

## Capital Region Vision Zero Alliance Initial Meeting Summary and Next Steps

The Capital Region Vision Zero Alliance held an initial organizational meeting via Zoom on the evening of February 9, 2023.

Thank you to the following persons were in attendance:

Derek Baranski - Communications Dir. for Albany Riverfront Collaborative, Works for NYS Assembly

Chester Bennett – Member Walkable Albany & Albany Bicycle Coalition

Ed Brennan – President Albany Bicycle Coalition

Art Clayman – Founder of Cycle Schenectady

Stewart Durfield – Principal Organizer of Albany County Rail Trail Ambassadors

Jackie Gonzales - Member Walkable Albany

Danette Jewell – Healthy Communities Manager at Capital Roots

Liz Podowski King – Transportation Planning Professional and Landscape Architect

Susan Lovelock – Marketing Development Specialist with Whitney Young Health Centers

Mary Ellen Mallia – University at Albany, Director of Sustainability

Naqiy McMullen – Member Walkable Albany

Andrew Neidhardt – Member Walkable Albany

Matthew Peter – Albany County Legislator and Albany Parking Authority Director

James Rath – Urban Planner and Co-Founder of Capital Streets

Gabriella Romero – Albany Common Councilmember, 6th Ward

Glenn Sandberg – Vice President Albany Bicycle Coalition

Stephen Scaduto – UAlbany Urban planning student, works at NYSDOT Planning Division

Erica Schneider – UAlbany Urban planning student, Mbr. Safe Streets Coalition

Ira Share – Avid cyclist from Petersburg, NY, Assists with the Ride for Missing Children

The meeting began with personal introductions and an explanation as to why it was important for each of us to join the gathering.

The following facts were cited as an indication of our dire problem of increasing traffic violence:

- In New York State, traffic fatalities are up 20% since the pandemic began.
- For the first 9 months of 2022:
  - NYS traffic fatalities in NY were up another 4%
  - nationally cyclist deaths were up another 8%, pedestrian deaths up another 2%
- Motor vehicles are getting larger, vehicles are being driven faster and they are being driven with less attention.
- The bigger vehicles may be safer for those in them, but are mostly deadlier for those outside them.
  - Being more massive, they cause greater damage at the same speed
  - The front ends of these vehicles are often considerable higher so that what might be a leg injury for a sedan, becomes an upper body injury with an SUV or pickup (or a head injury for a child)
- Locally,
  - 2022 saw the most pedestrian deaths in Albany City since at least 1999
  - Albany County had
    - 2 ped deaths in 2019
    - 3 in 2020
    - 5 in 2021
    - 8 in 2022

Vision Zero was described as using a safe systems approach to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries on roadways. It recognizes human failures, allows that collisions will occur - but aims for a transportation system in which those collisions don't end in death and serious injury.

It was noted that there are municipalities, such as Hoboken, NJ, where **Vision Zero Action Plans** have been put in place that are actually bringing down deaths and serious injuries. Hoboken has had zero traffic fatalities since 2018. Some methodologies mentioned included

- Lowering municipal speed limits
- Daylighting intersections
- Reducing the distance pedestrians are exposed to traffic at intersections
- Providing pedestrian refuge medians
- Road diets
- Priority pedestrian signaling
- Separating vulnerable road users from motor vehicle traffic lanes with sidewalks, multiuse paths and bike lanes

We may well be in a period that favors achieving such changes locally.

- There are unprecedented funds available for Complete Streets public safety projects - including
  - A newly enacted State Complete Streets Funding Bill that was sponsored by a local Assembly Member Pat Fahy
  - Funding in the Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (including an announcement last week of 1.5 Million Vision Zero awarded to the Capital District Transportation Committee for local projects)
- There has been fairly good reporting and increasing public recognition that our roads have become increasingly more dangerous since COVID
- There is increasing desire among many for safe alternative transportation and a for more livable, walkable place to live

We talked about the role this alliance of concerned organizations and persons could play in driving the political will for local changes by communicating developments, coordinating efforts, diversifying the call for change and amplifying the call for change. We discussed

- communicating about developments such as local legislation, road and trail projects as these are often poorly reported by our media
- establishing a website and/or a e-newsletter to share such information
- spreading understanding of Vision Zero, Safe Systems and Complete Streets
- communicating and coordinating local campaigns such as the November Day of Remembrance for Traffic Violence Victims and Ride of Silence for persons killed and injured while cycling
- proving mutual support where appropriate to pressure local government to make changes to make our roads safer for all
- encouraging turnout where there are opportunities for public comment on projects

A broad range of topics were discussed as we eventually worked back to determining the focus of this new group:

- Making our cities less car dependent
- Protecting neighborhood thru streets from speeding commuters
- Reducing need for parking by promoting alternative transport
- Identifying electeds that understand the need for safer roads
- Using automated enforcement where traffic enforcement is lacking
- Identifying and pursuing easy wins and demonstration projects to build momentum
- The proven impact of turning out local citizens in numbers for public comment opportunities
- The importance of keeping the work of the Alliance manageable and supportive of the Vision Zero work of its constituent organizations

The following were determined to be next steps:

- Establishing Communications
  - A website will be established as a source for regional developments such as transportation projects, legislative efforts

and opportunities for public comment - a team was identified to get that started

- e-mail was determined to be easiest for most everyone to communicate:

An e-mail account [visionzero518@gmail.com](mailto:visionzero518@gmail.com) has been established to receive Alliance communications

- An e-mail newsletter will also be pursued to communicate the same sorts of information
- Anyone that has news of transportation projects, legislative efforts and opportunities for public comment is encouraged to send that information to [visionzero518@gmail.com](mailto:visionzero518@gmail.com).

- Spreading the word

- Traffic Violence is a matter of diverse interest and **everyone** is asked to spread the word about the Alliance to more organizations
  - of other municipalities
  - of diverse ethnic and economic communities
  - supporting our young, old and handicapped
  - any other organizations you know that share this concern
- The more diverse the voices to stop traffic violence, the sooner it can't be ignored
- Anyone that wants to be added to our contacts can e-mail [visionzero518@gmail.com](mailto:visionzero518@gmail.com).

- **Ed Brennan** of Albany Bicycle Coalition agreed to reach out to the National Vision Zero Network to see if they can provide a speaker for a next meeting in the Spring