

Traffic Safety Follow-Up



Objective

This special report followed up on eight recommendations our office issued for three audits related to mobility and traffic safety:

- [Transportation Effectiveness](#), April 2016
- [Traffic Enforcement](#), August 2018
- [Traffic Safety: Design and Education](#), September 2019

Background

These audits responded to the City's growing transportation challenges and concerns about traffic safety due to a rise in severe and fatal crashes.

Our work focused on City efforts to manage safety through system planning and traffic enforcement. We also looked at design and education efforts stemming from the City's adoption of Vision Zero.

Our audits identified several areas needing improvement. The City needed to collect better crash data to identify dangerous locations and ensure these locations were prioritized for safety improvements. Also, the City needed to be more strategic in their traffic enforcement and educational efforts.

What We Learned

The City implemented 7 of 8 recommendations related to mobility and traffic safety. One recommendation no longer applies due to a change in state law.

Transportation Effectiveness, 2016



Traffic Enforcement, 2018



Traffic Safety: Design & Education, 2019



The City has taken many actions to address traffic safety such as:

- Improving collection of crash data
- Prioritizing locations for safety improvements
- Expanding education efforts targeting dangerous driving behaviors

These safety improvements focused on the impacts of the most dangerous "Fatal Four" driving behaviors, shown below.



Speeding



Distracted driving



Impaired driving



Failure to yield

Additionally, the City acted to address Austin's rapid growth and mobility challenges by:

- Working with regional partners to develop the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan to guide transportation infrastructure projects for the next 20 years
- Implementing a Mobility Management Center to monitor and manage traffic signals and other mobility tools in real time
- Creating the Project Connect Office to serve as the City's point-of contact to collaborate and build regional high-capacity transit options

Traffic Safety Follow-Up

Looking Ahead

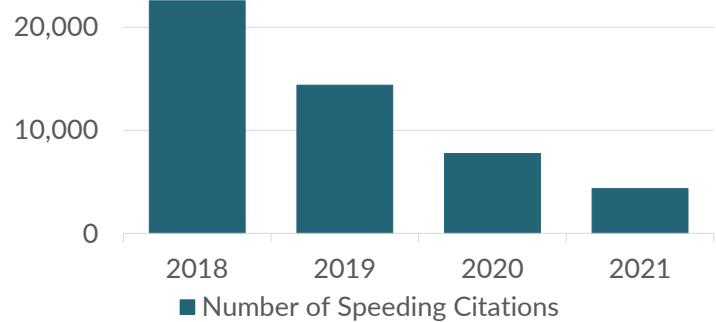
Despite Austin’s many efforts to improve traffic safety and mobility, the rate of people killed in crashes has increased in the last three years. Data collected by ATD’s Vision Zero program shows speeding is the primary contributing factor in one quarter of the fatal traffic crashes.

Management from ATD and APD reported the City’s traffic enforcement efforts are falling short as APD works to address current staffing constraints. This is especially challenging as the City’s Vision Zero effort calls for more enforcement to address speed and impaired driving on high-speed roadways.

Coupled with this call for increased traffic enforcement, the Vision Zero program’s equity analysis suggests systemic changes are needed to ensure traffic enforcement is equitable.

While Austin continues to address dangerous driving behaviors through engineering and educational efforts, traffic safety remains a critical issue for the City to analyze and address moving forward.

Austin Police Department issued significantly fewer speeding citations each year since fiscal year 2018



Source: Auditor analysis of Municipal Court caseload information from fiscal year 2018 through fiscal year 2021, January 2022

Implementation Status of Issued Recommendations

Transportation Effectiveness, April 2016		
Recommendation 1	Austin Transportation Department (ATD) should develop ways to better communicate and coordinate with internal and external partners.	Implemented
Recommendation 2	ATD should work with partners to close resource gaps and better leverage existing resources to achieve the City’s transportation goals.	Implemented
Recommendation 3	ATD should work with the Austin Police Department (APD) to improve access to crash data so the City could better identify issues that could lead to targeted engineering, enforcement, or educational actions.	Implemented
Traffic Enforcement, August 2018		
Recommendation 1	Municipal Court should work to evaluate current intersection crash data to determine if current red light cameras should be moved or new cameras added.	N/A due to State Law change*
* Texas House Bill 1631 prohibits the use of red light cameras.		
Traffic Safety: Design and Education, September 2019		
Recommendation 1	ATD should ensure the severity of crashes is considered in decisions related to improving safety on City streets.	Implemented
Recommendation 2	ATD should improve data related to traffic crashes by working with APD and other relevant parties to identify ways to improve and collect key data.	Implemented
Recommendation 3	ATD should ensure that decisions related to all roadway improvements are appropriately documented.	Implemented
Recommendation 4	ATD should expand traffic safety education efforts by developing and implementing strategies to specifically target dangerous behaviors.	Implemented