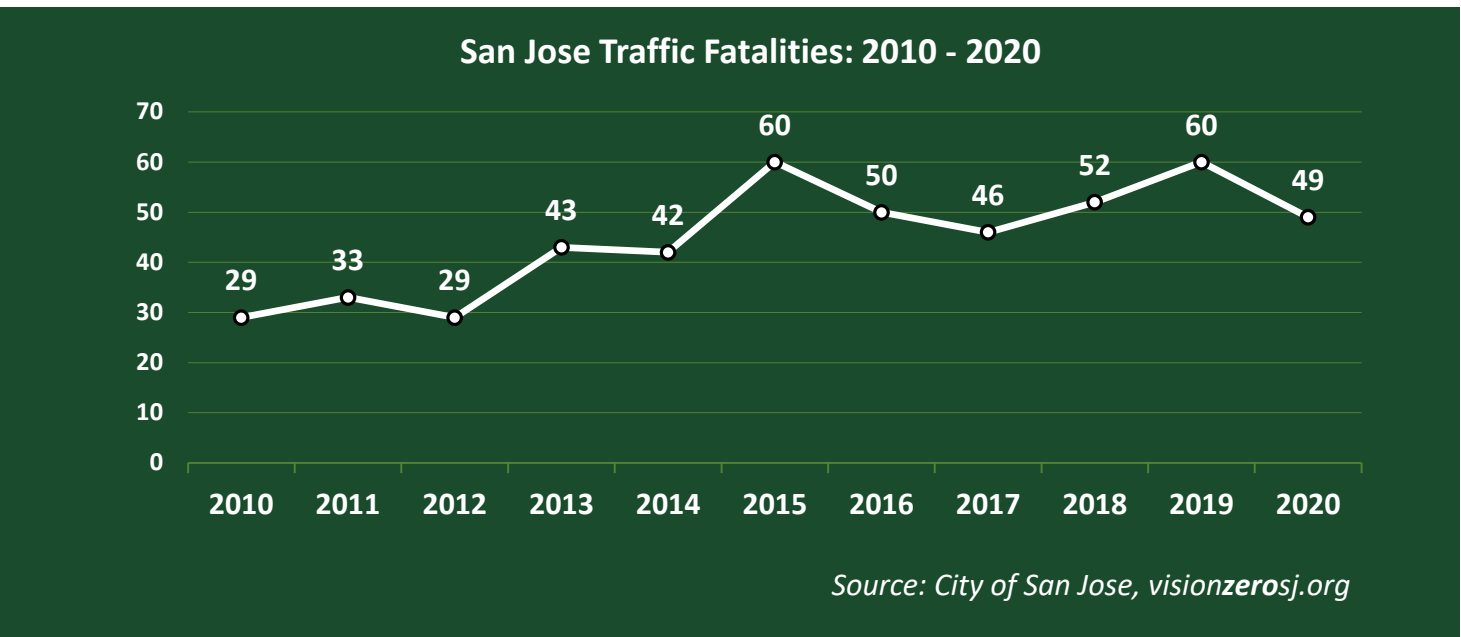


SAFETY ON OUR STREETS IN 2020

Traffic deaths on San Jose streets have more than doubled over the last 10 years. It's been six years since the City of San Jose adopted Vision Zero, a traffic safety initiative to eliminate traffic deaths and severe injuries on roadways, but it feels like things have stayed the same. This past year, San Jose residents have seen an increase in driver speeds AND traffic deaths have not decreased despite low traffic rates due to COVID-19. In an [interview with CBS San Francisco](#), one San Jose resident living near Capitol Expressway and Senter Road (District 7) warned others about the rise in speeding drivers, "You gotta really watch and be careful because they're coming around this corner so fast, you don't want to get hit."

PAST SAN JOSE SAFETY TRENDS

In San Jose, older adults and people experiencing houselessness makeup the majority of pedestrian deaths. According to the City, the median age of pedestrians killed from 2015-2019 was 58 years old, and 10 unhoused residents died while walking or biking from 2017-2019 (as confirmed by Santa Clara County's Medical Examiner Coroner).



At the end of 2019, San Jose had a record high of 60 traffic deaths, 29 of which were pedestrians. Between 2015-2019, 914 people suffered severe traffic-related injuries and the total number of people hit by cars has steadily increased, consistent with the [nationwide trend over the past decade](#).

OUR STREETS IN 2020

Last year, our lives changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As we responded to the pandemic with social distancing and wearing masks, our relationship with our public spaces changed.

For some, walking, biking, and rolling through our neighborhoods was a safe activity we depended on for recreation and exercise while staying home. Others relied on our streets and transit system to get to essential jobs, grocery stores, testing sites, and so many other important destinations. More than ever, we see clearly our need for safe streets, to be able to move safely through San Jose with ease and comfort, no matter our age or ability.

Still, in 2020, we lost 49 of our family members, friends, and neighbors in San Jose to traffic-related deaths: 20 pedestrians, 20 motorists, seven bicyclists, and two motorcyclists. The continuous increase in preventable traffic deaths, especially pedestrian deaths, is unacceptable. All San Jose residents deserve safe spaces to walk, roll, and bike.



San Jose's World Day of Remembrance 2020 memorial, in honor of the 250 lives lost on San Jose streets from 2016 to November 2020. Rows of sneakers were lined up in pairs and paper flowers placed on a concrete ground.



Pre-COVID-19, the Walk SJ team met with seniors at the Vietnamese American Community Center to learn about their experience walking in San Jose. Image shows four rows of seniors sitting at a table with papers and miscellaneous items set in front of them.

Below, we will look at:

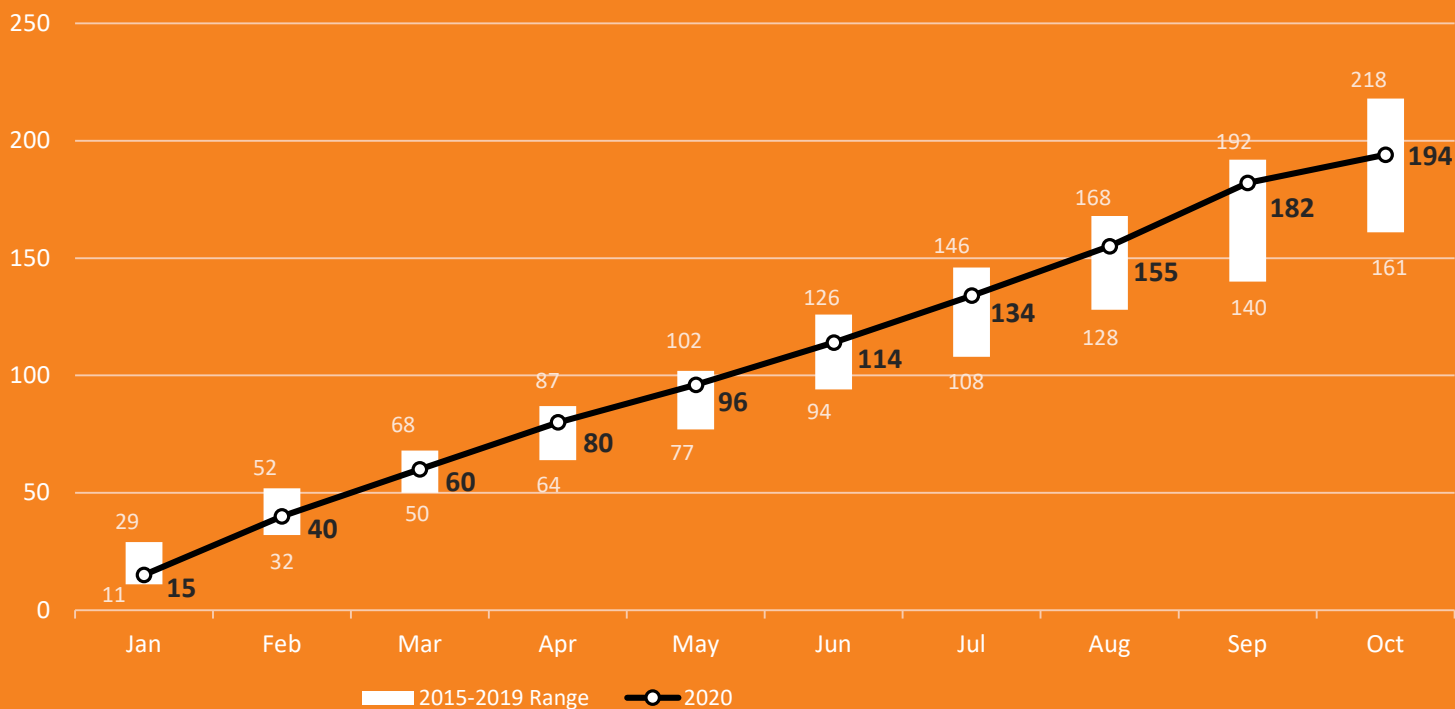
1. How COVID-19 and Shelter-in-Place affected traffic safety
2. Street safety attitudes among San Jose residents
3. San Jose's 2020 Vision Zero Action Plan and funding

IMPACT OF SHELTER-IN-PLACE ON TRAFFIC SAFETY

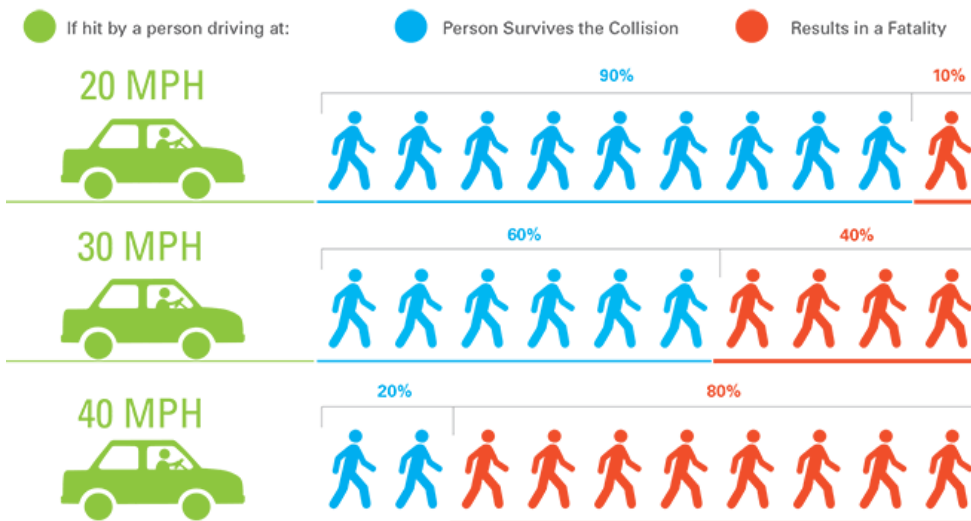
In March 2020, the City of San Jose and State of California entered into a stay-at-home order. Public health officials advised us to avoid gathering in large groups and recommended keeping a six (6) foot distance from others when outside their households. To protect pedestrians, over 100 crossing signals in Downtown were automated to eliminate surface contact and signal timing was altered to prevent drivers from speeding on empty streets.

With stay-at-home orders enacted, traffic volume in San Jose fell, as did overall traffic crashes and injuries. However, San Jose’s fatal and severe injury rates are still within the range of previous years. Lower traffic congestion has instead resulted in higher speeding rates on city streets, which makes any crashes more likely to be fatal.

2020 San Jose Cumulative Fatal And Serious Injuries By Month, Compared To 2015-2019 Range By Month



Source: City of San Jose, visionzerosj.org



In collisions at 40 mph, the average person has a 90% chance of dying.

Credit: [San Francisco MTA Vision Zero Action Plan, February 2015](#)

Transportation advocates have long warned that speed kills: a pedestrian’s chance of surviving a traffic crash significantly drops the faster the car is travelling. Because of higher speeds in San Jose, there was a similar number of fatal or severe crashes as in past years. Despite fewer crashes overall, the crashes that did occur were at higher speeds and therefore more likely to end in death or severe injury.

The increase in speeding rates in San Jose is consistent with other cities across the U.S. One [report](#) showed that while traffic levels are down, speeding is up by 27 percent this past year. Speeding has directly contributed to a 20 percent increase in the traffic fatality rate (the number of deaths per 100 million vehicle miles driven) in the weeks following shelter-in-place orders.

Driving speed also has a huge impact on the driver’s “cone of vision”, or what the driver can see while looking ahead and out of the corner of their eye. If a driver is driving at 15-20 mph, their perception angle can pick up more detail compared to driving at 30-45 mph (see Image).



Credit: [Walkable City Rules](#)

STREET SAFETY ATTITUDES AMONG SAN JOSE RESIDENTS

In 2020, EMC Research conducted a poll on street safety attitudes among 400 San Jose residents. The poll revealed the following:

Among San Jose residents...



One in three knew someone who was seriously injured or killed in a traffic collision. The likelihood of knowing collision victims goes down as income level increases.



89% are concerned with distracted driving in the City.



68% are concerned about the speed at which cars travel within their neighborhoods.



Nearly half reported feeling unsafe walking in their neighborhoods and cited unsafe drivers as the biggest deterrent.



53% have not heard or seen anything about pedestrian safety efforts in the city.



Nearly three-quarters believe that it would be safer for people walking and bicyclists if people drove more slowly.



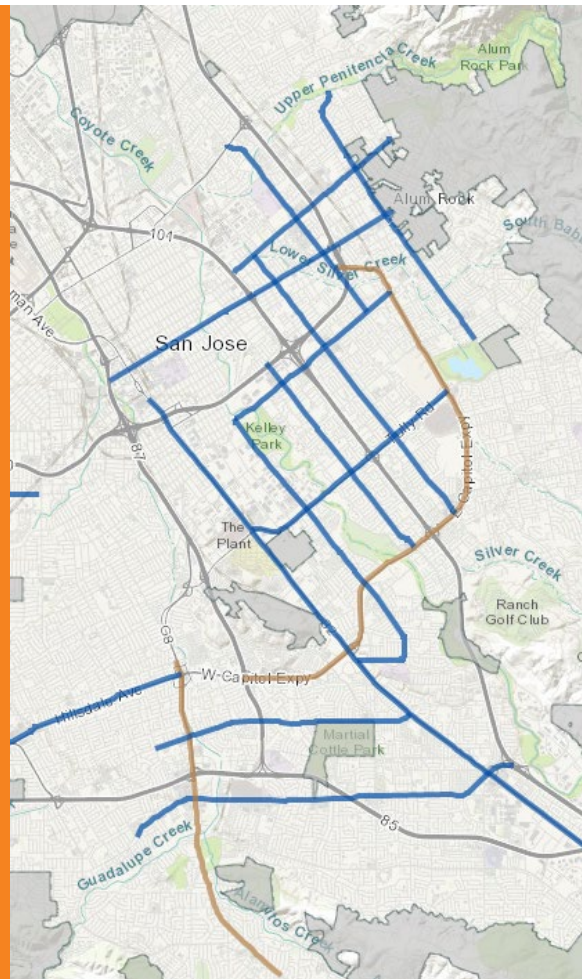
64% broadly support increasing funding to make our streets safer. Latino and lower-income residents are especially supportive of improving safety.

CITY OF SAN JOSE

2020 VISION ZERO ACTION PLAN

In February 2020, the City of San Jose adopted a new Vision Zero Action Plan which outlined six high priority actions for the next five years:

- 1 **Build a data tool to analyze traffic crash locations and conditions**
- 2 **Form a Vision Zero Task Force to build collaboration across City and County departments**
- 3 **Institute traffic enforcement strategies to reduce fatalities and severe injuries**
- 4 **Increase community outreach and engagement to build a culture of safety**
- 5 **Implement quick-build safety improvements on the City's most dangerous streets**
- 6 **Prioritize resources on locations with high numbers of traffic crashes**



City Council approved a one time funding allocation of \$6.78 Million for Vision Zero. This funding is to be used for the first year of the five year action plan to kick off quick-build improvements along 11 of the 56 miles of Priority Safety Corridors in San Jose. Quick-build projects are low-cost safety improvements that use paint and plastic to make streets safer for people to walk and bike. These projects are intended to last for 1-5 years, before being replaced with permanent improvements.

Quick Build projects refer to low-cost safety improvements that use paint and plastic. These projects are intended to last for 1-5 years, before being replaced with permanent improvements.

Below, we break down the use of this \$6.78M funding allocation.

SAN JOSE VISION ZERO FUNDING FOR 2020-21

\$200,000

\$200,000 for a Vision Zero Data Analytics Tool

In 2020, the City created a [data dashboard](#) that allows users to look at San Jose crash data from 2015-2019 by location, severity, and cause. In addition, the City selected Urban Logiq as a data consultant in 2020.

\$300,000

\$300,000 for a Vision Zero Outreach Consultant

In early 2021, City will select an outreach consultant (applications for consultants closed on 1/8/2021) to create a Vision Zero outreach strategy. In addition, the City launched a “Fight the Spike” campaign to respond to the spike in fatalities during daylight savings time each fall. The City has also put up posters along Vision Zero corridors in 3 languages that say “Look out when it’s dark out”.



**

\$1.78 Million

\$1.78 Million for improvements at the intersection of Story Road and Jackson Avenue

On 9/15/2019, following the death of a bicyclist at Story Road and Jackson Avenue, Councilmember Carrasco and Mayor Liccardo directed DOT staff to prioritize engineering improvements at Story and Jackson. \$1.78M of the Action Plan funding will go towards meeting this direction. This project is currently under design. The first phase of implementation will be completed in early summer 2021, the second phase will be complete by the end of 2021

\$4.5 Million

\$4.5 Million for quick build improvements on 11 miles of San Jose’s Priority Safety Corridors

- [Senter Road](#): Construction is scheduled to begin in October 2020 with completion expected in early 2021. This project will include new high visibility crosswalks, pedestrian signal timing improvements, new bike lanes, and many other safety enhancements.
- [Fruitdale Avenue](#): This project was delayed until Spring 2021 due to the County needing to review plans.
- Hillsdale Avenue: Design for this project will start in summer 2021, construction will happen in 2022.

****Image Description:** Dark blue and yellow poster with “Conduzca Con Cuidado Cuando Está Oscuro” in large white letters. Poster shows icon of a child on a scooter and senior walking with a car traveling towards them. Poster is displayed on a traffic sign pole in front of a bright, decorative mural.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Last year, we relied on our streets more than ever before. Yet, San Jose residents still have to worry about the speed of cars coming through their neighborhoods. With the launch of the new Vision Zero Action Plan, the City has taken the first steps towards a safe, accessible City. After a new high-visibility crosswalk was installed outside Orchard Elementary School, the school superintendent said, “The community felt a sigh of relief when we saw the crosswalk enhancements.” These projects have the ability to permanently affect a community’s safety and health, for the better.



The new high-visibility crosswalk outside Orchard Elementary School. Image of two traffic lanes with a crosswalk painted on the ground. There are tall green-orange trees and sidewalks. (Photo credit: Robin Roemer)



Overfelt Gardens. We relied on our streets and parks for recreation and exercise last year. Image of bicyclist on a dirt path surrounded by grass and tall trees. (Photo credit: Theresa Do)



Before COVID-19, Walk SJ joined a senior walking group at Willow Glen Community Center to talk about safety and the benefits of walking. Image of five people wearing neon green vests walking on a sidewalk near trees and grass. (Photo credit: Alvaro Celaya)

There is still so much more that needs to be done in order to meet the City's Vision Zero goal of zero traffic deaths. Lucky for the City, San Jose residents strongly support more traffic safety efforts, so the support of the people is there. What we need is a strong commitment and the will of our elected officials. The City took a large step forward by adopting and funding the new Vision Zero Action plan, and ***can keep building momentum on Vision Zero by funding a second year of the action plan in 2021.***

Walk San Jose proposes the City take the following actions in 2021 keep us on the right track:

Allocate at least \$5 Million in the 2021-22 budget for quick-build improvements on 11 miles of Priority Safety Corridors. This will keep the City on track to meet their goal of 56 miles of quick-build improvements in 5 years.

Improve traffic safety awareness through educational campaigns around speeding and distracted driving. Educational campaigns should be in multiple languages to reach most of San Jose's diverse residents.

Increase community outreach through walk audits, community walks, and other activities to identify what improvements are still needed and where funding has not been allocated.

To learn more about San Jose traffic safety and how to get involved, you can attend the City's [Vision Zero Task Force Meetings](#), which take place once a quarter. The Task Force meetings are open to all to attend and share their concerns about safety on our streets. To learn more on how to watch and speak at City meetings, check out the [City Clerk's instructional video](#).

To learn more about Walk San Jose, please visit www.calwalks.org/walk-san-jose or email us at walksanjose@calwalks.org.

Support our work creating safe, just, and inclusive spaces for all: www.calwalks.org/donate