian and bicycle safety, with an emphasis on e-bike safety.
- Collaborate with the County Substance Use Disorders Services (SUDS) program on DUI/impaired driving prevention.
- Host events for elected officials and relevant government staff to experience traveling through the county using active transportation.
- Develop questions for candidates running for office regarding safe and active transportation.

Safer Roads: Design roadway environments to mitigate human mistakes and reduce the chances of severe injury and death to facilitate safe travel by the most vulnerable road users (e.g., pedestrians and bicyclists). The role of the CTSC is to support and advocate for local jurisdictions to design and build roadway improvements that increase safety for all road users.

- Assist in collecting and analyzing crash and safety data to identify and evaluate problem areas and traffic situations.
- Include community members and community feedback when planning and designing traffic safety systems and infrastructure projects.
- Incorporate system-level changes that allow for consideration of project impacts on those using active transportation.
- Advocate for evidenced-based traffic safety approaches (e.g., roundabouts, speed bumps, narrowing travel lanes, separated bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and improved lighting and pedestrian crossings).

- Encourage funding and land use planning to increase opportunities for more active and sustainable forms of transportation.
- Advocate for utilizing pop-up infrastructure demonstration projects prior to design and construction of permanent road improvements.
- Complete bicycle and pedestrian safety audits to proactively identify dangerous road locations that can inform jurisdictions of high priority areas for road safety improvements.
- Promote [RTC's Hazard Report](#) to improve roadways and enhance pedestrian and bicyclist safety.

Safer Vehicles: Expand the availability of vehicle systems and features that help to prevent crashes and minimize the impact of crashes on both occupants and non-occupants.

- Child Passenger Safety (CPS):
  - Provides free car seats and car seat inspections to lower-income families to help ensure greater vehicle safety for young occupants.
  - Keeps informed about the latest car seat and vehicle restraint system safety technology and recall information.
  - Uses the National Digital Car Seat Check form to improve consistency, accuracy, and quality of child passenger safety data collected during car seat check events and car seat appointments.
  - Provides input on local, state, or federal policies and designs that make vehicles safer, such as collision avoidance systems and connected vehicle technology.
- Provide education on safe vehicles and enhanced safety features, including the installation of backup cameras.
- Advocate for appropriate safety measures on large vehicles (e.g., safety features for limited visibility and lateral protective devices (LPDs), also known as side guards, on commercial vehicles)

Safer Speeds: Promote safer speeds in all roadway environments through a combination of roadway design, speed-limit setting, education, and enforcement.

- Traffic Calming staff program:
  - Provides trash can stickers to slow traffic on residential streets in the City of Santa Cruz, and PACE car stickers to residents in all local jurisdictions to slow traffic on residential streets.
- Collaborate with jurisdictions on speed management (e.g., funding to implement temporary projects that slow vehicle speeds and sharing research reports on effective measures to slow drivers).

- Promote lowering speeds on high injury corridors to reduce fatal and serious injury crashes.
- Engage with the local government to address traffic speed issues that community members experience.
- Support projects that slow vehicle speeds and protect bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Advocate for installing cameras at busy intersections to capture red-light running and speeding, especially at school zones and high-crash locations.

Post-Crash Care: Enhance the survivability of crashes through expedient access to emergency medical care. Enhance trauma support to crash victims and generate greater awareness of crashes and the impact they have on communities.

- Post online acknowledgements and response to lives lost and those severely injured.
- Develop and share annual crash reports with elected officials, law enforcement agencies, fire departments, the County Office of Education and the public to highlight local traffic safety issues.
- Involve multiple stakeholders, such as fire and police departments, to review factors that contribute to local serious injury and fatal crashes.
- Assist in identifying the built environment factors that impact crash dynamics and increase understanding that the designers of those systems hold responsibility as well to reduce “victim blaming.”
- Work with law enforcement agencies to share local crash data and report on traffic citation trends, especially regarding e-bikes.
- Assist jurisdictions in developing a plan to respond to fatal and severe injury crashes.
- Participate in the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims or other annual memorial events.
- Develop and explore resources to support families who have been impacted by traffic violence, including resources from Families for Safe Streets.
- Reach out to crash survivors and individuals who have lost loved ones to hear their stories and engage them in generating greater awareness to humanize these traumatic experiences.

## **Appendix A**

### The Safe System Approach

The Safe System Approach incorporates the following 6 principles:

1. **Death and Serious Injuries are Unacceptable.** A Safe System Approach prioritizes the elimination of crashes that result in death and serious injuries.
2. **Humans Make Mistakes.** People will inevitably make mistakes and make decisions that can lead or contribute to crashes, but the transportation system can be designed and operated to accommodate certain types and levels of human mistakes to avoid death and serious injuries when a crash occurs.
3. **Humans are Vulnerable.** Human bodies have physical limits for tolerating crash forces before death or serious injury occurs; therefore, it is critical to design and operate a transportation system that is human-centric and accommodates those physical human vulnerabilities.
4. **Responsibility is Shared.** All stakeholders—including government at all levels, industry, non-profit/advocacy, researchers, and the public—are vital to preventing fatalities and serious injuries on our roadways.
5. **Safety is Proactive.** Proactive tools should be used to identify and address safety issues in the transportation system, rather than waiting for crashes to occur and react afterwards.
6. **Redundancy is Crucial.** Reducing risks requires that all parts of the transportation system be strengthened, so that if one part fails, the other parts still protect people.

Unlike prior approaches that prioritize human behavior and place most of the blame on the individuals involved in a crash, the Safe System Approach works by building and reinforcing multiple layers of protection to prevent crashes from happening and minimizing harm to individuals when crashes occur. This holistic approach incorporates the following 5 objectives to achieve zero traffic deaths and serious injuries:

**Safer People:** Encourage safe, responsible behavior by road users and create conditions that prioritize their ability to reach their destination unharmed.

**Safer Roads:** Design roadway environments to mitigate human mistakes and reduce the chances of severe injury and death to facilitate safe travel by the most vulnerable road users.

**Safer Vehicles:** Expand the availability of vehicle systems and features that help to prevent crashes and minimize the impact of crashes on both occupants and non-occupants.

**Safer Speeds:** Promote safer speeds in all roadway environments through a combination of roadway design, speed-limit setting, education, and enforcement.

Post-Crash Care: Enhance the survivability of crashes through expedient access to emergency medical care. Enhance trauma support to crash victims and generate greater awareness of crashes and the impact they have on communities.



<https://www.transportation.gov/NRSS/SafeSystem>

## **Appendix B**

### CTSC Roles and Responsibilities

The coalition staff are employed by the County of Santa Cruz Health Services Agency (HSA) in the Public Health Division and are responsible for assisting the coalition in managing its operations, including coalition meetings, member communication, and community engagement, as well as work plan development, implementation, and evaluation. The coalition members and partner agencies actively participate in meetings and play an advisory role in fiscal management and strategic planning. Members and partner agencies take on specific work plan tasks as appropriate. Two coalition leaders (Co-Chairs) are elected by coalition members for two-year terms and are responsible for facilitating coalition meetings, providing expertise and guidance to coalition staff, and signing coalition letters.

CTSC will provide support, technical assistance, and resources to jurisdictions and the community to implement Vision Zero, as well as develop and maintain collaborative relationships for other grant funded traffic safety programs that support Vision Zero. The Coalition and staff are also committed to providing traffic safety programming, such as the Ride n' Stride education program, the Bicycle Traffic

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School diversion program, Bicycle Helmet Fit and Distribution Sites, participation in Bike/Walk to School and other community outreach events, Pace Car and Trash Can Sticker traffic calming programs, maintenance of the CTSC website at [sctrafficsafety.org](http://sctrafficsafety.org), Facebook and Instagram platforms, and traffic related injury and fatality crash data.