



Dangerous by Design: A Primer

Workshop

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Attachments: Yes

Referring Committee: Not Applicable

Issue:

This item provides background on the Dangerous by Design report to prepare board members for the October board Workshop, which is also the second workshop this year focused on equity issues in the Sacramento region.

Request:

Receive & File

Recommendation for Board:

This item is information only, no action is recommended at this time.

Recommendation for Committee:

Not applicable

Background:

As part of the board's racial equity statement of commitment to listen and learn, the board adopted a goal to deepen its understanding of how race/ethnicity, income, and geography (rural/urban) affects the social outcomes of communities throughout the Sacramento region. To support this goal, the board has at least two workshops a year on equity issues and trends in one of SACOG's core subject areas, such as transportation, housing, land use, economy, or environment. Last year, the board had multiple workshops on equitable community engagement for community-based solutions to a range of community-defined challenges. This year, the board's March workshop was on racial equity and inclusion in the farming and agricultural sector.

The October workshop will be the second workshop for the year, focused on demographic disparities in pedestrian fatalities and community-engaged approaches to reducing pedestrian fatalities.

Dangerous by Design is a report written by Smart Growth America – a U.S. non-profit that exists to advocate for safe roadways for all users and better-connected neighborhoods. This report is updated every few years. It communicates the trends in pedestrian deaths around the country and data on the most vulnerable people at risk. The Sacramento-Roseville-Folsom area has perpetually appeared in [Dangerous by Design's](#) top 100 most dangerous metropolitan areas for pedestrians. It has consistently been in the top 50 in every report, with

2024 being the lowest rank it has ever had at number 20. Our average annual pedestrian fatality rate for the Sacramento-Roseville-Folsom area per 100,000 people is 3.15 and has increased by 1.05 percent since the last report in 2022.

Discussion/Analysis:

Roadways have historically been designed and built for vehicle capacity and speed, even at the expense of keeping people safe. Traffic fatalities are considered an epidemic in this country and are worsening over time. Overall, there has been a 75 percent increase in pedestrian deaths all over the United States since 2010 (when the first Dangerous by Design Report was being developed).

What makes a roadway dangerous?

Speed and roadway design are two of the primary considerations to determine if a road is safe for all users. Speed is generally considered the most important factor that determines whether or not a person walking survives after being hit by a car. For example, the risk of death for a pedestrian that is hit at 20 miles per hour is about 5 percent. However, that number increases to 45 percent at 30 miles per hour. It almost doubles at 40 miles per hour with a risk of death at about 85 percent. These numbers are typically calculated with an able-bodied person in mind. For a child, a senior citizen, or a person with a disability, their likelihood of survival can decrease.

Roadway design is highly influential on how a driver responds. Long, straight roadways with spacious lanes encourage speeding and are forgiving for drivers when they make mistakes. These designs can be fatal to pedestrians because they allow motorists to speed, allow for erratic or unpredictable behavior, and make it a difficult environment to spot pedestrians. These designs may make sense on a freeway, which is meant to move cars, but for local arterials, major corridors, and even local, smaller roads, this design only encourages people to speed, despite any posted speed limits. In addition to this, intersections also pose a high risk due to high speeds, poor visibility, long crossing distances for pedestrians, motorists turning on red lights, among other factors.

High-level findings

A few high-level findings of the 2024 Dangerous by Design report show that:

1. Urban areas are increasing in roadway danger at a faster rate than rural areas. Total pedestrian deaths are up 61 percent in urban areas as compared to 41 percent in rural areas. Rural areas are not improving, however. They have been flatlined since 2011.
2. People who are not protected by the confines of a vehicle are more vulnerable to a roadway death.
3. The people who are most at risk tend to be lower income individuals, people of color (particularly American Indian, Alaskan Natives, and Black individuals), and people between the ages of 50-65 and over 70.

How does this relate to the region?

With the Sacramento metropolitan area being ranked as the 20th most dangerous place for pedestrians, this information is timely and important to understand. State, federal, and regional funding exists to address these types of roadway safety disparities and can help agencies create safer roadways for all users. As will be noted in the workshop, there are interim solutions that can be quickly implemented and at a lower cost. These two types of solutions are called demonstration projects and quick-builds (see Attachment A). A demonstration project is a short-term (one day to one month) interim solution meant to collect public feedback and is developed with materials that are temporary (i.e., traffic cones, chalk paint, plastic/water barricades, etc.).

Quick-builds are also interim solutions, but are created with semi-permanent materials (i.e., concrete jersey barriers, concrete buttons, plastic, rubber or concrete barricades/delineators, paint, etc.) and can last up to five years. Quick-builds are also great for community engagement because they can typically be easily altered to respond to public feedback. Both demonstration projects and quick-builds are eligible for many of the funding programs that agencies within the SACOG region receive and can help fill a gap in infrastructure until a longer-term solution is identified.

Heidi Simon, Director of Thriving Communities at Smart Growth America, will be joining SACOG for the board workshop to speak more on this report and the applicability of the findings to our region. Kiara Reed, Executive Director of Civic Thread, and David Moore, Community Planning Specialist at Civic Thread, will also be joining to share examples from the Sacramento area of community-co-created solutions to dangerous roadways.

Fiscal Impact/Grant Information:

Included in the Overall Work Program/Budget

List of Attachments:

Attachment A: Demonstration Projects vs. Quick-Builds