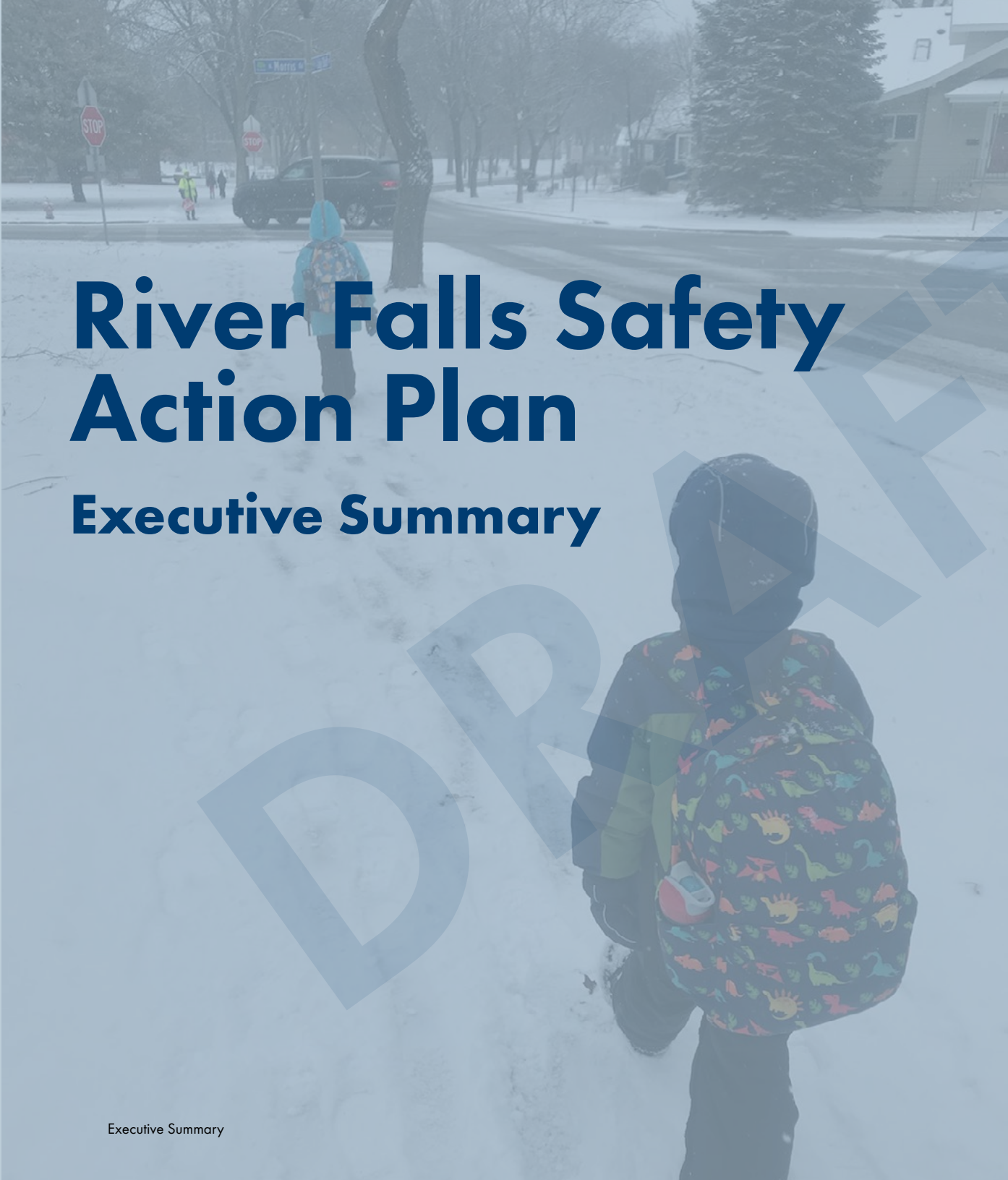




River Falls Safety Action Plan

Executive Summary

Like many cities across the US, River Falls is taking action to combat the traffic safety crisis. Over the ten years from 2014 to 2023, there were 30 severe crashes that led to one person dying and 37 people suffering serious injuries, averaging out to about **one life-altering crash every four months**.

With the understanding that roadway fatalities and serious injuries are preventable, the City of River Falls has set a Vision Zero goal of zero deaths and serious injury crashes on roadways within and owned by the City of River Falls by 2040. This will require committed leadership, consistent resources, and community support and action.

Together we can achieve zero roadway deaths and serious injuries by 2040.

Plan Process

Safe System Approach

Humans make mistakes, but those mistakes should not lead to death and serious injuries. This concept is foundational to the Safe System Approach, a shift River Falls is making through the Safety Action Plan to approach traffic safety holistically. The Safe System Approach acknowledges that all elements of the transportation system – safe roads, safe road users, safe speeds, safe vehicles, and post-crash care – must work together to achieve Vision Zero.



Community Engagement

The Safety Action Plan was shaped by input from more than 500 hundred River Falls residents, visitors, business owners, elected officials, and community partners.

Engagement by the Numbers

500+

River Falls
community
members
engaged

350+

Survey
participants

140+

Online
mapping
interactions

85+

Comments
submitted

3

Public
Input
Surveys

2

Open
Houses

Engagement Themes

Community voices coalesced around three safety and mobility priorities:



Culture of Transportation Safety:

The community expressed support for shifts in culture and norms to facilitate transportation safety for all users and modes, including changing their own behavior.



Mobility Options:

The transportation system should accommodate all modes of travel. Residents would like to be able to walk, bike, and roll safely across the city.



Maintenance and Connectivity:

The community repeatedly stressed the need to improve and maintain wider sidewalks and trails, safe crossings, and lighting. Residents would like a more connected non-motorized network throughout River Falls.

Needs and Opportunities

10-years of crash data, contextual data, and public input were analyzed to identify safety challenges and contextualize safety issue. Three needs and opportunities themes were identified through these analyses.



Enhance the safety of vulnerable road users

Vulnerable road users, particularly pedestrians, are at elevated risk of serious injury and death when involved in a crash. Residents communicated safety concerns for vulnerable users and the data showed that crashes involving these users comprised 2% of all crashes but 37% of fatal and serious injury crashes. This indicates a need to focus safety strategies on pedestrian/vulnerable road user safety and reducing conflicts between travel modes.

29% of pedestrian-involved crashes resulted in **death or serious injury**, 65% resulted in a minor or possible injury.



6% of bicyclist-involved crashes resulted in **death or serious injury**, 88% resulted in a minor or possible injury.



1% of motorist-involved crashes resulted in **death or serious injury**, 11% resulted in minor or possible injury.



Vulnerable Road Users:

People walking, rolling, cycling, or otherwise using a roadway that are not within and protected by a motor vehicle.

Enhance intersection safety

Three out of four fatal and serious injury crashes occurred at intersections and crashes at intersections involving vulnerable road users were more likely to lead to death or serious injury. Further, the public's top two issues raised were intersection-related – enhanced pedestrian connections and improved intersection and pedestrian crossing safety. The data and input indicate the need to focus safety strategies on reducing conflicts and speeds at intersections.



Improve general safety near schools, especially for children walking and biking

In the three months of August, September, and October, nearly half of vulnerable road user crashes occurred, coinciding with back to school for K-12 students as well as University of Wisconsin – River Falls students. Better child safety and safety around schools was the third most common issue raised by the public and many of the other common issues touch on youth safety and safety around schools, particularly for children walking and biking. This indicates a need and strong support for strategies to reduce crash risk near schools.



Improve safety outcomes for socially vulnerable populations

Roadways within areas with higher concentrations vulnerable populations, who are more likely to rely on walking, rolling, and bicycling, had higher-than-average frequencies of fatal and injury crashes. This includes young people, older adults, people in poverty, and people without access to a vehicle. Removing barriers for vulnerable road users will enhance safe mobility, addressing disparities in the transportation system.



Recommended Actions

To address the priority safety needs and opportunities, the Safety Action Plan lays out a series of actions to enhance systemic safety. Establishing a culture of street safety and addressing safety issues systemically and along priority roadways and intersections should be at the core of all decisions, informing educational campaigns, traffic enforcement, plan and policy updates, project prioritization, and other strategies to prevent fatalities and serious injuries on the street network.

The policy and program action steps are organized around the objectives of the Safe System Approach – safe road users, safe vehicles, safe speeds, safe roads, and post-crash care. This means focusing on reducing the risk of severe crashes, limiting their impact when they occur, and supporting a culture of safety for everyone.

Policies and Programs

General Safety



Formalize and institutionalize roadway safety into City policy and planning processes including integration of a safety task force into the City structure, regular reporting on safety measures, ensuring plans are consistent with the Safe System Approach, and encouraging broad Vision Zero commitments.

Safe Road Users



Foster a safety culture and promote safe behaviors through City staff policies and training, ongoing community engagement and capacity building, safety campaigns, and safety technology integration. This includes approaches to leverage partnerships to expand resources.

Safe Vehicles



Enhance vehicle safety by ensuring City fleet and contractor vehicles are sized and equipped with appropriate safety features and operators are trained.

Safe Speeds



Promote appropriate vehicle speeds, particularly in school zones, that reflect the roadway context, street activity, and users of all modes. This includes developing a local traffic calming pilot program focused around schools.

Safe Roads



Assess and design streets that support safety and accessibility for users of all modes as well as the adjacent land uses with specific emphasis on intersections and post-crash evaluations. Also, implement infrastructure safety enhancements by integrating projects, countermeasures, and safety principals into the City's capital and maintenance program.

Post-Crash Care



Enhance post-crash support by expanding resources, technologies, and coordination with emergency response and trauma centers. Also, partner with community-based organizations to enhance support for those impacted by traffic crashes.

Infrastructure

The safety countermeasures aim to address the safety themes found through the crash analysis and community engagement. Addressing these safety risks requires more than isolated, location-by-location fixes. Systemic safety treatments, or countermeasures, offer a way to improve safety throughout River Falls.

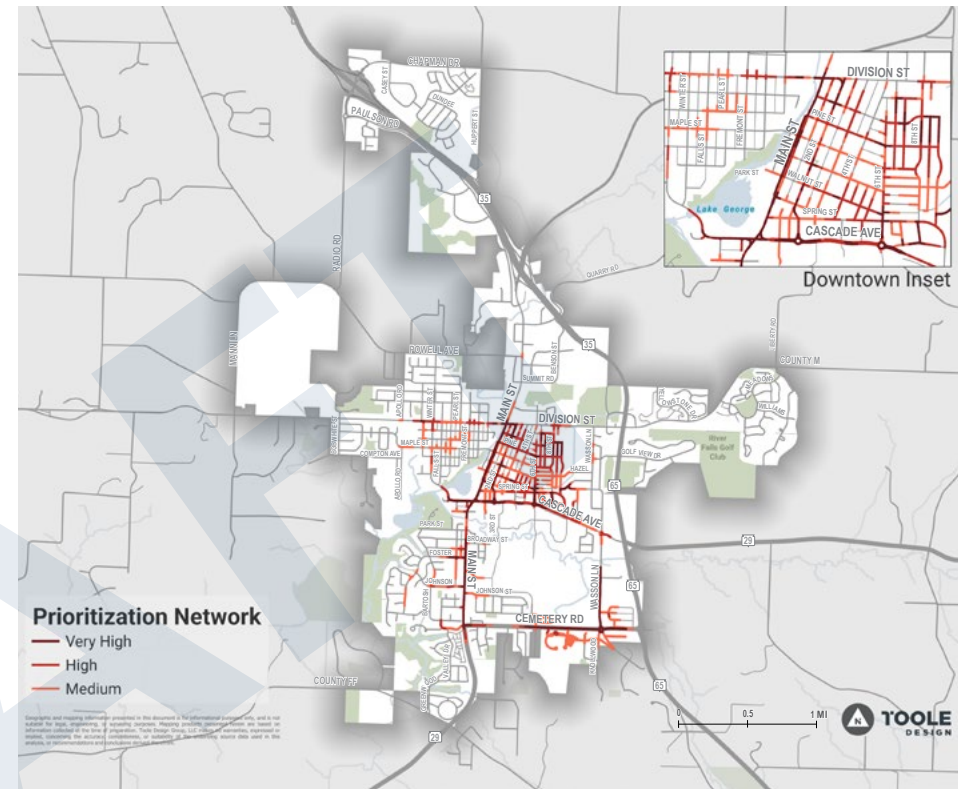
The Safety Countermeasure Index was developed as a toolbox of infrastructure interventions to implement throughout River Falls. This index identifies countermeasures most suitable for systemic implementation as well as for addressing specific crash types and on specific road types.



The Safety Action Plan establishes a priority network, which informs where safety countermeasures would likely have the greatest positive impact on safety, have the most public support, and offers direction on where the City should start with implementing countermeasures. The priority network also builds upon the needs and opportunities by incorporating other community values such as safety around schools and parks. The Safety Action Plan also establishes priority safety projects, informed by the priority network and opportunities presented by planned projects and funding opportunities, and includes concept illustrations with recommended safety improvements for each location.

Project Locations:

- North Main Street from Union Street to Paulson Road
- Downtown streets including Main Street, 2nd Street, and Maple Street
- Cascade Avenue and Main Street Intersection
- County Road M (Division Street) and Wasson Lane
- North Main Street and Paulson Road/Sullivan Court Intersection
- Neighborhood sidewalk infill



Conclusion

Traffic safety trends are the result of decades of decisions at the city, regional, and national level. Those decisions influenced who could move through the city safely and who was most exposed to traffic crash risk. Making different decisions to build better, safer streets and establishing a safety culture will take time, funding, and community support.

A shift to the Safe System Approach and investments in safer streets will allow the City of River Falls to reach our goal of creating a safer, more comfortable, and more accessible transportation system for all residents.