



Durham Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Commission

Durham Transportation Department · 101 City Hall Plaza · Durham, NC 27701
DurhamBPAC@DurhamNC.gov | @DurhamBPAC

March 1, 2023

Durham City Council
101 City Hall Plaza
Durham, NC 27701

Dear Councilmembers,

In the past week, a person walking was killed by a driver on North Alston Avenue, and a person cycling was sent to the hospital after a collision on West Main Street. Twenty-six people die every year on our streets, and, in the past decade, that number has been increasing.¹ Durham adopted a Vision Zero program in 2017 and just received a Federal grant through the DCHC MPO to develop a Vision Zero Action Plan. Durham needs a Vision Zero Coordinator to manage the development and implementation of this Action Plan to begin making headway on ending these ongoing tragedies. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission (BPAC) is in full support of City Council Liaison Javiera Caballero's budget request for a Vision Zero Coordinator to improve the safety and well-being of those who choose to walk, bike, or use public transit.

Vision Zero is not only concerned with the safety of pedestrians and cyclists, but with the safety of all roadway users. Making roads safer for pedestrians and cyclists will also make them safer for drivers. Vision Zero is a necessary step on the path to unlocking new local economic activity and making Durham accessible and comfortable for all its residents. Until better safety is achieved, the growth and improvement of Durham's communities will be significantly hampered.

Vision Zero must be achieved through how we design, build, and maintain our streets, not through education and enforcement alone. As long as our streets are designed such that cars can drive at high speeds near pedestrians and cyclists, achieving Vision Zero will remain elusive.

This means a proper implementation of Vision Zero goals needs to be integrated with every aspect of transportation in Durham. If we are committed to Vision Zero, it needs to be reflected in how we update the designs of our streets during repavings, how we pursue opportunities for traffic calming, how we build sidewalks, how we review the impacts of new developments, how we improve our public transit, and how we build bike lanes. It also means doing cross-departmental, public site investigations of every major crash that occurs in Durham to develop concrete steps to prevent similar crashes from occurring in the future.

¹ North Carolina 2021 Crash Facts, NCDOT,
<https://connect.ncdot.gov/business/DMV/CrashFactsDocuments/2021%20Crash%20Facts.pdf>

Currently, there is insufficient capacity within Durham's Transportation Department to manage the workload that this requires. Durham's Vision Zero webpage has a public comment map that does not load,² and numerous requests for improved infrastructure and maintenance come in through public comments at BPAC meetings and Durham One Call requests.

These 26 yearly deaths are preventable, and BPAC cannot imagine a more productive way for the city to direct funds than to have an employee whose sole focus is to reduce that number.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deniz", enclosed within a circular scribble.

Deniz Aydemir
Chair, Durham Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission

² Vision Zero, City of Durham, <https://www.durhamnc.gov/2995/Vision-Zero>