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Office of the Mayor
City & County of San Francisco

Gavin Newsom

Executive Directive 10-03
Pedestrian Safety in San Francisco

December 20, 2010

Death and serious injury suffered by pedestrians is too common in San Francisco. San Franciscans experience about 800 pedestrian injures and 22 fatalities every year. Approximately half of traffic collision fatalities are experienced by people walking. The risk of a fatality per walking trip is currently higher than per motor vehicle trip both in San Francisco and nationwide.

Seniors and children are particularly vulnerable to severe pedestrian injury. For instance, in 2004-2008 seniors experienced 42% of pedestrian fatalities, but made up only 15% of the San Francisco population. Further, preventing pedestrian injuries will save not only lives, but also taxpayer funds. In 2008, $15 million was spent treating pedestrian injuries at San Francisco General Hospital, 45% of which was charged to Medical and Medicare.

Transportation research has demonstrated that serious and fatal injuries suffered by people walking are often preventable with careful attention to the design, operation and enforcement of the transportation system. One of the most important steps to reduce fatal and serious injuries is designing streets so that motor vehicles travel at speeds that are safe for everyone, including pedestrians. When vehicles are traveling at 30 mph, studies show that pedestrians are six times more likely to die than in collisions with vehicles travelling at 20 mph or less.

Actions to reduce injuries have been proven in practice. In London, for example, the implementation of 20 mph residential zones resulted in an almost 50% reduction in collisions in which pedestrians were killed or seriously injured. Motor vehicle violations such as the failure of drivers to yield to people walking in intersections are also significant contributing factors to pedestrian injury in San Francisco.

For these reasons, I am establishing targets for the reduction of serious and fatal pedestrian injuries. I am directing City staff to both implement short-term priority pedestrian safety actions and to create and implement a longer-term Pedestrian Action Plan to promote walking and make it safer in San Francisco.

I am directing city agencies to coordinate through the Director's Working Group toward a citywide target of a 25% reduction in serious and fatal pedestrian injuries by 2016 and 50% reduction by 2021. Serious and fatal pedestrian injury reductions should also reduce existing inequities in serious injuries by neighborhood. These injury prevention goals should be linked with a complementary citywide goal of increasing walking as a share of trips in the city.

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NEAR TERM ACTION

Short term priority actions for pedestrian safety (to be commenced within 60 days with quarterly progress reports to the SFMTA Board of Directors) shall include:

(a) Implementing a 15 mph speed limit signage at all schools in San Francisco, led by SFMTA Sustainable Streets Division and enforced by the San Francisco Police Department and at other areas where applicable by law, including senior centers. This speed threshold is the maximum level at which pedestrians will survive in the event of a collision. At speeds above 15 mph, crash severity climbs quickly. Local governments are authorized by state law (AB 321) to lower the speed limit in this fashion.

(b) Identifying and implementing "home zones" within the SFMTA Sustainable Streets Division traffic calming program based on factors including history of injuries and fatalities, existing pedestrian environmental conditions, and feasibility, and ensuring that low-income and communities of color benefit from this program.

(c) Implementing a pedestrian safety engineering program led by the SFMTA Sustainable Streets Division aimed at corridors and neighborhoods with the highest levels of pedestrian injuries over the last several years, potentially including measures tailored to intersection characteristics, such as signal phasing/timing changes and improved crosswalk visibility.

(d) Implementing a targeted pedestrian safety enforcement program led by the San Francisco Police Department, the San Francisco Department of Public Health, and the SFMTA to address motor vehicle/pedestrian violations and increase enforcement efforts informed by data including history of severe injuries and fatalities.

(e) Building on existing research, DPH will develop pedestrian injury prediction models for San Francisco to identify and quantify the modifiable environmental and transportation characteristics contributing to injuries and injury severity.

(f) Continuing the work of DPH, in cooperation with SFMTA and the Planning Department, to evaluate opportunities to use the Pedestrian Environmental Quality Index as a tool to prioritize pedestrian realm improvements in plans and projects.

(g) Identifying international evidence-based pedestrian safety practices, led by the San Francisco Department of Public Health and the SFMTA Sustainable Streets Division that could be applied in San Francisco to reduce severe injury and death.

(h) The DWG will also be tasked to identify existing and new funds to implement the above actions to meet these targets, and seek efficiencies within interagency coordination to reduce the cost of implementation.

(i) Initiate outreach in collaboration with community organizations for all of the above efforts to ensure community participation and equitable distribution of efforts and resources to improve pedestrian safety.

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PEDESTRIAN SAFETY TASK FORCE

This Executive Directive creates the Pedestrian Safety Task Force to coordinate and implement the short-term actions. The San Francisco Department of Public Health and SFMTA Sustainable Streets Division shall be the lead agencies coordinating this effort.

(a) The task force shall include representation from the following City Departments and agencies - SFDPH, SFMTA, SF TA, SFPD, SFFD, SFDPW, SFPUC, SF Planning, Recreation & Park, SFUSD, SF DOE and Mayor's Office on Disability – as well as at least one representative of a citywide pedestrian safety organization.

(b) These City Departments will designate a contact for advancing the pedestrian safety principles of this Directive and submit the contact information the SFMTA Board of Directors within 60 days. Departments should also catalogue their past and present pedestrian safety programs, including policy initiatives, staffing, and capital programs.

PEDESTRIAN ACTION PLAN

Within 12 months, the Pedestrian Safety Task Force established above shall start the creation of a Citywide Pedestrian Action Plan, which shall:

(a) Create additional short, medium and long term goals for promoting walking and pedestrian safety in all San Francisco neighborhoods, measurable goals and benchmarks (for individual agencies and for the City including metrics to address existing disparities in injuries, deaths, and walking conditions in San Francisco neighborhoods), strategies and actions, with timelines for implementation.

(b) Utilize the Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) as the community advisory body charged with providing input to the Plan.

(c) Create a City summary document of San Francisco pedestrian safety programs, policies, initiatives, assessment tools, and research, and create a central repository for data and tools. The task force shall determine a mechanism by which these resources can be effectively shared across agencies and with the public.

(d) Analyze current City investments in pedestrian safety countermeasures and pedestrian infrastructure and make recommendations to increase and better use investments to achieve the goals of the Pedestrian Action Plan.

(e) Identify existing and future funds that will be needed to complete the above tasks including staffing, planning and monitoring, program and project environmental clearance, and funding capital projects.

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