

## Audit Report

# Pedestrian Safety

May 2026



The City has implemented several key pedestrian safety initiatives to make people safer, but incomplete data, limited funding, and jurisdictional challenges limit further progress. These challenges hinder the City's ability to identify and prioritize the right safety enhancements and implement them. In addition, City data shows more than two of every five pedestrian fatalities involve people experiencing homelessness. The City and the Texas Department of Transportation have made efforts aimed at reducing deaths of people experiencing homelessness by discouraging crossing and camping under or near high-speed roadways. However, more targeted and sustained interventions are needed to reduce the risk of death or serious injury for this vulnerable population.

# Pedestrian Safety

## Objective

Is the City effectively promoting pedestrian safety?

## What We Found

**The City has made efforts to improve pedestrian safety.** The City has developed several guiding plans and implemented infrastructure improvements aimed at enhancing pedestrian safety. Also, City staff conduct outreach efforts to educate the public about pedestrian safety. Crash data from the last few years shows improved safety results.

**While the City collects pedestrian crash data to guide its pedestrian safety-related decisions, the data is incomplete.** Incomplete data limits the City's ability to evaluate progress on established goals and allocate resources. Without complete and accurate data, the City may not be able to identify specific safety problems and target appropriate safety enhancements. Based on data analysis of over 3,700 pedestrian crash reports collected during calendar years 2015 through 2025, the City did not capture all factors that lead to crashes.

**City staff are unable to implement all identified pedestrian safety enhancements on roads managed by the State of Texas.** While the City and State share a long-term safety goal, staff from each agency said differences in roadway design standards impact the City's ability to make identified pedestrian safety enhancements on State-owned roadways. State standards generally prioritize traffic flow and moving vehicles through corridors. City standards focus on moving people safely on roadways, generally at lower speeds. While this challenge persists and more can be done, staff cited recent improvements in communication and cooperation between the two parties to reach their common goal.

**About 40% of pedestrian fatalities involve people experiencing homelessness.** Based on pedestrian crash reports for calendar years 2020 through 2025, about two of every five pedestrian deaths involved a person experiencing homelessness. The City has made some efforts, including working with the State to discourage people from crossing and camping under or near high-speed roadways. However, more targeted and sustained efforts are needed to further reduce the risk of death or serious injury for this vulnerable population.

## What We Recommend

We recommend the Director of the Transportation and Public Works department and applicable stakeholders engage to:

- Evaluate current gaps in pedestrian crash data and implement strategies to improve collection of more complete data
- Strengthen the City's relationship with State partners to improve coordination
- Evaluate current efforts and identify new strategies to address the traffic-related safety of people experiencing homelessness, measure the outcomes of those strategies, and adjust strategies, as needed



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Cover: Pedestrian crossing at 35th St. and Kerbey Ln., Austin  
 Transportation and Public Works.

## Objective

Is the City effectively promoting pedestrian safety?

## Background

The City adopted Vision Zero in 2015 and set a goal of zero traffic deaths and serious injuries. This goal covers all modes of transportation and applies to pedestrians within the city. There are several stakeholders involved in the City’s pedestrian safety-related activities.

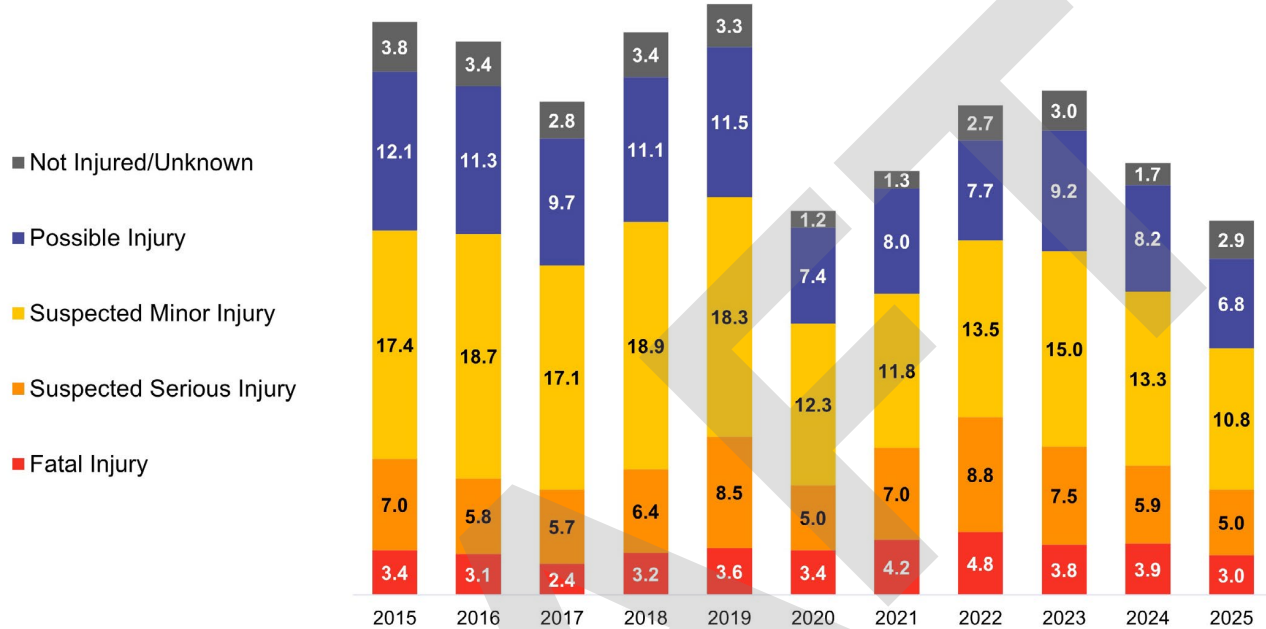
**Exhibit 1: Multiple stakeholders contribute to pedestrian safety-related oversight and operational activities**

Stakeholder	Key Responsibilities
City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishes pedestrian safety policy</li> <li>Approves funding for pedestrian safety initiatives</li> </ul>
Austin Transportation and Public Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Vision Zero team coordinates Citywide pedestrian safety policy, planning, and programming</li> <li>Implements pedestrian safety initiatives including installing, managing, and maintaining infrastructure improvements as well as conducting public outreach and education</li> </ul>
Austin Police*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enforces City traffic laws related to pedestrian safety</li> </ul>
Pedestrian Advisory Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advises the City and other jurisdictions on matters related to walking, including pedestrian safety</li> </ul>
Urban Transportation Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advises the City Council, City Manager, and City departments on transportation-related matters, including pedestrian safety</li> </ul>
Texas Department of Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Owns a portion of the roadways in Austin</li> <li>Approves pedestrian safety enhancements on State-owned roadways in Austin</li> </ul>
Community Advocacy Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocates for pedestrian safety-related enhancements and funding</li> </ul>

\*Other law enforcement agencies, such as the Department of Public Safety and the University of Texas Police Department, also enforce traffic laws  
 Source: Austin City Auditor Office’s (ACAO) analysis of the City’s pedestrian safety-related plans and other documents, March 2026

Over the past decade in Austin, the number of pedestrians involved in crashes has varied. To normalize this data, Exhibit 2 shows figures per 100,000 people. Since 2023, the number of pedestrian crashes in each category has generally gone down.

**Exhibit 2: Over the past decade, the number of pedestrian crashes per 100,000 people has varied and gone down since 2023\***



\*Evaluations for 2025 were based on the most recent census population estimates from 2024  
 Source: ACAO analysis of Vision Zero’s pedestrian crash report data, March 2026

To improve pedestrian safety, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommends a three-pronged approach of engineering, education, and enforcement. The City’s Pedestrian Safety Action Plan identifies these as key components of its overall pedestrian safety strategy. Currently, most of the City’s efforts appear to be focused on engineering. Regarding enforcement, Austin Police is responsible for enforcing the City’s traffic-related laws and regulations. According to best practices, ensuring that people comply with traffic laws leads to a reduction in crashes, injuries, and fatalities. Staff from surveyed peer cities agreed enforcement is key to improving safety outcomes, but it must be sustained to be effective. Most cities reported current resource challenges and some noted enforcement has focused on risky times of day, generally late at night, or on risky behaviors, including speeding and driving under the influence.

Both Austin Transportation and Public Works and Austin Police staff said there has been reduced enforcement in Austin over the last few years.

The City’s recent “Vision Zero 10-year Report” noted speeding citations had dropped by 90% since 2015. Staff said this is mainly due to Austin Police’s patrol officer vacancies and other competing priorities. Over the last three fiscal years, Austin’s police officer vacancy rate varied from about 17 to 20%. The most recent report shows 342 officer vacancies, or about 19% of all positions. Based on this, it appears that sustained, robust enforcement will not return until more officer vacancies are filled. However, the City can continue to make progress with engineering and educational efforts, as well as better coordination with key partners.

## Finding 1

The City has implemented various initiatives to improve pedestrian safety in Austin. However, progress continues to be slowed by challenges including incomplete data and jurisdictional authority.

Many people are killed or seriously injured on City roadways every year. Over the last three years, an average of almost 100 pedestrians per year were killed or seriously injured. The City has made several efforts to protect pedestrians on roadways in Austin. For example, the City has:

- Developed several pedestrian safety-related plans and other guiding documents
- Implemented infrastructure improvements aimed at enhancing pedestrian safety
- Conducted public educational outreach focused on a safe pedestrian environment

**The City developed guiding plans and documents aimed at enhancing pedestrian safety.** Vision Zero serves as the main City group coordinating City pedestrian safety efforts. The City has adopted several plans to guide its efforts, including the Pedestrian Safety Action Plan, which serves as a major Citywide framework for reducing pedestrian fatalities and injuries.

**Exhibit 3: Multiple City plans guide pedestrian safety-related strategies and goals**

City Plan	Plan Purpose
Pedestrian Safety Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes strategies aimed at reducing and eliminating pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries</li> <li>• Addresses areas including engineering, education, enforcement, evaluation, policy, and funding</li> </ul>
Sidewalks, Crossings, and Shared Streets Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes goals and strategies aimed at providing safe, comfortable, and accessible pedestrian passage along and across City roadways</li> </ul>
Austin Strategic Mobility Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritizes policies, programs, and projects to guide the City's transportation investments</li> <li>• Includes guidance on preferred cross-sections for all streets</li> <li>• Highlights the need for design criteria to prioritize pedestrian safety</li> </ul>
Transportation Criteria Manual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides design criteria for City and private streets, which influences pedestrian safety and comfort</li> </ul>

Source: ACAO analysis of the City's pedestrian safety-related plans and other documents, March 2026

Staff in surveyed peer cities reported working on lighting issues and implementing leading pedestrian intervals as safety measures. Also, peer staff noted reducing distances between pedestrian crossings is a challenge.

**The City implemented infrastructure improvements aimed at creating safer conditions for pedestrians.** Current efforts include constructing a variety of pedestrian safety treatments, such as pedestrian crossing islands, paint-and-post islands, pedestrian hybrid beacons, rectangular rapid flashing beacons, and sidewalks. The City installed leading pedestrian intervals at traffic signals, which gives pedestrians added time as a head start entering a crosswalk before traffic gets a green light. Also, since most fatal and serious injury crashes happen in dark conditions, the City has worked to address lighting issues. City staff noted reducing long distances between pedestrian crossings continues to be a challenge.

**Exhibit 4: The City installed multiple crossing treatments in the last two years**

Pedestrian Treatment	Estimated Cost (per treatment)*	Fiscal Year 2024	Fiscal Year 2025
Crossing Islands	\$60,000	137	128
Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons	\$575,000	6	7
Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons	\$100,000	8	1

\*Vision Zero staff provided an estimated individual cost per treatment as of 2026  
 Source: Transportation and Public Works department staff report and interviews, March 2026

All surveyed peer cities reported doing some educational outreach.

**The City provides some educational outreach related to pedestrian safety.** Federal guidance speaks to the importance of educating both pedestrians and drivers. For pedestrians, this includes the appropriate use of crossings, the importance of obeying traffic signals, being aware of their surroundings, and sharing safety tips with children. Transportation and Public Works staff conduct some public education and outreach focused on pedestrian safety. According to staff, their efforts mainly focus on contributing factors that lead to serious and fatal injuries such as speeding, impaired driving, failure to yield, and distracted driving. They also work to raise awareness about school safety and traveling in dark conditions, especially in the fall as Daylight Savings Time ends.

**While the City collects pedestrian crash data to guide pedestrian safety decision-making, the data is incomplete.** According to federal guidance, one of the foundational steps to improving pedestrian safety is understanding where and when pedestrian crashes occur and what factors contribute to the crash. Doing so requires collecting and maintaining reliable pedestrian crash data.

Most surveyed peer cities reported the importance of gathering accurate data to guide their work.

The City utilizes a data-driven approach to manage their pedestrian safety activities. Specifically, crash data helps identify the causes of crashes and guide targeted initiative and enhancement decisions. Data also informs how to allocate resources and evaluate progress on goals and the impact of actions. The City relies on crash data from the Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT) Crash Records Information System (CRIS). For fatal crashes, Vision Zero staff supplement the CRIS data with information gathered from news stories and speaking with Austin Police investigators and victim services staff.

Staff from peer cities reported efforts to get hospital or trauma records.

Based on interviews with Vision Zero staff and our analysis of the crash data reporting, some information is missing. For example, some pedestrian crash and injury information is not reported, such as minor crashes where public safety is not called. This means the City is not capturing that data. City staff are not sure how many crashes are not reported. Vision Zero staff also indicated a need for more coordination with the City's public safety agencies, especially EMS and Fire, and hospitals to get a clearer picture of what needs to be addressed.

We noted each crash report contains a field where the reporting officer can document contributing factors of the crash, such as failure to yield,

intoxication, or distracted driving. This information would help the City better determine why crashes occur and identify the best way to address the issue. However, this field is optional, based on officer judgment, and not always filled out. Vision Zero staff said they are working on a pilot program to see if contributing factors can be identified from the crash report narrative instead. We reviewed Vision Zero's data for over 3,700 crash reports since 2015 and found:

- 70% of all crashes did not list contributing factors
- 57% of serious injury and fatal crashes did not list contributing factors
- 43% of fatal crashes did not list contributing factors

In addition, Austin Police officers do not usually provide specific geolocation information for where crashes occurred. While general location data helps identify "hot spots" where crashes cluster, more specific location data can help staff identify details such as where on the block or which side of the street the crash occurred. Austin Police staff said they can only geolocate a crash when their phone is at the crash scene. However, officers often fill out crash reports after they have left the scene. In addition, investigators may not get follow-up details from victims after every crash.

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Staff from peer cities cited inaccurate location data as an issue in their cities.

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**City staff are unable to implement all identified pedestrian safety enhancements on all roadways within Austin.** According to City information, the State owns a little over 14% of roadway miles in Austin. Based on our analysis of Vision Zero's crash data reporting, about 64% of pedestrian fatalities occurred on roadways owned by the State. While both the City and State are committed to achieving zero fatalities, differences in roadway design standards impact the City's ability to make needed pedestrian safety enhancements on State-owned roadways. TxDOT standards generally prioritize moving vehicles quickly through corridors by prioritizing flow, speed, and capacity. However, the City mainly focuses on moving people safely using all modes of transportation, generally at lower speeds. The City's Vision Zero staff noted this difference as a key challenge in their recent 10-year Report.

The City requests permission from TxDOT to make safety enhancements on State-owned roads. Some City staff noted this process can be slow and frustrating, especially when permission is not granted. However, both Transportation and Public Works and TxDOT staff said that coordination between the two agencies has improved over time. Specifically, TxDOT staff noted that communication with the City has improved recently due to having clearer points of contact and consistent communication.

For example, City staff noted the importance of placing a crossing device, such as a pedestrian hybrid beacon, on a State-owned road with limited crossings like North Lamar. TxDOT staff said current State standards do not allow such a device due to the higher speed limit on that arterial road. However, they also noted TxDOT can pilot solutions, where needed, based on engineering judgement. Both City and TxDOT staff indicated solutions like this are being explored in the interest of safety.

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Surveyed peer cities reported jurisdictional challenges in their cities, as well. Staff noted the importance of partnering with key stakeholders to make progress. One city reported having local control of all their surface-level streets.

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However, TxDOT staff noted that some City actions still catch them by surprise. In one case, a resident asked why TxDOT was excavating one end of a street while the City was restriping the other end during the first week of school. Their pointed question was “Do you ever talk to each other?” TxDOT staff noted there are efforts to address this, including a tool showing all work zones, and said better coordination with the City helps, as well.

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## Finding 2

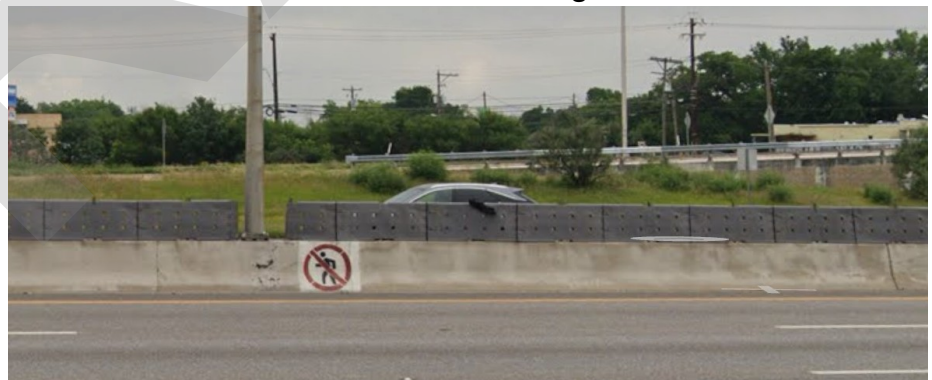
About 40% of fatal pedestrian crashes involve people who may be experiencing homelessness. The City needs to take more targeted efforts to reduce the risk of death or serious injury for this vulnerable population.

Based on our analysis of Vision Zero’s crash data reporting since 2020, people experiencing homelessness are impacted by fatal and severe crashes at a disproportionately high rate. About two of every five pedestrian fatalities involved people thought to be experiencing homelessness. According to Homeless Strategies and Operations (HSO) management, there are approximately 7,500 people experiencing homelessness in the City.

**The City and TxDOT have made efforts aimed at reducing the risk of death or serious injury for people experiencing homelessness on roadways in Austin.** These efforts include discouraging people from crossing or camping under or near high-speed roadways, mostly using physical barriers. The City’s HSO staff also conducts outreach efforts aimed mainly at encouraging people to move to City shelters and connecting them to other resources and partner organizations.

Efforts aimed at discouraging people from crossing heavy traffic roadways. The City and TxDOT coordinated to add two-foot plastic panels to the top of the center median concrete barrier along Interstate-35 (I-35) to help prevent people from trying to cross the highway.

### Exhibit 5: TxDOT increased the center median concrete barrier along I-35



Source: Google Maps, April 2026

Efforts aimed at discouraging people from camping under or near high-speed roadways. City and State staff noted efforts to restrict camping near high-traffic areas, such as highway underpasses, by closing encampments. In April, HSO communicated plans to update how it manages encampments. As part of this update, a dedicated team will work weekdays focused on transportation corridors, including around highways and major roadways. Also, HSO staff said they coordinated with TxDOT to put barriers between I-35 and the frontage road to deter

homeless encampments in medians. In early 2026, the most recent barrier was installed on I-35 in south Austin.

### Exhibit 6: TxDOT installed barriers between I-35 and a frontage road



Before



After

Source: Google Maps and ACAO observation, April 2026

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Surveyed peer cities reported little to no outreach or education work targeting people experiencing homelessness. Some cities reported taking steps to discourage people from standing and camping near high-speed roadways, but they did not report offering relocation assistance.

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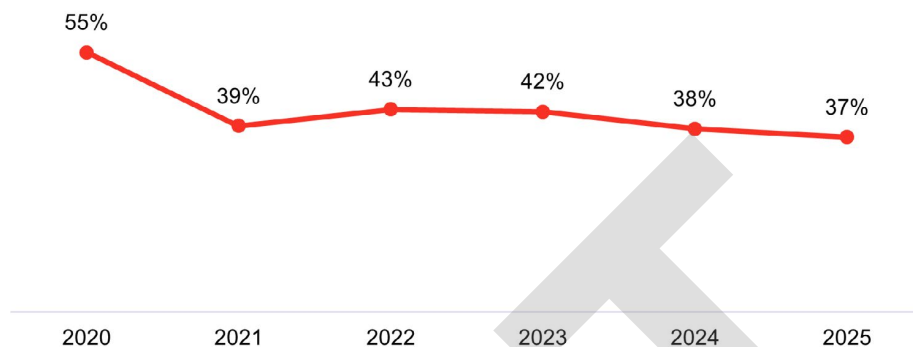
HSO encourages people experiencing homelessness to move to City shelters and has connected them to other resources and partner organizations. According to HSO management, they have a team that conducts outreach for people experiencing homelessness, including talking to people about the dangers of camping around high traffic areas. This team also advises people to go to shelters. For people who are unable to use the shelters, including people with mental health issues, staff connect them to other resources and partner organizations. However, even if the City was successful at convincing everyone to move to shelters, the City does not have enough capacity to house everyone.

Also, HSO staff said people experiencing homelessness are not very receptive to the City's safety messaging. They cited panhandling as a key issue to improve safety outcomes. Staff said Austin Police are not prioritizing enforcement, and some community members have expressed discomfort enforcing against this vulnerable population. However, staff said without enforcement, the pedestrian safety issues affecting people experiencing homelessness will remain.

Also, HSO management said they hold weekly meetings with agencies that play a role in addressing people experiencing homelessness in Austin. These agencies include City departments (including Austin Police, Fire, EMS, and Austin Public Health) and partner organizations (TxDOT, Texas Department of Public Safety, and Austin Independent School District). These meetings cover encampment locations, which inform where to focus outreach efforts.

**While the percentage of pedestrian crash fatalities involving people experiencing homelessness has gone down over the last few years, more targeted and sustained efforts are needed to further reduce the risk of death or serious injury for this vulnerable population.** Based on our analysis of Vision Zero's crash data reporting since 2020, the percentage of people experiencing homelessness involved in fatal crashes went down significantly during the pandemic years. However, between 2021 and 2025, it has remained relatively stable.

**Exhibit 7: In recent years, the percentage of fatal crashes involving people experiencing homelessness has remained consistently high**



Source: ACAO analysis of Vision Zero’s pedestrian crash reports, March 2026

The City’s recent “Vision Zero 10-Year Report” recommended traditional safety interventions need to be expanded to enhance the safety of people experiencing homelessness on Austin’s roadways. Also, new strategies must be explored to reduce risks for this population. However, the report did not identify specific interventions.

## Additional Observation

Limited funding resources impact the Transportation and Public Works department’s ability to achieve current pedestrian safety goals within established timelines.

The City relies mainly on bond money to fund pedestrian safety-related efforts. Other funding sources include federal and state grants, and a transportation user fee which funds sidewalk maintenance.<sup>1</sup> The City also partners with private developers to achieve goals, especially related to sidewalk construction.

According to City staff, the City’s bond funds for pedestrian safety work will be mostly spent by 2026. City staff anticipate future bond funding, as well as federal grants, face an uncertain future. The City’s 2026 Bond program has not been finalized. However, funding levels are estimated to be lower for the City’s Vision Zero program, as well as mobility programs overall, when compared to prior years. Transportation and Public Works management said the City will continue to pursue federal and state grants, where available. However, the bottom line is City funding sources for pedestrian safety initiatives are vulnerable to decisions by others, including other government entities, Council, and voters.

Reduced funding would likely have an impact on the City’s ability to achieve its Vision Zero goal. We also looked at three other City goals related to pedestrian safety that established 2033 as a deadline. Two goals focus on sidewalks, and one focuses on crossing gaps. It appears the City has made progress toward these goals. However, staff reported 2024 and 2025 spending was just over half what they estimate is needed to achieve these goals. Based on this shortfall and the expectation for less funding over the next few years, achieving these goals within the current timeline is unlikely. Since Transportation and Public Works is not currently positioned to achieve these goals, management should consider revisiting each to align priorities with available funding and be transparent about realistic timelines.

Surveyed peer cities reported having more sources to fund pedestrian safety efforts than Austin. Most other cities devote money from their general fund, and some use money from various taxes and fees.

<sup>1</sup> We noted a current lawsuit related to the City’s Transportation User Fee.

## Recommendations and Management Response

1

To ensure the City collects and reports complete and reliable crash data to inform the Vision Zero goal, the Austin Transportation and Public Works Director should work with the leaders of Austin's public safety agencies to evaluate current gaps in the City's pedestrian crash data, and identify and implement strategies to improve collection of as much data as possible. The success of this recommendation relies on all City departments participating and engaging in these efforts which should, at a minimum, address the issue areas noted in this report.

**Management Response:** Agree

**Proposed Implementation Plan:**

Austin Transportation and Public Works will coordinate with public safety partners to improve the completeness and reliability of pedestrian crash data supporting Vision Zero.

The audit report identified gaps in injury severity, location, and contributing factors. While current data undergo robust quality assurance, we agree improvements are needed at the point of collection. In the past Vision Zero has trained APD cadets on the importance of accurate crash reporting and is prepared to expand this effort to future cadet classes. We are also partnering with Prairie View A&M University on a research project to use machine learning to extract contributing factors from officer narratives; if successful, we plan to integrate this algorithm into our crash analysis tools to address gaps in contributing factor reporting.

We will also continue to expand data integration across agencies. Austin-Travis County EMS is providing patient care records, which TPW is incorporating into the crash database this year. We will pursue similar data from other regional EMS providers and will then prioritize integrating Austin Fire response data. Longer term, we will explore access to de-identified hospital data through partnerships with research institutions and state agencies.

**Proposed Implementation Date:** 12-18 months

2

The Austin Transportation and Public Works Director should work to strengthen the City's relationship with the Texas Department of Transportation to help achieve both City and State goals related to pedestrian safety. This effort should establish clear points of contact within the City to aid coordination.

**Management Response:** Agree

**Proposed Implementation Plan:**

TPW agrees that strengthening coordination with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is critical to advancing shared pedestrian safety goals. The City and TxDOT have a longstanding working relationship, and coordination continues to improve through regular leadership engagement and project-level collaboration, such as the IH-35 Capital Express project.

While differences in design standards can present challenges, both agencies share a common commitment to improving safety for all users. We have continued to navigate these differences through collaborative, solution-oriented approaches. Recent coordination—such as joint efforts to enhance safety on North Lamar Boulevard following a tragic fatal pedestrian crash—demonstrates the value and effectiveness of this partnership.

Moving forward, TPW will formalize clear points of contact and continue regular coordination with TxDOT to identify opportunities to better align practices and advance pedestrian safety outcomes.

**Proposed Implementation Date:** 6 months

## Recommendations and Management Response

3

In order to ensure that people experiencing homelessness are protected from fatal crashes and injuries, the Austin Transportation and Public Works Director, with input from the Homeless Strategies and Operations Officer, should work with relevant stakeholders to:

- a. Evaluate the City's current efforts in this area to identify needed improvements
- b. Implement new strategies to improve the safety of people on or near roadways in Austin
- c. Measure outcomes, and adjust targeted solutions, as needed

**Management Response:** Agree

**Proposed Implementation Plan:**

TPW agrees that improving safety for people experiencing homelessness requires a coordinated, multi-agency approach. While addressing homelessness remains a significant nationwide challenge, we are committed to strengthening coordination with Austin Homeless Strategies and Operations (HSO) and other partners to improve safety for this vulnerable and disproportionately impacted population.

Current efforts include ongoing data sharing, with Vision Zero identifying crash hotspots and HSO providing encampment location data to better understand areas of elevated risk. TPW also helps identify high-risk locations from a crash perspective to inform the prioritization of encampment abatement and supports implementation of those efforts in coordination with partner departments.

Earlier this month, HSO coordinated with other City departments, including TPW, to launch an update to the Homeless Encampment Management (HEM) program to improve the City's ability to respond to encampments, maintain public spaces over time, and ensure a more consistent, coordinated approach to outreach, enforcement, and site restoration. As part of this effort, HSO, TPW, and APD will have a dedicated HEM team cleaning and clearing encampments along major freeways, roadways, and other travel corridors five days per week. One of the anticipated outcomes from this new HEM team is improved traffic safety due to fewer encampments located near high injury hotspots.

In response to this recommendation, TPW will continue working with HSO to evaluate the new efforts, identify gaps, and assess opportunities to strengthen coordination, informed by innovative and emerging practices within our community and from other jurisdictions and Vision Zero cities.

TPW has also recently been invited to participate in TxDOT's Initiative Addressing Homelessness, a series of workshops to bring together local officials and community leaders with the goal of identifying challenges, collaborating on ideas, and supporting each other's work to proactively address concerns of people experiencing homelessness in Austin.

TPW will continue tracking injuries and fatalities involving people experiencing homelessness and will refine performance measures over time to better assess outcomes and to guide the implementation of focused, data-driven interventions.

**Proposed Implementation Date:** 12 months

# Management Response



**To:** Jason Hadavi, City Auditor

**Through:** Mike Rogers, Assistant City Manager

**From:** Richard Mendoza, Director, Austin Transportation and Public Works *RM*

**Date:** May 8, 2026

**Subject:** **Management Response to the Pedestrian Safety Audit**

The purpose of this memorandum is for Austin Transportation and Public Works (TPW) management to respond to the City Auditor's Office draft audit report on Pedestrian Safety, provided for our review on April 30, 2026. We appreciate the thoroughness and professionalism of this audit. Independent reviews of this kind are invaluable, and we are grateful for the partnership.

The safety of people walking and traveling on Austin's streets is TPW's highest priority. Every traffic fatality is preventable, and eliminating deaths and serious injuries on our network is the foundational principle guiding everything we do. Austin's Vision Zero program is among the most recognized in the nation. Our data-driven, equity-focused approach — including innovative use of technology, rigorous crash analysis, and multi-agency collaboration — has made Austin a model for peer cities across the country.

We view the internal audit as an opportunity to further strengthen our efforts to improve pedestrian safety, and we look forward to continuing to make progress towards our Vision Zero goal. We agree with the audit's three recommendations; below you will find our proposed implementation plan to operationalize these recommendations.

## **Recommendation 1**

*To ensure the City collects and reports complete and reliable crash data to inform the Vision Zero goal, the Austin Transportation and Public Works Director should work with the leaders of Austin's public safety agencies to evaluate current gaps in the City's pedestrian crash data and identify and implement strategies to improve collection of as much data as possible. The success of this recommendation relies on all City departments participating and engaging in these efforts which should, at a minimum, address the issue areas noted in this report*

**Management Response:** Agree

Date: May 8, 2026  
Subject: Management Response to the Pedestrian Safety Audit

**Proposed Implementation Plan:**

Austin Transportation and Public Works will coordinate with public safety partners to improve the completeness and reliability of pedestrian crash data supporting Vision Zero.

The audit report identified gaps in injury severity, location, and contributing factors. While current data undergo robust quality assurance, we agree improvements are needed at the point of collection. In the past Vision Zero has trained APD cadets on the importance of accurate crash reporting and is prepared to expand this effort to future cadet classes. We are also partnering with Prairie View A&M University on a research project to use machine learning to extract contributing factors from officer narratives; if successful, we plan to integrate this algorithm into our crash analysis tools to address gaps in contributing factor reporting.

We will also continue to expand data integration across agencies. Austin-Travis County EMS is providing patient care records, which TPW is incorporating into the crash database this year. We will pursue similar data from other regional EMS providers and will then prioritize integrating Austin Fire response data. Longer term, we will explore access to de-identified hospital data through partnerships with research institutions and state agencies.

**Proposed Implementation Date:** 12-18 months

**Recommendation 2**

*The Austin Transportation and Public Works Director should work to strengthen the City's relationship with the Texas Department of Transportation to help achieve both City and State goals related to pedestrian safety. This effort should establish clear points of contact within the City to aid coordination.*

**Management Response:** Agree

**Proposed Implementation Plan:**

TPW agrees that strengthening coordination with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is critical to advancing shared pedestrian safety goals. The City and TxDOT have a longstanding working relationship, and coordination continues to improve through regular leadership engagement and project-level collaboration, such as the IH-35 Capital Express project.

While differences in design standards can present challenges, both agencies share a common commitment to improving safety for all users. We have continued to navigate these differences through collaborative, solution-oriented approaches. Recent coordination—such as joint efforts to enhance safety on North Lamar Boulevard following a tragic fatal pedestrian crash—demonstrates the value and effectiveness of this partnership.

Moving forward, TPW will formalize clear points of contact and continue regular coordination with TxDOT to identify opportunities to better align practices and advance pedestrian safety outcomes.

Date: May 8, 2026  
Subject: Management Response to the Pedestrian Safety Audit

**Proposed Implementation Date:** 6 months

### **Recommendation 3**

*In order to ensure that people experiencing homelessness are protected from fatal crashes and injuries, the Austin Transportation and Public Works Director, with input from the Homeless Strategy Officer, should work with relevant stakeholders too:*

- a. Evaluate the City's current efforts in this area to identify needed improvements*
- b. Implement new strategies to improve the safety of people on or near roadways in Austin*
- c. Measure outcomes, and adjust targeted solutions, as needed*

**Management Response:** Agree

### **Proposed Implementation Plan:**

TPW agrees that improving safety for people experiencing homelessness requires a coordinated, multi-agency approach. While addressing homelessness remains a significant nationwide challenge, we are committed to strengthening coordination with Austin Homeless Strategies and Operations (HSO) and other partners to improve safety for this vulnerable and disproportionately impacted population.

Current efforts include ongoing data sharing, with Vision Zero identifying crash hotspots and HSO providing encampment location data to better understand areas of elevated risk. TPW also helps identify high-risk locations from a crash perspective to inform the prioritization of encampment abatement and supports implementation of those efforts in coordination with partner departments.

Earlier this month, HSO coordinated with other City departments, including TPW, to launch an update to the Homeless Encampment Management (HEM) program to improve the City's ability to respond to encampments, maintain public spaces over time, and ensure a more consistent, coordinated approach to outreach, enforcement, and site restoration. As part of this effort, HSO, TPW, and APD will have a dedicated HEM team cleaning and clearing encampments along major freeways, roadways, and other travel corridors five days per week. One of the anticipated outcomes from this new HEM team is improved traffic safety due to fewer encampments located near high injury hotspots.

In response to this recommendation, TPW will continue working with HSO to evaluate the new efforts, identify gaps, and assess opportunities to strengthen coordination, informed by innovative and emerging practices within our community and from other jurisdictions and Vision Zero cities.

TPW has also recently been invited to participate in TxDOT's *Initiative Addressing Homelessness*, a series of workshops to bring together local officials and community leaders with the goal of identifying challenges, collaborating on ideas, and supporting each other's work to proactively address concerns of people experiencing homelessness in Austin.

**Date:** May 8, 2026  
**Subject:** Management Response to the Pedestrian Safety Audit

TPW will continue tracking injuries and fatalities involving people experiencing homelessness and will refine performance measures over time to better assess outcomes and to guide the implementation of focused, data-driven interventions.

**Proposed Implementation Date:** 12 months

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Joel Meyer, Transportation Safety Officer, Austin Transportation and Public Works, at [joel.meyer@austintexas.gov](mailto:joel.meyer@austintexas.gov) or 512-974-1405.

cc: Jim Dale, P.E., Deputy Director, Austin Transportation and Public Works  
Anna Martin, P.E., Assistant Director, Austin Transportation and Public Works  
David Gray, Director, Austin Homeless Strategies and Operations  
Lisa Davis, Chief of Police, Austin Police Department

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## Scope

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The audit scope included the City of Austin's activities and practices for ensuring the safety of pedestrians in Austin from 2020 to 2025.

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## Methodology

To complete this audit, we performed the following steps:

- Researched leading practices and guidance for pedestrian safety
- Interviewed City department staff from Transportation and Public Works, Austin Police, and Homeless Strategies and Operations; a member of the Pedestrian Advisory Council; and staff at TxDOT about pedestrian safety efforts and practices
- Reviewed plans, policies, and procedures and other relevant documentation related to the pedestrian safety program
- Analyzed crash report data related to pedestrian safety from 2015 through 2025
- Analyzed timelines, spending, and progress for three City pedestrian-related goals
- Selected and surveyed staff in six peer cities (Dallas and El Paso in Texas; San Diego, California; Charlotte, North Carolina; Columbus, Ohio; and Seattle, Washington) and analyzed responses about their pedestrian safety efforts and practices
- Evaluated the risk of fraud, waste, and abuse regarding pedestrian safety efforts and practices
- Evaluated internal controls related to pedestrian safety efforts and practices

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## Audit Standards

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

The Austin City Auditor's Office was created by the Austin City Charter as an independent office reporting to City Council to help establish accountability and improve City services. We conduct performance audits to review aspects of a City service or program and provide recommendations for improvement.

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