

Rapid Response Street Fixes (RRSF)

Briefing prepared by Adam Greenfield

Introduction

In 2017, 76 people died in vehicle-related crashes in Austin. This equated to 8 deaths per 100,000 residents, more than double the 3.4 deaths per 100,000 residents in the Netherlands, a country with a Rapid Response Street Fix (RRSF) policy. A variant of this approach is starting to be replicated in the US.

Austin's 2016 bond allocated funds for improving safety at Austin's most dangerous intersections and corridors, as well as creating better pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure. However, as standard infrastructure projects tend to require comparatively long planning periods and use capital-intensive materials, combining an RRSF policy with low-cost tactical urbanism practices could offer a faster solution to dangerous roads before more permanent solutions are implemented.

A. RRSF in the Netherlands

Black spotting, a version of RRSF, was a policy adopted by the Netherlands from the 1970-90s and revived in the early 2000s that made inexpensive but meaningful safety upgrades within 2-4 weeks at "black spot" sites where crashes resulted in serious injury or death. Eventually, streets became so safe that not enough places qualified as black spots and the practice was replaced with a Vision Zero policy.

Definitions of "black spot"

- **Common definition:** "Any place where there were 6+ incidents in the last 3 years"
- **Another common definition:** "A location with significantly more incidents than other places"

Process

1. A crash results in death or hospitalization
2. **A Working Group** of 5 or 6 people (staffed with representatives from traffic police, neighborhood residents, traffic safety experts, and the cycling agency) forms
3. **The Working Group collects information** (crash data, witness information, makes site visits, etc.) and suggests simple safety improvements that can be made immediately at the crash site
4. **Changes are usually small** and can include adding traffic lights, reducing speed limits, adding stop signs, wider bicycle paths, removing a pole in the way, etc.
5. Changes usually implemented **2-4 weeks after a crash**

B. RRSF in the US

Similar policies in the US are a recent phenomenon.

"Oakland Promises Fast Guerilla-Style Safety Measures" – October 2017

<https://sf.streetsblog.org/2017/10/10/oakland-promises-fast-guerilla-style-safety-measures/>

"[W]hen a hazardous condition is identified, low-cost infrastructure such as paint, bollards, and other simple fixes should go in right away. Then the process for more permanent fixes can start." Ryan Russo, Director, Oakland DOT: "In this new model, we can act meaningfully in weeks rather than years,".

"San Francisco Steps Up on Vision Zero With "Rapid Response Team"'" – November 2017

<https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/san-francisco-vision-zero-rapid-response-team>

Executive Order from Mayor Ed Lee: "SFMTA should expeditiously advance and implement near-term safety improvements for Vision Zero projects that have an anticipated implementation date beyond one year from today. I ask that the SFMTA also develop a Rapid Response Team to quickly analyze, design and develop improvements at the sites of Vision Zero-related fatalities".

Janette Sadik-Khan, NYC DOT Commissioner 2007-2013, co-created a fast tactical urbanism-style implementation system

<http://www.businessinsider.com/janette-sadik-khan-on-transforming-city-streets-2016-3>

- **Data:** Sadik-Khan: "We went a long way in taking our streets from ones that were measured by anecdote...to now measuring by analysis,"
- **Vision and leadership:** "Sadik-Khan also believes in the importance of having an overarching vision — and carrying it out quickly"
- **Swift implementation:** "But vision, of course, is not enough. You need action. And if you wait too long, residents start to lose faith." Sadik-Khan: "It's about showing changes in real time using temporary materials."

Possible interfacing with tactical urbanism: "The black spot method combined with tactical urbanism might be a superb tool for change." - Dick van Veen, Traffic Engineering Consultant, Mobycon (Dutch traffic consultants), via email, March 3rd 2018

C. Potential advantages and challenges of RRSF in Austin

Advantages

- Can be implemented quickly
- Inexpensive
- Targets the most dangerous places
- Potential of greater public involvement and awareness of Vision Zero goals

Challenges

- Would require funding
- Might need strong political support
- Would need to coexist with existing plans (2016 bond projects, Vision Zero, etc.)
- How many potential RRSF areas are not already being addressed in the near term through existing programs?
- Might not address places that are dangerous/unpleasant but with low/no fatalities
- If a part of the process, Working Group members must be well-chosen