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Session 2 – Vision Zero

Led by Rob Pitingolo, Urban Institute

Notes by Kelley Hanni

Participants: Katie Pritchard, Sarah Laurent, Jay Herrmann, Charlotte-Ann Lucas, Denise Linn Reidl

Rob - What is Vision Zero: A strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities across the US. Is there an event that prompted this? Does your city have this initiative?

Charlotte-Ann – San Antonio does! There was an area with a lot of pedestrian deaths, specifically children and there were a lot of fatalities that prompted the adoption of vision zero. A corridor had been changed to a 6 lane highway and it had a huge and negative impact.

Rob - Does MKE have one? It is a national campaign, but how do cities use/inforce it?

Katie – I’m not aware

Rob – DC has it, but each year that it has been in place there have been more traffic deaths. One of the required pieces in DC was the data requirement. If you’re in charge of bike lanes you have to provide that data. Most agencies seemed to provide the data only out of compliance and not to be helpful. It seems to have been a onetime thing and no follow up.

Jay – our story: Vison Zero came up as we were getting the streetcar up and running and there was an accident that promoted a lot of conversation. We’re doing a pilot through federal grant through MODOT. It looks at bicycle and pedestrian level of stress and service. There are 18 mobility hubs that we’ve identified. Most of the metro is represented challenges with data – when we asked people we had a pretty good response, but had to invest a large amount of intern work. We’re creating a robust set of data.

Rob – as data people, if we want to go to the leaders and say that their initiative is failing and we can figure out why. What data would we need? In DC they made a whole lot of data requirements but no real follow through.There is an infamous bike lane in DC that is called a parking lot because cars are always there. So when someone announces that they’ve added X amount of bike lanes how many are actually useful when they aren’t maintained or used properly?

Katie – We conducted a safely initiative that focused on gangs, guns and robbery, but from a neighborhood perspective they were actually move concerned with traffic safety. We’ve done the mapping of the crash data and there is so much more than what people thought.

Rob – there is a messy equity part of it. People get annoyed and upset with people coming in, but in DC there was an example where a tourist came in and was killed at a dangerous crosswalk in a low income neighborhood when the neighborhood had been asking for changes and were ignored. In my experience the areas that feel the most dangerous for traffic fatalities tend to be low income areas. The most noise that is made is downtown and areas of higher income. How do you frame that this is good for the entire community.

Katie- From the surveys and talking to people about gentrification. Bike lanes is one. They are an indicator of the population coming in and not the existing population. This also included: influx of young higher educated people.

Rob – there was a case in Baltimore where they actually just took it away.

Jay – you mention the safety, but for us we’re trying to connect and increase ridership and transit. And sometimes the data that you’re asking for to be analyzed isn’t cheap.Data sets are multi use and we set up maintenance environments and there is a place for you to put the data.

Rob - How do you get speed data?

Jay – We’re getting posted speed, but we don’t have actual speed and we understand that is very different.

Charlotte-Ann – you can also look at complete streets data. There is one street in San Antoinio that added a blvd of trees down the middle and it’s posted at 40, but people tend to go around 35. But the problem is that it’s inferred.

Rob – it seems like there are a lot of gruella methods, but they aren’t sustainable. There is an app called “hows my driving D”C that collects this data. But it’s self selecting.

Charlotte-Ann -Streets with bike lanes are not always the ones that get a street sweeper so there’s a lot more debris and therefore more dangerous. And depending on the county/state or city designation it might not get cleaned.

Katie – an app seems more effective than some of these slow down signs. There’s also the 311 problem and just because people call in doesn’t mean it’s not happening in other places. Community surveys are difficult to do, but helpful in gathering information. You need that because you need the sample to be representative.

Rob - A lot of the great examples of complete streets or well done public spaces are because there were security issues. Like times square and Pennsylvania ave

Sarah – In parts of Europe where this started, you have a lot more bikers and streets are safer and that’s not the case here. The stress level is hard to quantify. When the bus stop shares a bike lane, when bikes and pedestrians share the sidewalk.

Katie – there was a study about parking old police cars on busy streets and that caused people to slow down.

Rob: So why does it keep getting worse? We don’t have the data and we haven’t really attempted to do this.

Sarah – in Milwaukee there are issues of construction and condition of the roads. They don’t create areas for pedestrians and bikers when the sidewalk is obstructed.

Katie – on the other end of it, neighborhood groups have created an advocacy group so that when there is a death and a memorial. They monitor that and then go to the neighborhood to follow up and see what data can be used.

Denise – In Chicago they have implemented Vision Zero – multi-purpose sensors that would capture urban flooding and traffic accidents through a camera. I would be surprised if they were fully deployed and they were using them to their full potential. They probably can identify problem intersections and close-calls. We don’t know what cause a lot of the traffic accidents in South Bend. We have some data around EMS calls, but it’s not publicly available.

Rob – Close calls are good indicators because they feel the most dangerous. But it might not get flagged in some data sets is that the police or ambulance aren’t called.

Denise - What about cameras at red lights? In South Bend they are owned by the county, but there is a debate whether or not it should be used at all.

Rob – this is a political hot button. Pedestrian vs bike fatalities. Bike fatalities tend to get more of a focus, but the amount of pedestrian fatalities is huge. What happens when you remove or ban traffic cameras.

Denise – what if residents could nominate problem intersections.

Katie – we should look at what are vision zero cities and what NNIP partners are in these cities and what data do they have?

Is Jay’s data available and can be shared?