

Update on State Zero Traffic Fatalities Task Force (ZTTF) Report

Purpose and Overview

The California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) released the [final report](#) of the State's Zero Traffic Fatalities Task Force (ZTTF) in February 2020. The ZTTF was established by AB 2363 (Friedman) to identify changes in speed setting methodologies and other steps that can reduce traffic injuries and fatalities. Given that speed is the leading predictor of whether someone survives a crash, changing speed setting methodologies has significant potential for saving lives. CalSTA's report summarizes the current approaches to setting speeds, describes alternatives to the current 85th percentile methodology, and summarizes recommendations from the Task Force on strategies to make roadways safer and eliminate traffic fatalities. The Task Force also explored complementary strategies, such as automated speed enforcement to reduce speeding and save lives.

About the Process

CalSTA convened a Task Force over Summer/Fall 2019 to provide input on recommendations for the report. The Task Force was comprised of 25 members, representing government agencies and advocacy groups, including representatives from AARP, AAA, California Highway Patrol, and CalBIKE. The City and County of San Francisco is represented on the Task Force by the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA). The San Francisco Department of Public Health and Walk SF were also represented on the Advisory Group, which provided input on the work of the Task Force.

Current Approach to Setting Speeds

Speeds are set in California based on driver behaviors, focused on the speed at which the 85th percentile of motorists travel in a free-flowing traffic environment. Although many California cities have dense urban environments with other modes such as bicyclists and pedestrians, this speed setting methodology still primarily emphasizes vehicle throughput. Many states around the US, including Massachusetts, Oregon, Minnesota, Washington and New York have developed new approaches to setting speeds that better balance the safety of all road users. These new approaches to setting speeds emphasize the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists and other road users. The CalSTA Report identifies these other States as models for new approaches that can save lives on our streets.

Recommendations for Changes to Speed Limit Setting

The Task Force recommendations include both interim recommendations that work within the existing speed setting methods, but also a long-term recommendation that would be a context-sensitive, safety-based approach as an alternative to the 85th percentile methodology. If advanced as legislation and enacted into law, these recommendations would bring down speeds where people are dying and protect vulnerable populations where they live and go as they move in the City. For instance, through these recommendations San Francisco could:

- **Lower speeds on the High Injury Network** – San Francisco's High Injury Network (HIN) represents the 13% of streets where 75% of severe and fatal injuries occur. Greater flexibility



for setting speeds on the High Injury Network would allow San Francisco to reduce speeds on streets with the highest proportion of severe and fatal injuries.

- **Lower speeds on streets near vulnerable populations, such as streets close to senior facilities, homeless shelters, parks or playgrounds, and healthcare facilities** – In San Francisco, some communities and road users are disproportionately impacted by traffic deaths, such as seniors and people experiencing homelessness. Greater flexibility to reduce speeds on streets near vulnerable populations would allow San Francisco to elevate equity in working to save lives.
- **Lower speeds where we know vehicles are already traveling slower** – Except in specific circumstances, San Francisco cannot set speeds below 25 mph, even if most people are already traveling at lower speeds. Artificially high speed limits influence how people drive – contributing to “speed creep.” In San Francisco, many streets have valid speed data showing that the streets could be set at 20 mph instead of 25 mph. Allowing San Francisco to set appropriate speed limits at 20 mph would create safer streets, such as in the Tenderloin and other areas that are part of the High Injury Network.

Even with these near-term changes, the CalSTA report also identifies longer term policy recommendations for consideration that better take into account how a street is used and by whom, how protected bicyclists and pedestrians are from vehicles, and how likely it is that there will be conflict between vehicles and other street users. A long term, context-sensitive approach to how speeds are set in California would support San Francisco in setting speeds that protect vulnerable road users, such as bicyclists and pedestrians.

Consideration of Automated Speed Enforcement

As part of the report, the Task Force also discussed the role of ASE as an effective, proven tool to reduce speeding, injuries and fatalities. Cities in California require legislative authority to implement automated technology for enforcing traffic laws. The report summarizes policy considerations related to ASE, including enforcement location, notices, privacy, citation type, and use of revenue.

Next Steps

The Zero Traffic Fatalities Task Force Report was been provided to the Legislature, pursuant to the requirements of AB 2363. Based on the report’s findings, Assemblymember Friedman, who was the author of the legislation that created the Task Force, introduced two pieces of legislation, AB 2121 and AB 2828, that signaled her intent to codify recommendations related to speed limit setting and updating the Highway Design Manual. We worked closely with Assemblymember Friedman’s office to help draft legislative language, along with other cities, to ensure our priorities regarding allowing more flexibility to set speed limits in high-crash areas, creating new prima facie zones in complex multi-modal environments, and protecting vulnerable road users are included in the legislation. However, this legislation will not advance in the current legislative cycle due to the Legislature’s focus on COVID-related issues.



Intersection with San Francisco's Vision Zero 2019 Action Strategy

Pursuant to the Task Force discussions, changes to Urban Speed Limit Setting and Automated Enforcement comprise two of the four Transformative Policies in [San Francisco's 2019 Vision Zero Action Strategy](#). Transformative Policies are evidence-based, high-impact initiatives that will significantly move San Francisco towards our Vision Zero goal and require State authorization to implement locally.

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For a copy of the full report, please go to [Zero Traffic Fatalities Task Force Website](#). [The UC ITS Research Synthesis is also available online.](#)