



Safe Streets for All: NM Road Safety Policy

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Introduction:

Road Safety is Public Health

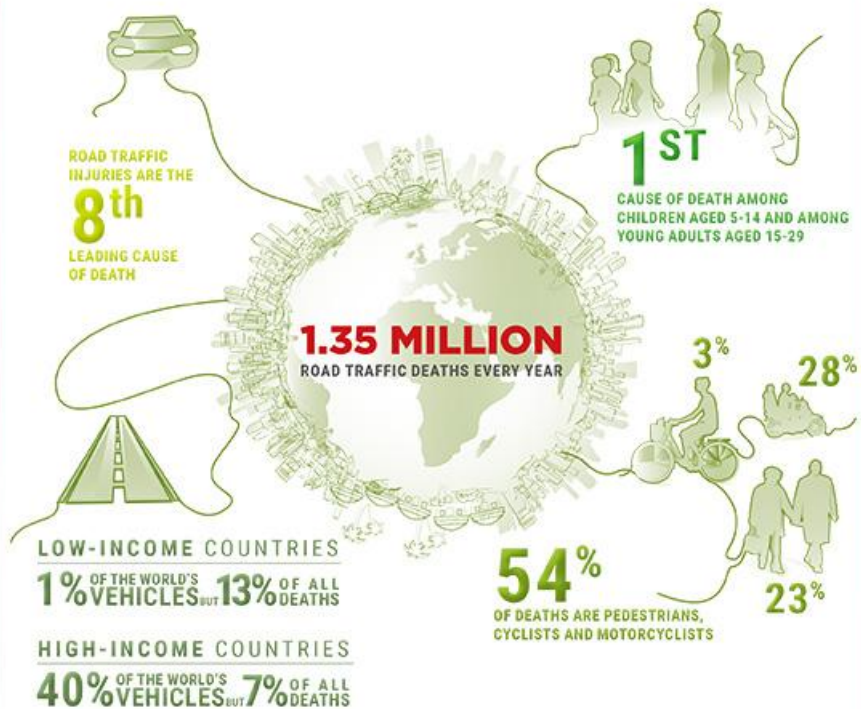
The global health burden of road traffic deaths is a large, persistent, and systematically underappreciated issue, especially when compared to both communicable and noncommunicable disease.

- Road traffic deaths and serious injuries are preventable.
- Safety is a shared responsibility.
- Transportation systems shape health outcomes.

Transportation policy is health policy.



ROAD TRAFFIC INJURIES: **THE FACTS**



**EVERY 24 SECONDS
SOMEONE DIES ON THE ROAD**



#RoadSafety



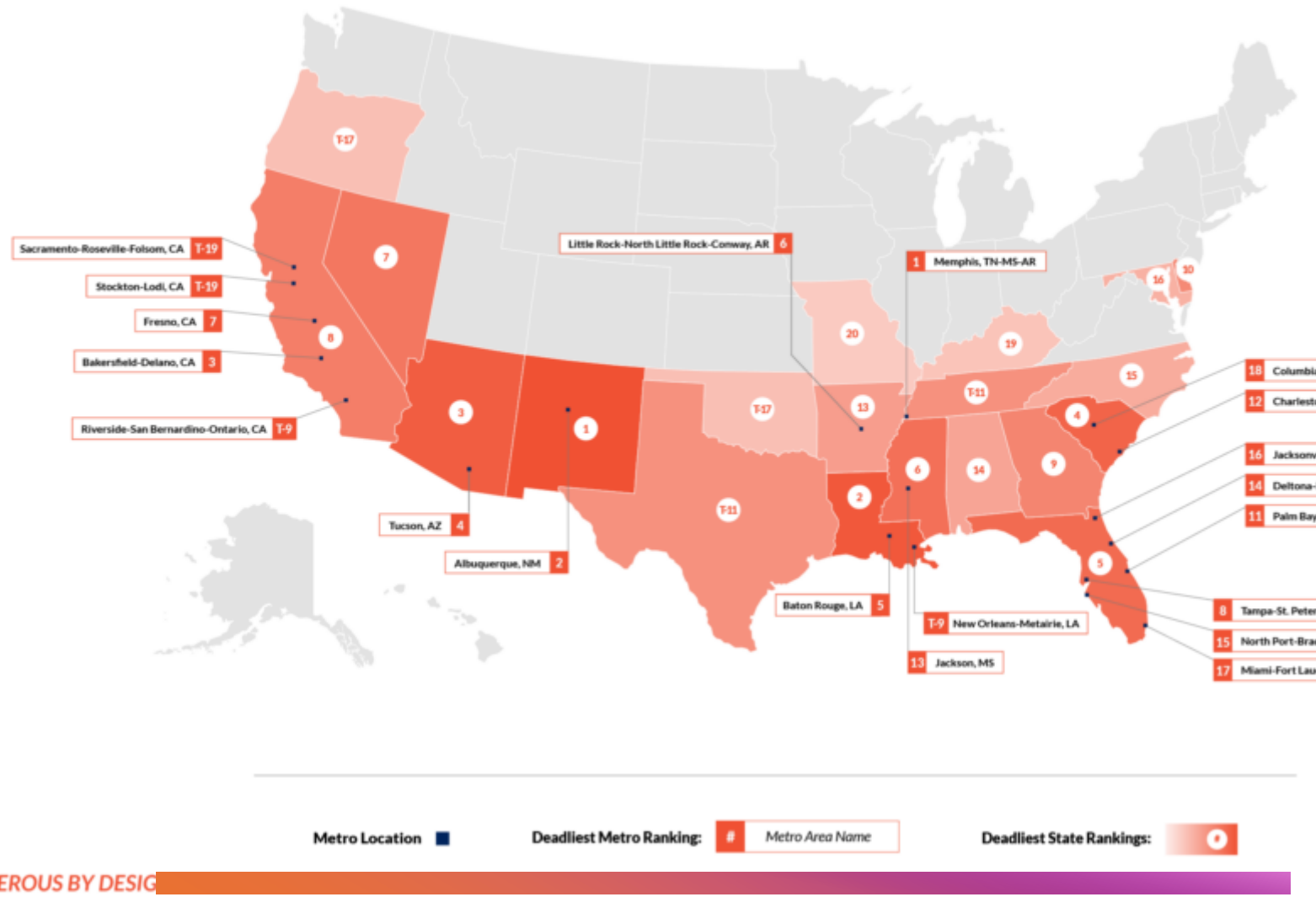
World Health
Organization

source: WHO Global status report on road safety 2018
www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_safety_status/2018/en/

Zoom Out: A Global Public Health Crisis

- 1.16-1.35 Million Deaths Globally.
- Leading cause of death in ages 5-29 years old. Two thirds of road traffic fatalities occur among people of working age (18–59 years).
- 20-50 million people suffer non-fatal injuries, many resulting in a disability.
- Leading cause of economic losses to individuals, families, and nation, due to cost of treatment and lost productivity for those killed or injured.

THE DEADLIEST STATES AND METRO AREAS



Zoom In: The United States

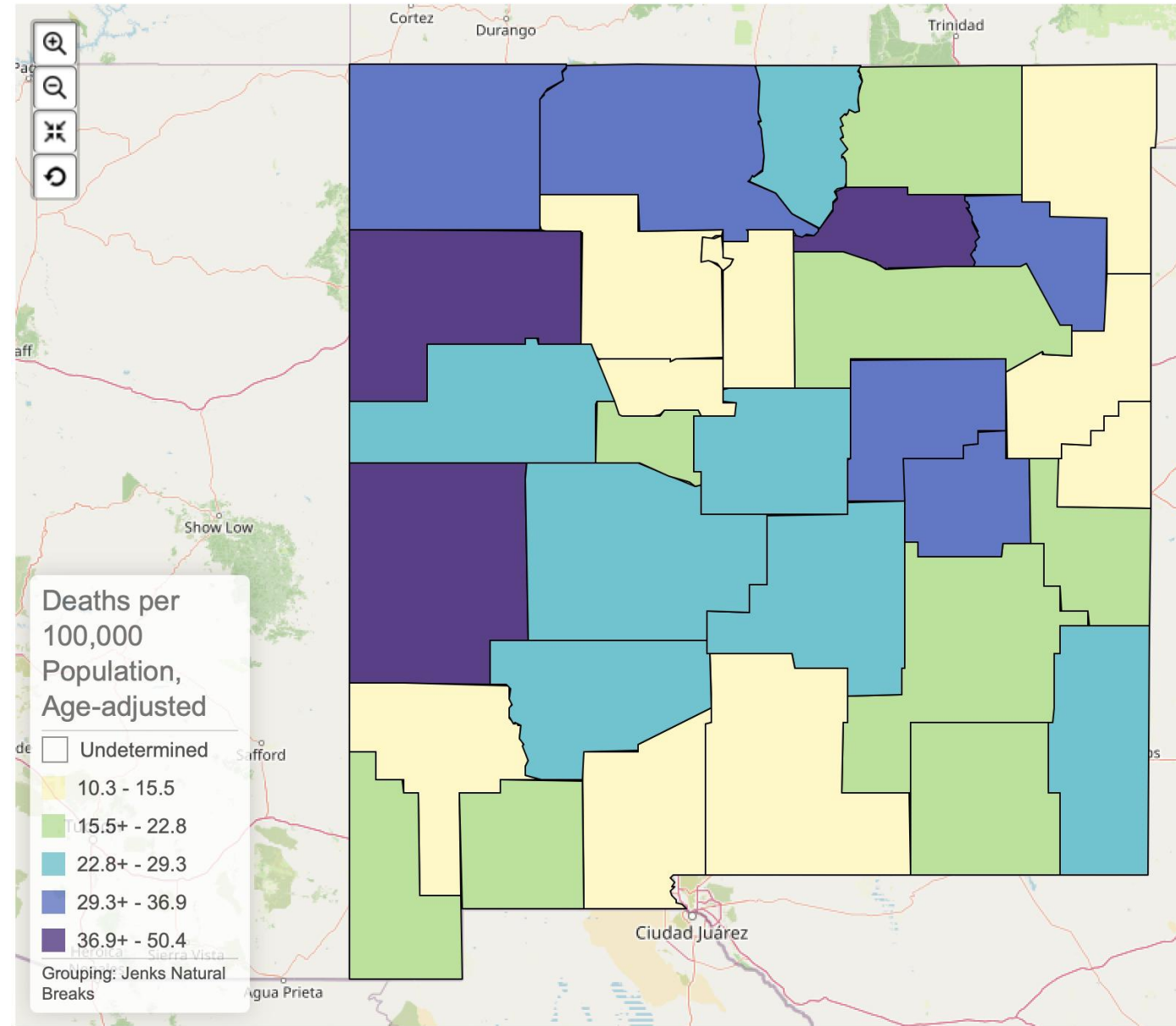
The U.S. adopted Safe Systems through the USDOT and National Roadway Safety Strategy (NRSS).

Governance is fragmented at all levels (federal → local) and public health outcomes are not fully integrated into assessment and reporting.

Zoom In More: NM Motor Vehicle Crash Data

- Second leading cause of injury death in 2020 for New Mexicans aged 1 to 24.
- Males 15 to 24 die at 2x rate of females.
- **NM vehicle-related death rate 62% higher** than national (19.4 vs 12.0/100k)
- Increased risk in rural and mixed rural-urban counties due to greater VMT, more dangerous road designs, and longer emergency response time.

NM Motor Vehicle Crash Death Rates by County 2016–2020



The Burden is Not Shared Equally

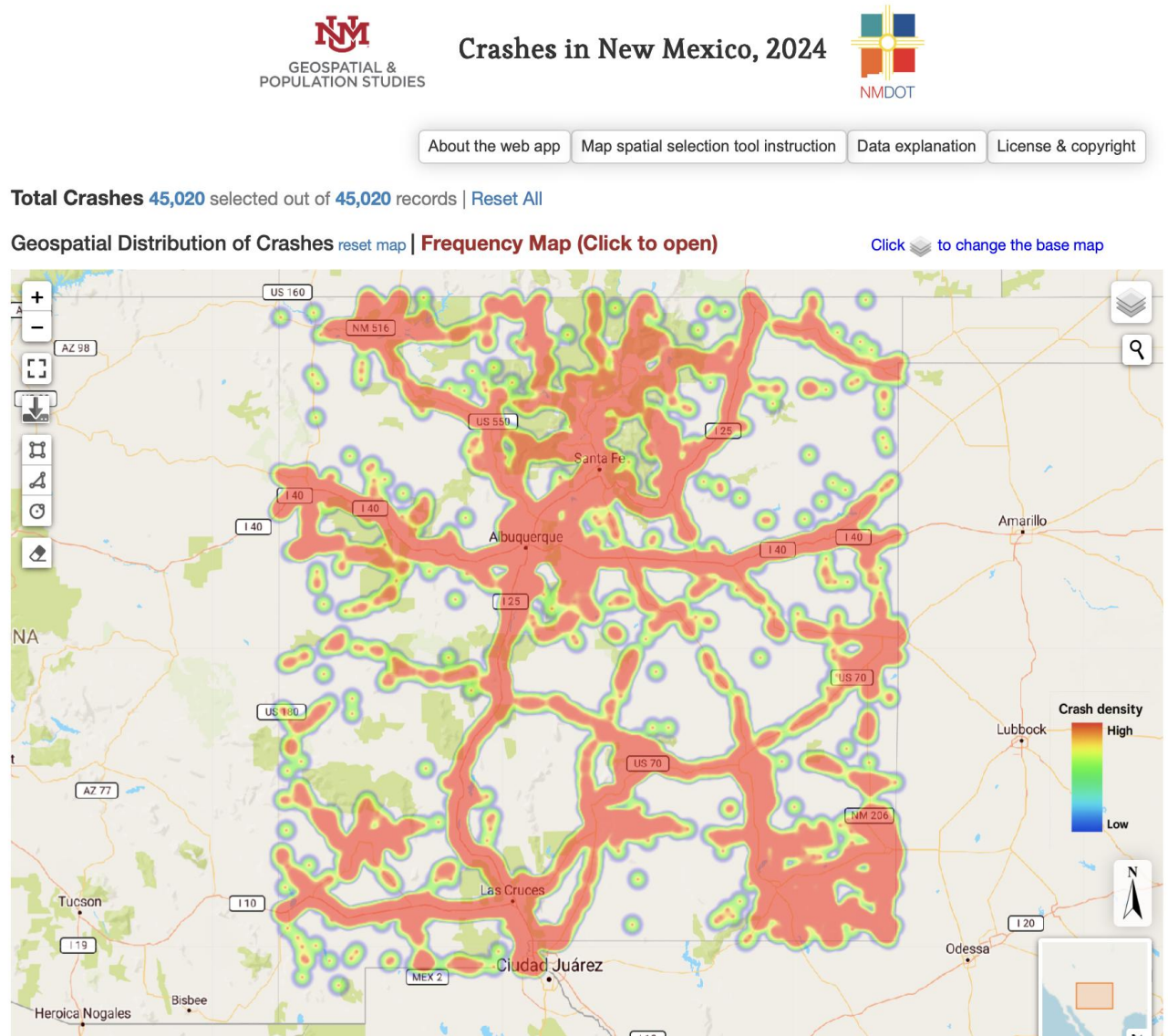
- **Vulnerable Road Users (VRU)** — anyone not in a vehicle that has a protective shell – pedestrians, construction workers, cyclists, scooters, wheelchair users, and more. Depending on law, may include motorcycles.
- Low/middle-income countries, which also reflects NM counties
- Socioeconomic disparities

Health is determined by your zip code, and infrastructure is a component of this. Where and how safe systems are built determines who survive.

Who Bears the Burden in NM?

- Pedestrians
- Tribal communities
- Rural residents
- People exposed to high-speed arterials and state highways

Risk isn't randomly distributed



What Determines Whether Someone Survives?

- **Socioecological Framework** – how human development and behavior are shaped by the dynamic interplay between individuals and their surrounding environment.
 - **Individual behavior matters** – impairment, distraction, speed management.
 - **Interpersonal** – social networks and relationship, how do we talk about road safety?
 - **Organization/Institutional** – school zones, safety standards, enforcement.
 - **Community** – what are the community norms? Is traffic/road safety a priority?
What are the speed limits?
 - **Public Policy** – the laws, regulations, and resources that regulate or support safety.
- Road design, vehicle design, laws, funding and post-crash care/emergency response are where lawmakers can influence safety.

From the 4Es to a Safe System Approach



Enforcement, Education, Engineering, Emergency Services
→ a siloed approach that assigns duties to separate agencies



The Safe Systems approach integrates the 4 E's collectively as interconnected system of strategies where multiple layers work in tandem.

The Paradigm Shift: Safe Systems

- A holistic road safety framework designed to eliminate fatal and serious traffic injuries for all road users.
- Humans make mistakes.
- The system should prevent those mistakes from becoming fatal.
- Shared responsibility.
- Proactive safety.
- Redundancy.



The Missing Partner: Public Health

- Transportation + Law enforcement traditionally dominate.
- Public health contributes to understanding injury epidemiology, surveillance, equity analysis, prevention, community engagement and post-crash outcomes.
- NM has crash data, but the fatality data is fragmented:
 - **Crash reports, hospital records, and death certificates use different reporting standards, coding practices, and geographic classifications.**
- The Safe Systems Approach recognizes that preventing fatalities and serious injuries require more than changing individual behavior. **Public Health** brings understanding of who is more affected, the conditions that shape risk, and how to evaluate whether interventions improve population health.



We Know Better Outcomes are Possible

Road traffic fatalities per 100,000 residents (2024)

- Sweden **2.0**
- Japan **2.6**
- **United States 11.6**

The U.S. has nearly six times Sweden's road traffic fatality rate.

Road Safety Governance: International Lessons for New Mexico

Sweden and Japan

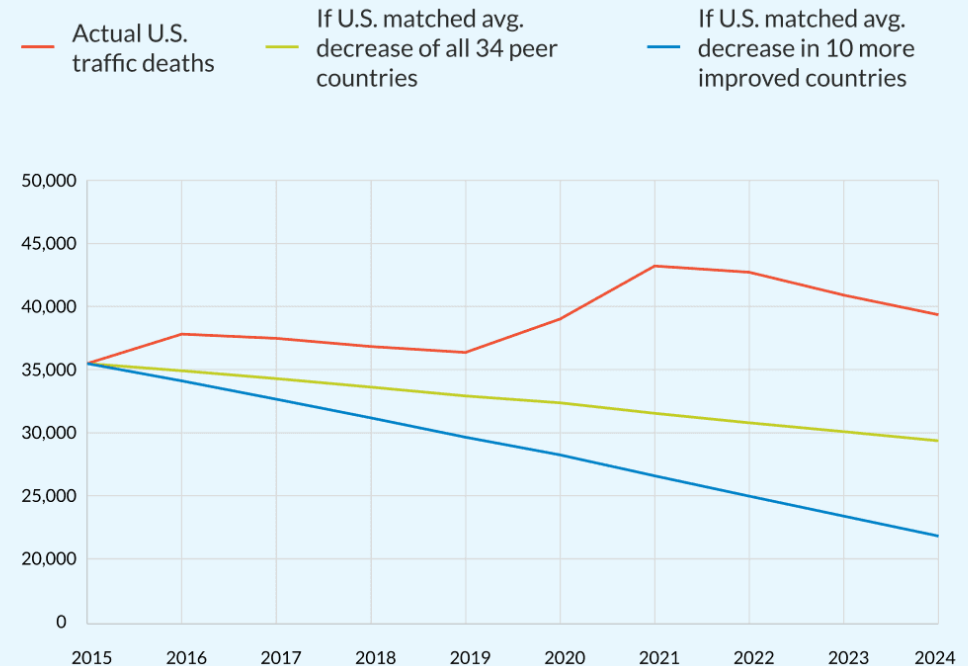
- National road safety goals with defined responsibilities.
- Coordinated policies across government agencies.
- Emphasis on prevention, infrastructure, and measurable outcomes.

United States

- Nat'l Safe System strategy, but implementation is decentralized.
- Responsibilities divided among federal, state, and local gov.
- Funding and accountability frequently fragmented.

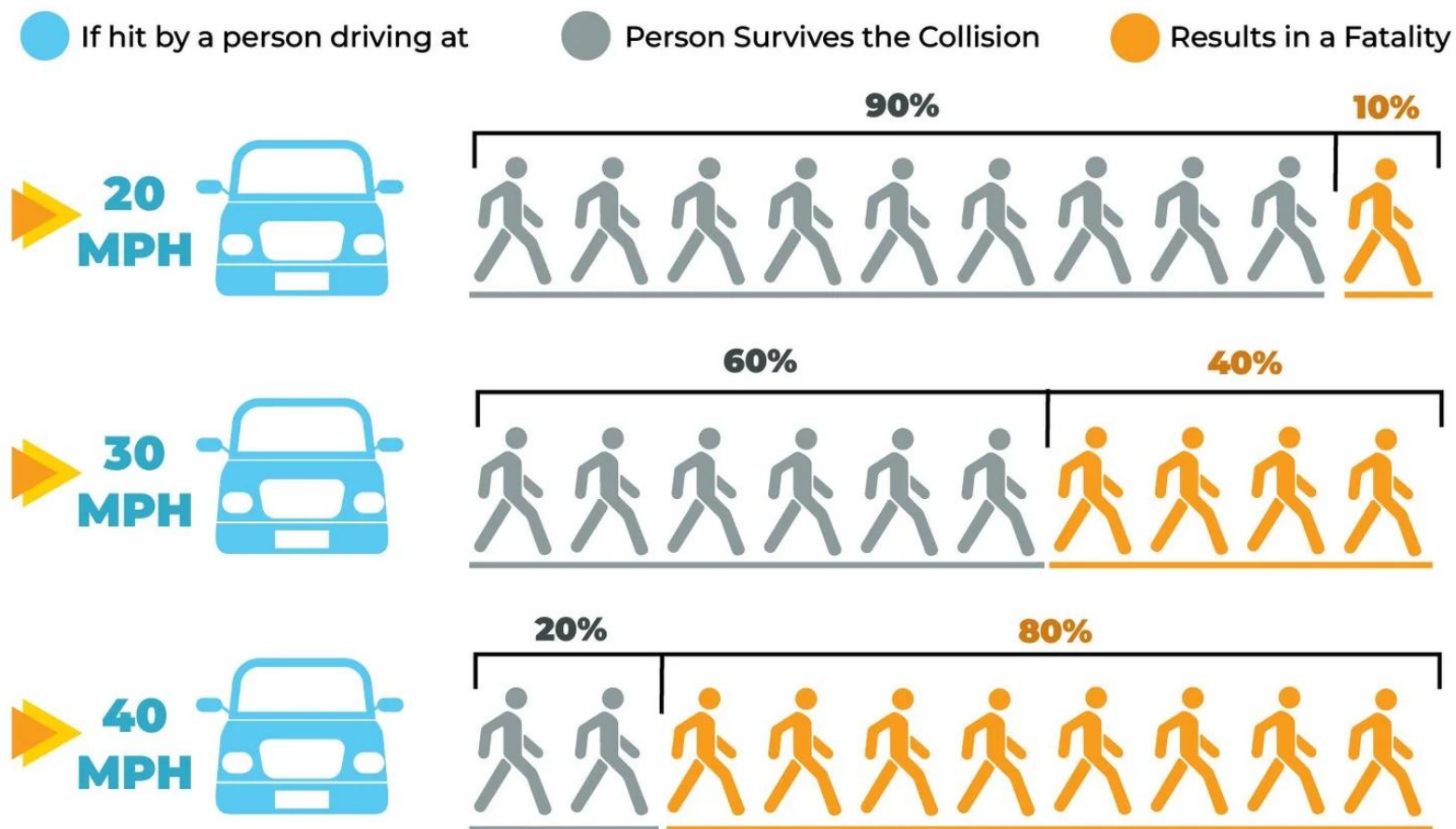
Safety requires coordinated responsibility, sustained investment, and measurable results.

If U.S. traffic fatality trends had followed other peer nations



If the U.S. had simply been able to emulate the progress of these 34 peer nations in the developed world, 63,441 lives otherwise lost to traffic violence could have been saved over the last decade alone.

Speed matters



Speed limits alone are insufficient. Streets must be designed to encourage safe driving speeds.

What Safer Infrastructure Looks Like

Road Diet

- Reduces crossing distance
- Reduces vehicle speeds
- Makes space for other uses
- **Statewide streamlined approval based on daily traffic, no study needed?**



Before



What Safer Infrastructure Looks Like

Protected Bike Lane

- Keeps bicyclists and car drivers safe
- Transportation option for non-drivers
- Can reduce vehicle traffic on the road
- **Statewide protection standards based on speed and traffic volumes?**



What Safer Infrastructure Looks Like

Protected Crossing

- Keeps pedestrians and car drivers safe
- Creates expectation on how to act
- **Require and fund signalized crossings for ALL schools near multi-lane highways or arterials?**



What Safer Infrastructure Looks Like

Protected Highway Interchange

- Keeps VRUs separate from vehicles
- Makes highways no longer a barrier
- **Require and fund protected ped/bike facilities for ALL new and reconstructed bridges and interchanges?**



Safer Streets Don't Always Require \$\$\$\$\$\$ ***Improvements Implemented Over Time***

CABQ Complete Streets Ordinance

- Improve street layout during routine resurfacing projects
- 2026: Council adds *Quick Build* consideration to the process
- If Quick Build omitted from project, must document why

NMDOT Quick Build Guide

- Released April 2026
- Provides a foundation for cities to say “We can do this too!”
- Great way for state highway Main Streets to become safer

Case Study: Truth or Consequences

NMDOT recently implemented multimodal improvements and a road diet along Main St and Broadway Blvd (I-25 Business Loop) through Downtown Truth or Consequences. The project helps illustrate the types of safety improvements that are possible by restriping downtown main streets without moving existing curb lines.

The Context

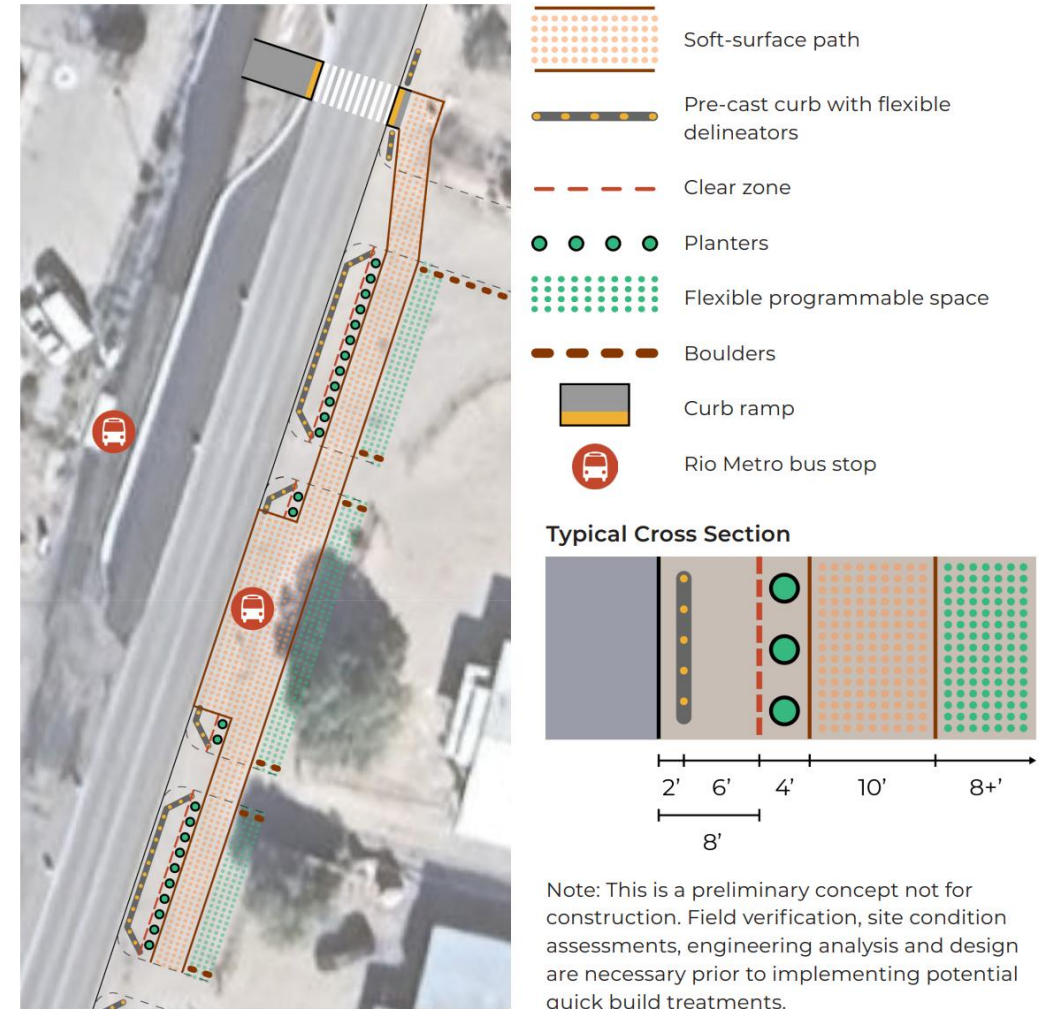
This project applied changes along two one-way couplets through Downtown Truth or Consequences—Main Ave and Broadway St—through resurfacing and restriping, as well as accessibility improvements such as upgraded curb ramps. The project implemented a road diet, reducing the number of general purpose travel lanes from two to one per direction on both streets. It maintained on-street parking, and reallocated roadway space to provide parking-protected two-way bikeways with a striped buffer on both streets. This reconfiguration improves safety along the corridor by reducing motor vehicle speeds and providing new bikeways. It also supports economic development goals and local businesses by maintaining on-street parking and providing more direct access to businesses for bicyclists.

Following the initial installation, NMDOT applied a revised layout that retained the road diet but converted the two-way cycle tracks into one-way buffered bike lanes.

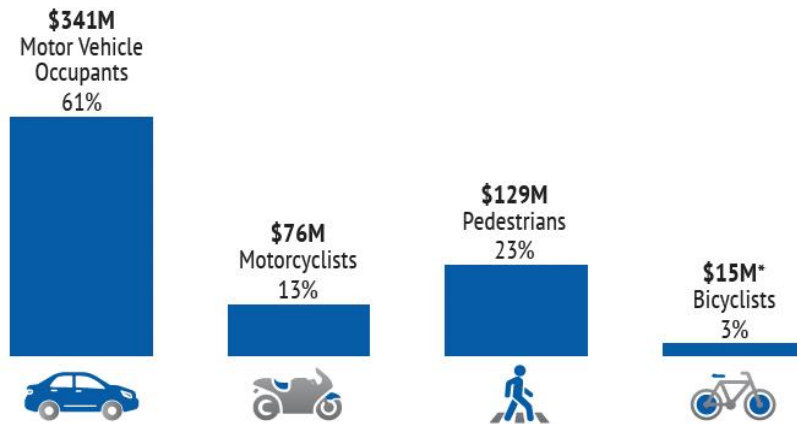


Case Study: Pueblo of Jemez

The Pueblo of Jemez recently explored and developed a design concept for a demonstration project along NM-4 as a part of a federal tribal safety grant awarded to the Pueblo and other communities across the country. Although the Pueblo ultimately installed a demonstration project on a local street, the design concept illustrates how tribal and rural communities can use quick build treatments and low-cost, readily available materials to improve crossings and corridors for people walking, bicycling, and riding transit.



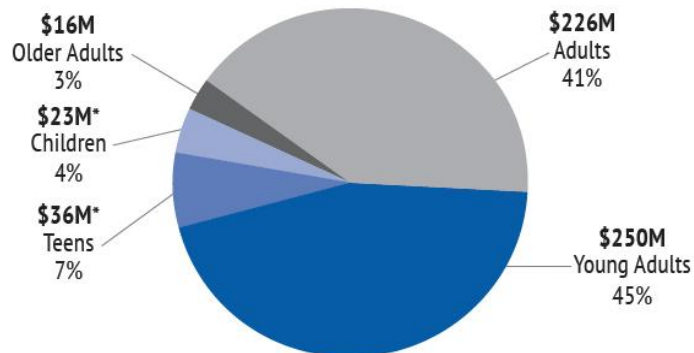
What is the Economic Cost of a Fatality?



Source: CDC WISQARS (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System), 2018

*Cost is based on fewer than 20 deaths and may be unstable.

COST OF TRAFFIC DEATHS BY AGE GROUP NEW MEXICO



Children: 0-14, Teens: 15-19, Young Adults: 20-34, Adults: 35-64, Older Adults: 65+

Source: CDC WISQARS, 2018

*Cost is based on fewer than 20 deaths and may be unstable.

Motor Vehicle Crash Deaths: Costly But Preventable

NEW MEXICO

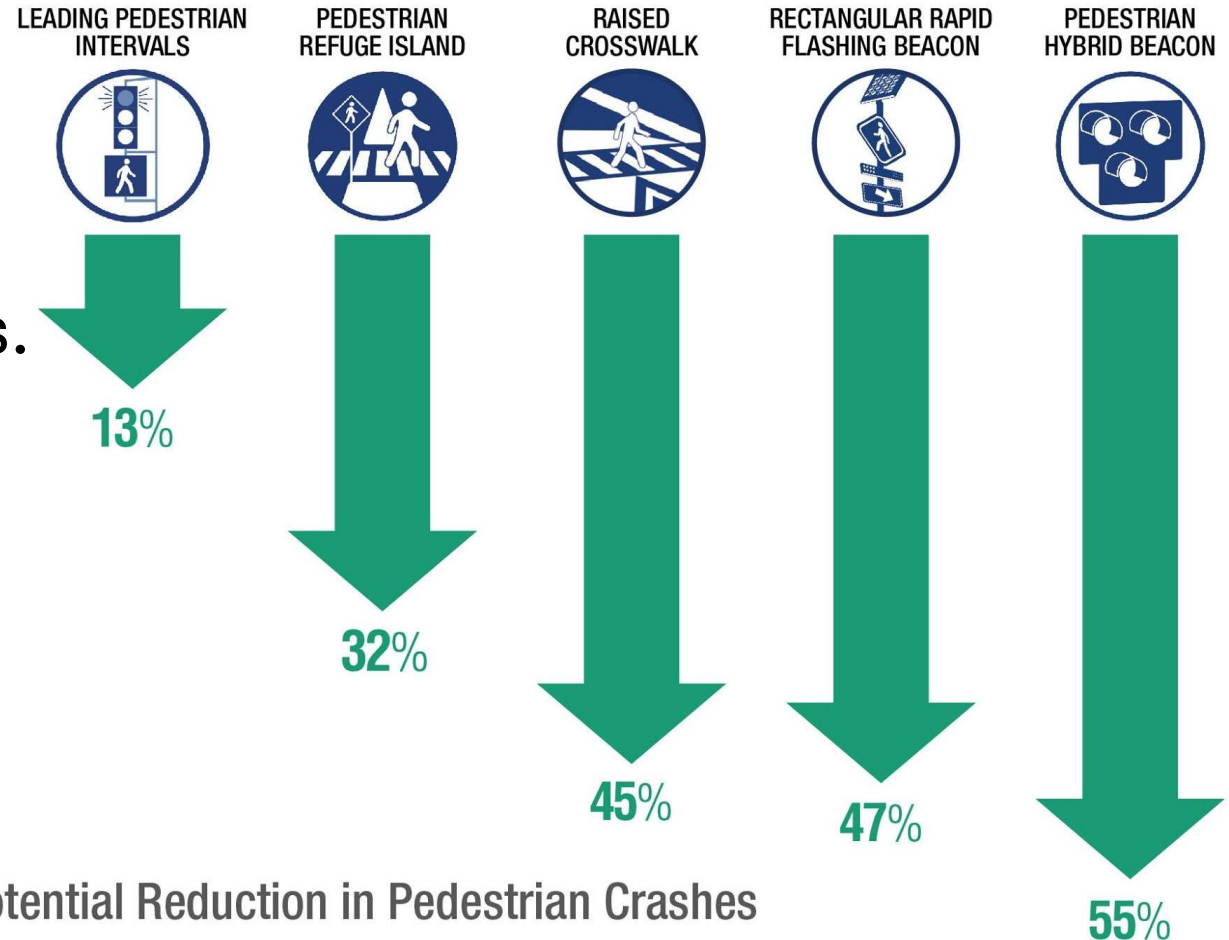


- This data does not capture every human, social, or economic consequence.
- \$1.46 million per traffic fatality in medical costs and lost productivity
- Comparing the cost of a Safety Countermeasure

The Economics of Prevention

Maryland DOT evaluated 15 constructed roundabouts:

- **\$6.2 million** in construction costs.
- **86% reduction** in injury-crash rates.
- **15:1 benefit-cost ratio** from preventing serious crashes.



Source: https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/step/

New Mexico's Road Safety Challenge

- NM has Target Zero program, safety plans, complete streets, VRU assessments, and crash tracking data AND still has extraordinary injury and mortality outcomes.
- **New Mexico has strong safety plans but lacks consistent statewide implementation.**
- **NM needs cross-sector policies focused on outcomes:** promote survivable speed limits, fund and build self-enforcing roads to reduce human error, protect VRUs with best-practice designs, and use automated enforcement to reduce unsafe driving behavior.



From Target Zero Goals to Full Support



- **Governance:** Establish durable statewide goals and responsibilities.
- **Funding:** Align sustained investment with evidence-based safety priorities.
- **Coordination:** Integrate transportation, public health, law enforcement, community.
- **Data:** Improve shared information about fatalities and serious injuries.
- **Accountability:** Establish measurable outcomes and transparent reporting.

Turning Public Health Evidence into Legislative Action

- **Modernize:** Update outdated traffic laws and clarify responsibilities.
- **Prevent:** Support safer speeds and proven infrastructure improvement.
- **Invest:** Establish sustainable, equitable funding for prevention.
- **Measure:** Strengthen injury surveillance, evaluation, and accountability.

These priorities represent emerging policy opportunities for the 2027 New Mexico legislative session.

Modernizing Traffic Law & Accountability

- Establish Target Zero in statute with clear statewide responsibilities and reporting requirements.
- Modernize language in the State Traffic Statute
 - Update outdated terminology and definitions
 - Strengthen protections for vulnerable road users
 - Clarify driver responsibilities at crossing
- Accountability following serious harm
 - Review negligent homicide by vehicle provisions
 - Address gaps involving careless and reckless driving
 - Consider victim-impact and restorative justice pathways

Safer Speeds & Sustainable Funding

1. Expand evidence-based speed management, including Automated Speed Enforcement (ASE) in appropriate work zones.
2. Consider Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA) device for repeat extreme-speed offenders.
3. Review penalties and accountability for dangerous behaviors, such as speeding and other moving / safety violations.
4. Require applicable ASE revenue to road safety improvement, prioritizing proven countermeasures and high-injury locations.

Goal: Prevent dangerous speeds through safer road design, effective interventions, and sustained investment.

Safer Infrastructure & Better Data

Build Safer Roads

- Statewide Quick Build and streamlined approvals.
- Standardized road-diet eligibility criteria.
- Incorporate protected VRU facilities on bridges and interchange projects.
- Prioritize equitable VRU infrastructure funding.

Measure What Matters

- Improved coordination of crash, injury, and fatality reporting.
- Use shared data to prioritize projects and evaluate outcomes.

What a Coordinated Road Safety System Requires



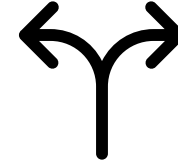
Governance & Law

Clear standards and
responsibility



Safe Speeds

Preventing fatal crash forces



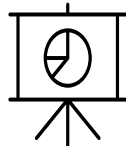
Safer Infrastructure

Designing roads for human
error



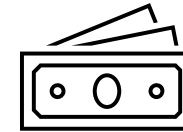
Public Health

Prevention, equity, and injury
surveillance



Data & Accountability

Tracking outcomes and
measure progress



Sustainable Funding

Making prevention possible
statewide

Target Zero provides the goal.

A coordinated system makes implementation possible.

What We Ask of TIRS

- Review and provide technical and policy input on the emerging 2027 road safety policy package.
- Identify statutory, administrative, and practical barriers to implementing proven safety countermeasures.
- Recommend sustainable and equitable infrastructure funding.
- Strengthen coordination among transportation, public health, and other safety partners.

What We Ask of TIRS

New Mexico doesn't lack road safety plans or goals.
We need to make it easier for communities to put those plans into action—by removing legislative barriers and providing dedicated funding for proven safety improvements.