PRESS RELEASE
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Mayor Announces Pedestrian Safety Task Force
Group will study four fatal and four serious-injury collisions in last 6 months

Columbia, MO - Mayor Bob McDavid announced today the formation of the Mayor’s Task Force on Pedestrian Safety. He will appoint City Council representatives Clyde Ruffin (Ward 1) and Ian Thomas (Ward 4) to head up the Task Force.

"We have experienced a spate of automobile crashes involving pedestrians in recent months," said McDavid, "I want to find out whether this is an unusual trend, how pedestrian safety in Columbia compares with our peer cities, and what steps we need to take to protect people." Four pedestrians have been killed and four others have been seriously injured in seven separate crashes since October, 2014.

According to Task Force Co-Chair Ian Thomas, who works for the national organization America Walks, "Columbia’s recent experience is similar to what we’re seeing across the country. People are moving into cities, they're walking more, and they're getting hit by cars more often." The U.S. Department of Transportation reports that annual pedestrian fatalities increased 15% between 2009 and 2012. Thomas added, "The cause appears to be a combination of driver and pedestrian inattention, excessive vehicle speeds in areas where people are walking, and inadequate pedestrian infrastructure."

Co-Chair Clyde Ruffin, whose ward includes some of Columbia's oldest neighborhoods, said residents without cars are especially vulnerable. "Many of our children and adults must walk through neighborhoods without adequate sidewalks, crosswalk protections or traffic calming measures and across busy intersections in order to access school buses or public transportation." Recent pedestrian injuries have occurred on high traffic streets, including Rangeline Street, Stadium Boulevard, Providence Road, and College Avenue.

Brant Kassel, Chair of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Commission, which asked McDavid to form the Task Force, said "I believe the Pedestrian Safety Task Force will have a positive impact on our city. Too many pedestrians have been hit by cars in recent months for the status quo to continue. Columbia is a great place to live and our citizens should feel safe and free to move around Columbia whether they are walking, biking, or driving."
According to McDavid, the Task Force will consist of around 15 members. Several City Commissions, Neighborhood Associations, the University of Missouri, Missouri Students Association, and Missouri Department of Transportation will be invited to participate. He said, "The Task Force will be in place for 6-12 months and then deliver a report and recommendations to City Council."

McDavid added, "I'd like to see some kind of future goal established for reducing these incidents so we can measure the success of our interventions." Numerous cities have recently established "Vision Zero" campaigns, modeled on New York City's successful initiative, which has dramatically reduced traffic injuries and fatalities, primarily by slowing down vehicles.