

# Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 4, Issue 2

April 4, 2025

## A Safer Madison Starts with the Safe Systems Approach

*A message from Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway*

Madison is embracing the Safe Systems Approach to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries. This approach represents a major shift in transportation planning, focusing on designing safety into every aspect of the system. It recognizes that people make mistakes and should not pay for them with their lives.

**Proactive, Data-Driven Decision Making** – Instead of reacting to crashes, the Safe Systems approach prioritizes data to identify high-risk areas and address safety concerns before crashes happen. We focus on the most vulnerable road users to ensure equitable safety improvements that will have the most impact.

### What is the Safe Systems Approach?

Unlike traditional methods that focus on individual behavior, the Safe Systems Approach designs roads, speeds, and vehicles to prevent crashes and reduce their severity. It is built on the following key principles:

1. **Mistakes Happen, But They Shouldn't Be Fatal** – Instead of trying to eliminate all mistakes (impossible), we focus on reducing their severity. Safer street design, better policies, and improved emergency response help prevent deaths and serious injuries.

2. **Reducing Kinetic Energy Reduces Harm** – Kinetic energy (the energy of motion) is a combination of speed and mass. Lowering speed limits, adding traffic-calming measures, and reducing vehicle size where possible significantly decreases crash severity. Protected bike lanes, landscaping that buffers sidewalks, and vehicle safety technologies also help absorb impact forces.

3. **Safety is a Shared Responsibility** – Planners, policymakers, road users, and infrastructure designers all play a role. Madison's Vision Zero Stakeholder Task Force includes engineers, planners, public health officials, law enforcement, educators, and community leaders working together to improve safety.

### How Madison is Putting This into Action

Madison's Vision Zero Action Plan applies these principles through key strategies:

- **Safe Streets** – Redesigning high-injury corridors through the *Safe Streets Madison* program by adding pedestrian islands, protected bike lanes, and better street layouts to lower travel speeds and reduce conflicts.
- **Safe People** – Promoting safer behavior through public education campaigns, partnerships with schools and community groups, and initiatives like the *20 is Plenty* project, which lowers speed limits on most neighborhood streets to 20 mph.
- **Safe Vehicles** – Continuously upgrading Madison's city fleet with advanced safety technologies, setting an example for safer vehicle standards.
- **Safety Data** – Using data to identify high-risk locations, understand crash factors, and ensure resources are allocated equitably to prevent future crashes.

**Safety-Focused Enforcement** – Addressing reckless driving that leads to fatalities without creating disproportionate impacts on low-income communities and communities of color.

### Want to Learn More?

Madison is committed to making our streets safer for everyone. Check out our [Vision Zero Action Plan](#) for more background, and the [Vision Zero Network](#) for a national take on this topic.



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# 'Rest in Red' Traffic Signal Operations

*Jerry Schippa, City Traffic Engineering*

Madison, along with other communities [1], are changing late night traffic signal operations away from flashing, free or coordinated operations to what is being referred to as 'Rest-in-Red'. This means the traffic signal will default to an all-red state where all vehicle approaches are red, and all pedestrian phases display a don't walk. The intention with this operation is to keep all the functions of the traffic signal operational through the night while reducing speeding opportunities and allowing the city to convert more signals to red-red flash during emergency only situations.

This operation means that the traffic signal will always default to displaying red on all approaches. When a traffic signal is displaying a stale green under 'normal operations', drivers may feel the need to speed up so as not to 'miss the light.' However, thanks to advance detection, and the signal being in a 'ready' state, right about the time a driver may need to apply the brakes, provided no other phase is serving, the light will turn green for them. This means fewer speeding incentives, but no additional delay.

For those using the crosswalk, a similar immediate response can be expected.

This operation also allows us to change signal flash settings to red-red, which we believe is more consistent with driver expectations when approaching a signal that if flashing red on their approach. Confusion between red-red and yellow-red flash settings, has led to angle crashes during flash operations, especially during emergency flash operations during day-time hours.

The City of Madison is currently running this operation at Atwood Avenue & Wal-

ter and Gammon Road & Gammon Lane. More locations to be re-programmed once detection is updated.

[1] [Portland Transportation, Vision Zero Website, 'Rest in Red'](#)



Above and below, 'Rest in Red' example at Atwood and Walter.



## Think Safety When Driving!

*Ilknur Uludag, City Fleet Services*

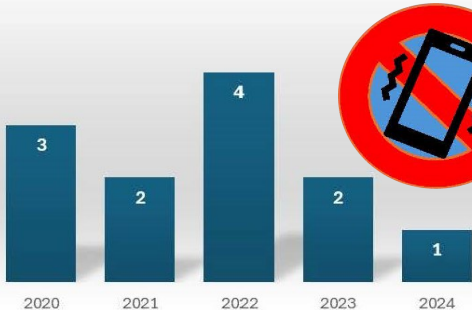
As Madison shifts from winter snow and ice to warmer temperatures we are reminded that **April is Distracted Driver Awareness Month.**

Distracted driving is anything that takes your attention from the road for even just a moment.

Distracted driving was the contributor to 14 deaths and 16 injuries on Madison streets from 2020 to 2024.

*\*totals do not include data from the Belt Line (12), 51, 151, 39, and 90.*

Total Crashes with Distracted Driver Tag in City of Madison



### THE THREE TYPES OF DISTRACTED DRIVING AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

 VISUAL	 MANUAL	 COGNITIVE
		
Keep your eyes on the road. Pull over to read directions. Put your phone in "Do Not Disturb" mode.	Keep your phone out of reach. Make all adjustments before driving. Don't reach for items while driving.	Avoid phone calls, even hands-free. Stay focused on the road. Keep your emotions in check.



# Rutledge Street Reconstruction

Nashaly Gutierrez Vazquez, City Engineering

The Rutledge Street reconstruction project will focus on making improvements to the street and replacing the underground utilities. The project spans Rutledge Street from Riverside Drive to Lakeland Avenue and, also includes a portion of Division Street starting at Lakeland Avenue and going north to the Jennifer Street/Oakridge Avenue intersection. The project includes replacement of gravel base, asphalt pavement, curb & gutter, sanitary sewer main, water main, storm sewer main, and spot replacement of sidewalk. Construction is expected to start in Spring 2025 and be completed in late Summer 2025. The project was approved for construction on March 5, 2024 by the Common Council and is funded by the City's 2024 Engineering-Major Streets Capital Budget.

The reconstruction project includes many safety improvements for all road users and include:

- Curb bump-outs at Walton Place and north Russell Street intersections that narrow the roadway to reduce the pedestrian crossing distance and reduce vehicle speeds.
- Improved pavement markings and grading at all the intersections to help pedestrians of all ages and abilities cross the street safely.
- Two-sided parking will narrow the roadway to help reduce vehicle speeds.



Above: Rutledge Street —  
Division to Riverside

Visit the [Rutledge Street project page](#) on the City of Madison website for more information.



Right: Rutledge  
Street — Riverside  
to Division

## Malcom Shabazz Students Design Traffic Calming Project

Renee Callaway, City Traffic Engineering



Traffic Engineering, spoke to the class about traffic safety, traffic calming and street operations.

Students took what they learned to work with Traffic Engineering on choosing a location and improvement that would benefit the safety of students at Shabazz High School and the nearby Sherman Middle School. The students asked the city to temporarily install a small traffic circle as their study focus. The City will continue to work with the students on the outcomes of the installation and whether it should be considered as a future permanent improvements.

In Fall 2024, Traffic Engineering staff were contacted to assist the Environmental Science Class at Shabazz High School who were learning how to be involved in local environmental issues, including urban planning and traffic safety.

The Environmental Science Class started with a 5-week unit on urban planning and street design. Students practiced safe bicycling skills and practiced their riding skills by exploring the neighborhood around the school. While riding the students recorded data on street width, traffic patterns, and the overall riding experience around the school. Jeremy Nash, from City

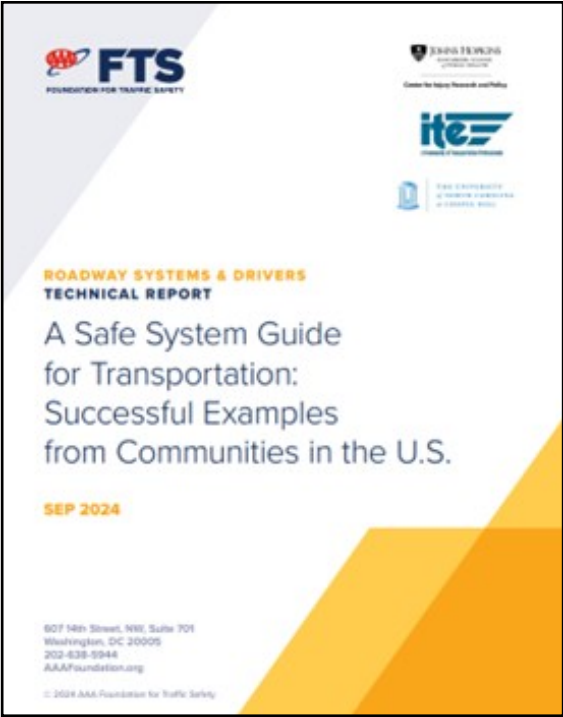




# Madison Recognized as a Best Practice Example for Safe Systems Approach in National Traffic Safety Report

Yang Tao, City Traffic Engineering

Madison’s work on implementing the Safe Sysetm Approach to improve traffic safety was recently recognized by a national report released by the [AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety](#). The report, titled [A Safe System Guide for Transportation: Successful Examples from Communities in the U.S](#), was jointly produced by a few leading industry institutions, including AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Injury Research and Policy, and Institute of Transportation Engineers. The report highlights six best practice examples across the United States, including the work of the City of Madison, and aims to help all communities across the country learn from these examples and incorporate the Sate System Approach into their efforts to reduce transportation fatalities and serious injuries.



AAA Foundation’s report highlighted Madison’s use of data-driven strategies to address top-risk locations and populations, new approaches for enhanced community engagement, accelerating research and adoption of technology to improve road user safety, and multi-modal safety improvements, including street (re) designs, speed management, and safer pedestrian crossings. These measures reflect the city’s broader efforts to create a safe, equitable, and sustainable transportation network.

For more information about Madison’s Vision Zero strategy, including a list of projects that utilize the Safe Systems approach, [visit the Vision Zero website](#).

Below: Jackson Quarry Lane—Speed Hump



Vision Zero is a data driven strategy intended to eliminate traffic deaths and severe injuries on all roadways, bikeways and sidewalks by 2035.

The City of Madison Vision Zero initiative strives to improve safety for all roadway users throughout the city and improve the identified high injury intersections, all in an effort to prevent avoidable fatal crashes.

*Safety starts with all of us.*

We can’t control human error, but we can help create more forgiving infrastructure and change systems to prevent crashes from being serious and fatal.

[www.cityofmadison.com/VisionZero](http://www.cityofmadison.com/VisionZero)



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