WORDS MATTER

Effective Vision Zero Messaging

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@BarbChamberlain #VisionZero #WordsMatter
Takeaways

• Think landscape, not portrait
• System changes benefit more people
• Be specific to clarify context and implicit assumptions
• Always ask “For whom?”
INDIVIDUAL

BIGGER PICTURE

Slow Down, Zoom Out

20-25 MPH

40+ MPH

Photos courtesy of NACTO
Safe Systems in Other Realms

- Water
- Electricity
Hierarchy of Controls

Elimination
- Eliminate exposure to the crash before it can occur

Substitution
- Replace with strategy that lowers injury severity in the event of a crash

Engineering Controls
- Make changes to how we design and operate the road system, vehicles, and programs

Administrative Controls
- Change the way people use the system through, for example, education, legislation, and policies.

PPE
- Personal protective equipment, e.g. motorcycle helmets, protective gear and helmets for motorcyclists
Design Benefits for All
Communication Structure

- **Thematic** frame—landscape, not portrait
- **Positive** traffic safety approach
- **Inclusive** and **specific** language
Shift the Frame

“PORTRAIT” Frame
- Passive voice, no agent: A pedestrian was hit and killed.
- Focus on pedestrian: A pedestrian was hit and killed by a car.
- Object-based language: A car jumped the curb.
- Person-based language: A driver drove over the curb.
- Episodic framing: Crash treated as isolated incident.

“LANDSCAPE” Frame
- Thematic framing: “This is the XXth fatal collision this year.” “This crash took place in a location with no lighting and no marked crossing. We’ve had 10 fatal crashes this year with those same factors.”
- Research finding: “…we find that editorial patterns significantly affected readers' interpretation of both what happened and what to do about it on nearly every measure.” (Goddard et al. 2019)
- Resource: http://www.pedallove.org/from-victim-blaming-to-solutions-toolkit-resources
On average, a driver killed someone walking or bicycling every 2.96 days in 2018.

Every 13.65 hours in 2018 a motorist struck and seriously injured or killed someone walking or rolling.

On average, a driver killed someone walking or bicycling every 2.96 days in 2018.
1. Open with shared norms.
2. Express concern or problem with thematic frame (landscape).
3. Close with hope and action.

1. While 80% of our residents agree streets should be designed to be safe for people using all modes of transportation,
2. we have not yet provided crosswalk markings and lighting that give everyone the right infrastructure and information.
3. If we commit to a program to prioritize and address crossings in high-need locations we can make our streets work better for all of us.
Use Questions to Fill the Frame

- **WHO?** (all modes every time; demographic analysis)
- **WHAT?** (details, context, historic patterns)
- **WHEN?** (land use, lighting, line of sight)
- **WHERE?** (street design context, multimodal network connectivity, land use)
- **WHY?** (infrastructure, traffic controls, land use, trends)
- **HOW?** (active, not passive voice)
Who?

**USE**
- People using bicycles
- People walking and rolling (assistive devices, wheelchairs)
- People driving
- People using transit
- People moving freight (which you can do by bike—bicycle logistics growing in use)

**AVOID**
- Cyclists, Bikers
- Pedestrians
- Drivers, motorists, cars, vehicles
- Buses
- Trucks
USE

- People who are just trying to get somewhere—like you and me
- People who rely on this mode of transportation to reach essential services
- Your friends, family, neighbors, colleagues

AVOID

Stereotypes
Labels or descriptions with implicit/explicit bias
Who

USE

• Demographic analysis that highlights disparities in transportation equity and health equity that we can and must address

AVOID

- Stereotypes
- Labels or descriptions with implicit/explicit bias
What IS Transportation?

USE

• Transportation modes, choices*, options
  – *Not everyone has choices about modes—don’t assume they do

AVOID

Alternative transportation (anything that isn’t driving)
What IS Transportation?

**USE**

• Active transportation, walking and rolling (inclusive of people using assistive devices)

• AASHTO Council on Active Transportation draft definition: “bicycling, walking, using portable personal and assistive mobility devices, and other active modes”

**AVOID**

Nonmotorized transportation
What IS Traffic?

USE

• Too many people driving

AVOID

Traffic congestion
There is too much traffic for Billy to walk to school; so we drive him.

Traffic Inducing Traffic

(People driving inducing people driving)
The “For Whom” Test

**USE**
- Less or more for whom? Improved for whom? Maybe you’re just doing something different. Measures may improve for some modes, not for others—depending on what you value and measure!
- Identify specific changes for all modes.

**AVOID**
- We’re doing less/more. We’re improving the street.
Once your street is improved, the curb will be right here.
It’s Not a Road Diet...

USE

• (On next slide because a diet doesn’t give you much)

AVOID

This road diet will slow drivers in the business district.
It’s a Road Buffet!

USE

• This change in road configuration creates a “self-enforcing street”: One whose design helps people in cars drive at the appropriate speed for the activities present on these blocks.

• This change will help drivers see people crossing with more time to stop. Research shows this should decrease the number of crashes and reduce the severity of those that do happen, which is better for everyone involved.

• Protected bike lanes provide space for bicyclists separated from the vehicular travel lane and reduce all crash types.

• The floating bus island provides a transit stop and keeps transit and bicycling uses separate.
When?

- **Pedestrian-scale** lighting in places where we can reasonably expect people walking/rolling
- Time of day
- Seasonal factors (early winter darkness, high tourist season, holiday shopping, summer vacation for schoolkids)
Where? (Often explains Why)

- **Presence/absence**
  - Mode-specific infrastructure
  - Network connectivity
  - Reasonably spaced crossing opportunities with markings, good lighting
  - ADA accessibility
  - Transit stops, access to multimodal connections (ferry landing, rail station, airport)
  - Land use indicating PEOPLE

- **Historical patterns**
  - Poorer neighborhoods have less infrastructure yet residents more reliant on walking, bicycling, transit

- **Type of facility**
  - Proximity to high-speed corridors
  - Arterials vs side streets
  - Wide, straight road, how many lanes (wider/straighter encourages speeding)
Why?

If hit by a person driving at:

- **20 MPH**: 90% Person Survives the Collision, 10% Results in a Fatality
- **30 MPH**: 60% Person Survives the Collision, 40% Results in a Fatality
- **40 MPH**: 20% Person Survives the Collision, 80% Results in a Fatality

Source: Vision Zero Two-Year Action Strategy
What Do We Build? For Whom?

Equality

Equity

Graphic by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Takeaways

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Postcards from the Road

Keep informed on trainings, resources, and news from WSDOT Active Transportation Division and our partners.

BONUS: Mode-neutral usage tips included at no extra cost!

Sign up for the Active Transportation E-News and send your news for inclusion.

On Twitter: Search for the #WSDOTactive hashtag
Links: Media

- **Does news coverage of traffic crashes affect perceived blame and preferred solutions? Evidence from an experiment.** Tara Goddard, Kelcie Ralph, Calvin G. Thigpen, Evan Iacobucci, 2019.
- **Editorial Patterns in Bicyclist and Pedestrian Crash Reporting** Kelcie Ralph, Evan Iacobucci, Calvin G. Thigpen, Tara Goddard, 2019.
- **When covering car crashes, be careful not to blame the victim**
- **People are dying on our streets: Why is this happening and how can we talk about it responsibly?**
- **Conclusive Evidence: How the Media Fails Bicyclists**
- **Framing the Bicyclist: A Qualitative Study of Media Discourse about Fatal Bicycle Crashes**
- **How Coverage of Pedestrian Fatalities Dehumanizes Victims and Absolves Drivers**
- **If You Want to Get Away with Murder, Use Your Car: A Discursive Content Analysis of Pedestrian Traffic Fatalities in News Headlines**
- **Why we need to change the way we talk about traffic deaths**
- **What New York Should Learn From the Park Slope Crash That Killed Two Children**
- **TSU Researchers: Pedestrian Deaths Are Misunderstood, In Part Because Of Police And Journalists; presentation Dying While Walking**
- **Collision course: why are cars killing more and more pedestrians?**
Links: Framing + Usage

• How smart language helped end Seattle’s paralyzing bikelash
• Don't Say 'Cyclists,' Say 'People on Bikes'
• People for Bikes research on public perceptions of bikes and mobility
• Aggressive Drivers See Cyclists as ‘Less than Human’: paper Dehumanization of cyclists predicts self-reported aggressive behaviour toward them: A pilot study
• How we see refugees could be changed by 'subtle shifts' in language, psychologists find
• “Conversation with an Engineer” Xtranormal video
• Making the Case for Transportation Language Reform: Removing Bias
• Attacking the Language Bias in Transportation Engineering
• Ableism/Language
• Words Matter: Invisible Disability Project Usage Guide
• A New Way to Talk about the Social Determinants of Health
• Three steps to better climate conversations
• ITE Canada Transportation Equity cartoon
• Positive Culture Framework (Montana State University)
• How are Vision Zero, Safe System, and Traffic Safety Culture related?
• Traffic Safety Culture and Its Relationship to Vision Zero (Montana Dept. of Transportation)
Links: Safe Systems

- Vision Zero and the Safe Systems Approach (Moving Toward Zero)
- The Safe System (Towards Zero Foundation)
- The Safe System Approach (Road Safety Manual, World Road Association)
- Safe Systems (Institute of Transportation Engineers)
- Sustainable and Safe: A Vision and Guidance for Zero Road Deaths
- Pioneering Study Affirms Vision Zero Focus on Speed Management
- Washington’s Active Transportation Safety Council: Reports and information
- Target Zero: Washington State Strategic Highway Safety Plan
- Webinar archives
  - Developing a Proactive, Systems-Based Approach to Safety—Lessons from New York City and Seattle