

Vision Zero Council
March 27, 2024 Meeting Minutes
9:00 am – 11:00 am
This virtual public meeting was hosted on Zoom

Council Members Present: Garrett Eucalitto, Susan Logan, Jackie McMahon, Jim Polites (representing Tony Guerrero), Alexander Cintron, Jon Slifka, Keith Norton

Council Members Absent: Tony Guerrero, Office of Early Childhood

Other Attendees: Aaron Swanson, Aaron Nash, Eric Jackson, Anne Kleza, Phil Mainiero, Terri Thompson, John Acampora, Shaun Formica, Jake Fusco, Charles Harlow, Travis Gendron, Phyllis DiFiore, Joseph Balskus, Andy Greenawalt, Cora Barber, Dimitris Koutoumbas, Kristen Levesque, Laura Baum, Eytayo Olaleye, Emily Burnaman, Mathew Lieber, Jay Stange, Josh Morgan, Emily Ferreira, Kate Rozen, Allen Friedrich, Craig Yannes, Joseph Cristalli, Katherine Rattan, Roger Krahn, Christine Conte, Robert Dickinson, Mike Allen, Tracy Noble, Charles Foster, Kate Farrar, Ryan Casman, Ashley Taffe, Alex Slatky, Tom Russell, Flavia Pereira, Anna Stern, Bryan Pavlik, Amy Watkins, Elizabeth Keyes, Natasha Fatu, WTNH News8

I. **Adoption of 12/12/2023 Meeting Minutes**

-Motion by Susan Logan, second by John Slifka, no abstentions.

II. **Legislative Update**

- HB 5328: AAC Automated Traffic Safety Enforcement in Work Zones and Municipalities
-Work Zone Speed Cameras & Municipal Speed and Red Light Cameras
- SB 424: AA Reducing the BAC Limits for Impaired Driving & Boating
- HB 5330: AA Implementing Recommendation of the DOT
-Bicycle Traffic Control Signals, Variable Speed Limits, Motorcycle Helmets, Reckless Driving
- HB 5204: An Act Concerning the Registration and Use of Low-Speed Vehicles
- SB 186: AA Establishing Weight Tolerance Exemptions for Electric Commercial Vehicles and Registration of Certain Pick-up Trucks
- HB 5484: AAC Tree and Vegetation Management Guidelines by DOT
- SB 289: AAC The Authority of the DEEP and DOT over Vegetation Management
- HB 5329: AAC Road Safety Audits by the DOT
- SB 185: AAC School Buses Equipped with Seat Safety Belts

a.) Questions from Council

Commissioner Garret Eucalitto: So one item I think we forgot to add in was Senate Bill 423 I think it is which is a different form of 0.05% where it essentially is a non-criminal offense. From 0.05% to 0.079% so both bills advanced out of the transportation committee and so we'll see what the legislature decides to do. They move forward with two different versions of trying to address impaired driving between point 0.05% and point 0.08% this year. One thing I'll add too, I asked the team to include a whole host of types of safety legislation here. I think when think about Vision 0, we really need to mean 0: 0 deaths, 0 injuries. So including vegetation management may seem a little bit odd, but back in 2016 we had twenty-nine people, just on state roads not local roads, who were killed either from a tree falling on their vehicle or them crashing into a tree. In 2023 that was down to I think around twelve people so we're making progress and saving lives from people crashing into trees or having tree branches fall on them. It's one of those avoidable, hopefully avoidable deaths and injuries we can try to eliminate as we move towards a goal of 0 fatalities on our roadways. So any questions or any other bills that other agencies are following that you want to bring up for the council's awareness.

III. Presentation: UConn Connecticut Transportation Safety Research Center-Crash Data Dashboard Update

a.) Questions from Council

Commissioner Garrett Eucalitto: One first question I have for you is, and maybe it's just clarification point for people who don't often use the database or the crash data repository. So sometimes we'll see different numbers for how many fatalities or injuries are out there and can you just describe a little bit how there's a difference between the NITSA FARS (Fatality Analysis Reporting System) data, and so there's a lag between when NITSA will finalize any crash numbers or fatal numbers of injury versus what UConn, CTDOT and others will see in the repository?

Aaron Nash: I'll defer to Dr. Jackson.

Eric Jackson: Sure, happy to take that on. So there's several different data sources that we use to compile that data. UConn actually gets data directly from the OCME's office, the chief medical examiner's office. Some of the data that we have within the repository, those fatal reports take quite a while for police departments to finalize. So those reports come in maybe even six to eight months after the crash has actually occurred. So on the fatal ticker that we have and the weekly exports we create those come out of the OCME's office. So those are generated as soon as we are notified that there's been a fatality and then the repository often lags because we're waiting on the actual report to come in from the police departments. And then once it goes over to NITSA there's a whole another level of analysis to take place. Aaron talked about the 720 days that a fatality has to occur in after the crash, but there's also information that NITSA kind of processes and puts in and then the FARS (Fatality Analysis Reporting System) team at the DOT will decide if a crash was intentional or if there was a suicide or if it was of natural causes. So you'll see those fatal numbers actually fluctuate and maybe even reduce over time as the FARS (Fatality Analysis Reporting System) team at DOT starts investigating each individual crash. So each data source we have has a little bit different numbers, but each one is trying to do its best to try and figure out exactly where we're headed fatal trend wise.

Commissioner Garrett Eucalitto: Great and with respect to the new vehicle data dashboard-so one thing that we're seeing a lot of that there's a lot of discussion about the size of vehicles and the weights of the vehicles potentially likely being a contributing factor in more and more fatalities for

pedestrians and serious injuries for pedestrians. Will that dashboard in the future be able to differentiate or be able to parse out vehicles based on; model, size, weight? Do you think that's something in the future could be possible?

Aaron Nash: So we do have a vehicle body type by year graphic shown. It lists, this is the top ten, so we're trying to again truncate this list down to make it just a little bit usable. Passenger car is the highest that goes to SUV, pickup, passenger van, heavy trucks greater than 10,000 pounds. The vehicle model, we did look at that, but because it's, I believe it's free text on the MUC form it's a bit inconsistent. We don't get, it's kind of something I was looking at, right? "How many Volkswagens are out there and accidents versus, Subarus" type thing. But unfortunately, we have to normalize the data first in order to get it to a usable format and that's something we haven't really looked at yet because of time. I don't know if you want to elaborate on that, Eric.

Eric Johnson: Yeah, we also have the VIN number of each individual vehicle. So if we can actually hit, a then database that will give us gross vehicle weight or vehicle size or some of those statistics and make and model information, in future databases we may be able to start auto-populating some of that. So when we look towards the transition to MUC 6, we're going to start really looking at a lot of the data linkage opportunities that we have and that's definitely going to be one of the opportunities is what other federal databases exist out there that we can consume and pull in data that you know police officers don't have to enter on the side of the road.

Commissioner Garrett Eucalitto: That's great. Thank you, then a final question for me is on the totality of the repository and the Story Maps: Is there an ability and I saw someone put in a question from the public about being able to parse out which ones have the highest number of crashes, like which segments of roads have the highest level of crashes. Is that data able to be parsed out?

Eric Johnson: Yes, I can take that one, Aaron. So we have within CTI and the safety center, we have a tool that does that that's called the Connecticut Roadway Safety Management System, CRSMS. That follows the highway safety manual methods, the six-step process to be able to identify safety issues and then address them. So we have a network screening tool that's part of that, it's more statistics based and normalizes the data where the crash data repository is just more crash frequency based. So there's two different kind of methods and in the way that we look at the data whether it's crash frequency or if we really try and get into where are we seeing crashes overrepresented within our transportation network. So we have a completely separate tool that does the safety management and network screening process.

Commissioner Garrett Eucalitto: Thanks and just to clarify the vehicle one is still in QA here at DOT so it's not available for the public yet. Once it gets through the DOT process here, UCONN is going to release that right?

Aaron Nash: Correct, yes. They sent some changes back that we're making right now and then we'll send it back once we make all those revisions and we hope to get that out soon.

Susan Logan: Are we able to download the data?

Aaron Nash: Yes, in each one of the dashboards, there's a total number of accidents or records indicator in the top left-hand corner. There's a little download button that you can click, and it will export the data to a CSV file so that you could pull it to Excel. The columns do include the geography, so if you didn't want to use our raw spatial data feeds within your own environment, anybody who

has access to GIS software can take that data and then build geographic data set out of it, if that makes sense.

Susan Logan: So another question I have is I noticed that the data that you showed was counts. Do you have the ability to also calculate rates? Based on population.

Aaron Nash: No, this is like, Eric said there's the CRSMS which normalizes the data and takes into account a number of different variables. This is just the raw data themselves within graphics. So we're not applying any normalized attribution to kind of compare it to AEDTs or anything.

Susan Logan: Thank you and my last question is so this data feed comes from DOT so how often is this dashboard populated? If I look at it today what's the lag time?

Aaron Nash: So the raw data comes from the DOT to UConn nightly. We have a stored procedure that recalculates each emphasis area an hour after the feed gets updated. So the dashboard I showed at this time is the last data that was entered into it was from yesterday so we're typically about a day behind. So any accidents that happen today that make it into the DOT network will get updated. There is kind of like I mentioned earlier, a 30, 60-day lag on average between some reporting agencies. So we don't get the data right away they send us kind of like a data dump at the end of the month, maybe Eric can elaborate on that a little bit more.

Eric Jackson: Yeah, to kind of follow up on that within the within the DOT and within UConn we've prioritized fatal crashes, injury crashes, and commercial vehicle crashes. So those jump to the front of the queue and those are coded the same day the Connecticut DOT receives those through the XML site. So I mean, it could sit at the police department for two weeks before it goes over to the DOT, but those high priority type of crashes, they're coded the same day they come into the DOT and then that night at 3:00am they're pulled into the repository. Our current backlog with PDO crashes so property damage only crashes, I think is currently at about two months and that's because we've kind of prioritized injury crashes as soon as they come in we process them as soon as possible.

Susan Logan: So when you have your fatal crashes, did you say that you update the data with the medical examiner data?

Eric Jackson: Yeah, we don't update the repository. So the repository won't have those files unless, so sometimes police departments will submit a fast FARS (Fatality Analysis Reporting System) or a PR2 form, which is basically a notification to the DOT. The problem we have with those is a lot of them, the vast majority of that report is either blank or unknown, because it's just an early notification and they haven't completed their, actual report. A lot of the times those fatal crash reports may take six months before the DOT actually gets them. Some of them the DOT never actually gets because they're part of active litigation and the police departments don't want to release any of that information because there's pending either lawsuits or litigation going on. So the FARS team and a couple of retired law enforcement officers here at UConn, work closely with police departments to try and get that data in as quickly as possible but there are definitely delays in that coming in. The OCME data is used for the fatal ticker and helps the Connecticut DOT also identify as part of their FARS (Fatality Analysis Reporting System) systems, which fatals have occur so they can start tracking and trying to pressure police departments to get that report in as soon as possible.

IV. **Vision Zero Council 2024 goals and priorities**

a. Open Discussion

b. Sub-Committee Roles

Jackie McMahon: I just had a few ideas. You all know that my primary focus is impaired driving and traffic safety is so much broader than that, but just some ideas in the Impaired driving realm. I'd love to see the subcommittees explore more on improving our blood collection in OUI cases and how we can accomplish that, whether that be through some legislative proposals or, expediting the process of requesting warrants in those cases. I think it would also be beneficial to explore more training for officers on crash investigation. Right now there are specialized units that get called out in serious physical injury, fatal crashes, any kind of crash significance, but our crashes of any variety are important to try to identify the cause of those and figure out if that's linked somehow to poor driving performance, or impairment or something like that. So I think the more officers we have trained to do that, that would be something to consider and then maybe we did more into prescription drugs. This is something that's been raised previously in discussions, I know on the Enforcement subcommittee and the Education subcommittees. So I'd love to see some more focus on that and how either new prescriptions may alter a person's ability to drive safely on the road or any changes in their prescription and how they might also alter their safe driving. Those are just kind of three topic areas that I'm curious about.

V. Next Meeting: dates and potential topics for 2024 VZC meetings

- 6/20/24
- 9/11/24
- 12/10/24

VI. Public Comment

Robert Dickinson: Okay, comment is about bump outs, which I think are very effective in slowing cars down when they go through an intersection but one of the problems that if there was no side path the bicycles are forced to merge over into the active traffic plane in order to get through the intersection and I don't know if it's appropriate or not but if ramps were put on those bump outs for the bicycles to go up over them, there was a stop sign at the bump out or yield in order to avoid having the bicycle having emerged into the traffic lane.

Commissioner Garrett Eucalitto: Thank you for that comment. I have not seen that before, but we definitely pass that along to DOTs traffic engineering team for them to take a look at and I'm I think some municipal folks are on tuning in to the meeting as well. So I imagine they'll be taking a look to see if there's a practice or if it's permissible in certain municipalities or other locations across the US.

Roger Krahn (Online Q&A): was there a legislative bill to allow electronic or digital warrant for blood draw sampling for blood alcohol when impaired driving is suspected by an officer. I think Jackie McMahon has suggested this possible legislation in earlier meetings.

Jackie McMahon: Yeah there wasn't a bill that specifically targeted blood draws in OUIs. There were some constitutional and Supreme Court precedents that were very intertwined in that area. So legislation that kind of compels a blood draw would not be allowed. There was some proposal, I believe it came from judicial, to allow for virtual administration of oaths to officers, which is a necessary step on the path to getting us to the point where we can do electronic warrants for Blood Draws in Connecticut. So that's

something that's been proposed. I'm not sure where that stands right now, whether it's in committee or out of committee or if it's just not going to go forward but there was some discussion about it.

Terri Thompson (Online Q&A): The crash data dashboards are an incredible resource and are used frequently, can you discuss how some of the new MUC changes affect data output?

Eric Jackson: Yeah, I can provide a little bit of feedback on that. The NITSA has just put out a call for proposals for states to upgrade their crash data systems. We're in the process now of going through that MUC 6 data elements and trying to figure out which data elements will be implemented in Connecticut. We don't see dramatic changes into the way that data is going to flow. There are a lot of new potential data elements that are going to be collected on things like e-scooters, e-bikes, a lot of the newer technologies that are coming out in vehicles. So we can start tracking some of the issues that are related with those. But overall the data flow and process will remain relatively the same, but we're going to look at being able to work with other stakeholders being able to pull in data from the roadway system and pull in data from potentially DMV or judicial or public health to try and maximize some of the benefits we're seeing from the system itself, but I don't foresee dramatic changes coming. We're already MUC 4 compliant So we're just going to do an upgrade to MUC 6.

Charles Foster (Online Q&A): Is there a cycling subcommittee?

Aaron Swanson: Before we put that to the council, I can say there's not a specific cycling subcommittee, but nor is there one say, for motorcyclists or pedestrians either. Generally all of the different vehicle types and person types are covered within the existing four subcommittees and certainly having been a part of some of the meetings, the Education subcommittee in particular, Safe Routes to School, is active as part of that. They're definitely considered within those subcommittees. So if I missed anything, if any of the council wants to provide any more context, but they are considered.

Terri Thompson (Online Q&A): Poly-use of drugs and alcohol is an important concern, and the Enforcement subcommittee is putting this as a priority.

VII. Adjourn

-Closing Remarks by Commissioner Garrett Eucalitto