

April 24/2023

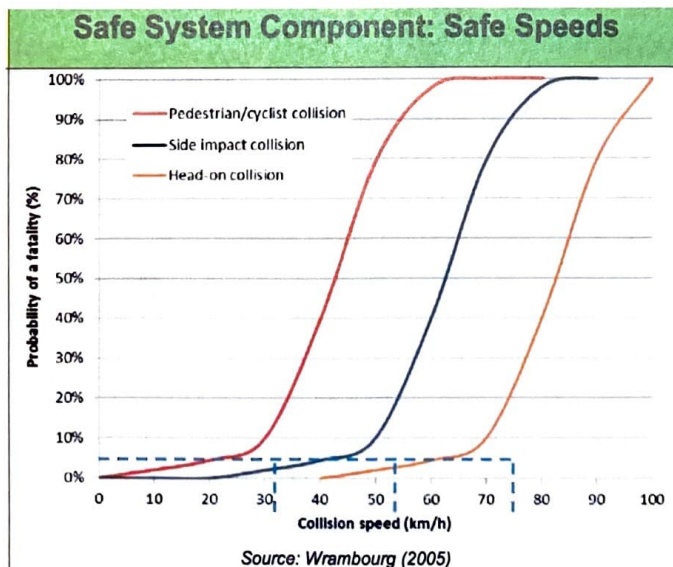
Dear Mayor Hyggen and Lethbridge City Council,

As members of the South Zone West Trauma Services, we believe there are significant opportunities for the city to reduce the burden of death and injury to its residents.

The City of Lethbridge Transportation Safety Plan clearly outlines that a severe collision (fatal or major injury) occurs on average once every two weeks in Lethbridge. This document also recognizes the superiority of a “safe system” approach to transportation safety, in which the system designer bears primary responsibility for these collisions, and that the most effective approach to safety involves changing the built environment (safe speeds, safe vehicles, safe roads). The Transportation Safety Plan also outlines the goal of achieving zero deaths or serious injuries in our transportation system by 2040.

While we applaud the goal of eliminating death and serious injury in our transportation system, a data-informed common-sense approach is needed to achieve this goal. For example, a pedestrian has a 90% chance of survival if struck at 30 km/h, versus a 15% chance if struck at 50 km/h (shown below). Clearly, the likelihood of pedestrian fatalities increases exponentially when motor vehicle speeds increase from 30 km/h to 50 km/h. Taking this data to heart, other Alberta communities have reduced the speeds of their city streets, and evidence is mounting of the safety benefits to all road users, as

well as the minimal impact on travel times for motorists.



Opposition to change is an expected speed bump, even when community members are presented with the benefits of speed reduction. One particular example involves the downtown speed reduction survey completed in 2020. The survey results revealed the disheartening reality that 77% of the 2204 survey respondents, when faced with the same collision data, supported maintaining the speed limits downtown at 50 km/h. While

the downtown speed reduction survey was valuable in quantifying the resistance we can expect from drivers, the results should not be utilized to make critical safety decisions. It is not appropriate to submit the safety of our road users to a popular vote, especially when a large component of that group (i.e., children) are both highly vulnerable to excessive motor vehicle speed and unable to directly contribute to the survey.

Our recommendation to the City Council is to make 30 km/h the default speed limit for our urban and residential streets. This creates a safer environment for pedestrians, cyclists, and motor vehicle occupants. Exceptions include major arterial streets, but these areas should still be expected to meet design requirements that effectively minimize pedestrian and motor vehicle interactions at these increased speeds. We do appreciate that the current City Council has inherited decades of city planning decisions that have created safety concerns for pedestrians and motorists alike. However, this does not justify maintaining the status quo and subjecting our city residents to avoidable risk.

Some actions by the city are to be celebrated. Of note, **we fully support the current proposal to harmonize the school and playground zones.** Our current school and playground zones rely heavily on signage to try and slow drivers to a safe speed, as the roads are otherwise designed to encourage speeds of 50+ km/h outside of the zone hours. If those areas were designated as 30 km/h zones permanently, our transportation department would be free to use more effective design elements to create safe, walkable streets, without relying as much on police/radar enforcement. This extended speed reduction needs to happen now, and while we would like the city to consider a broader speed-reduction strategy in the future, we do not want to interrupt this current positive safety initiative.

As you consider our recommendations, we hope you will recognize the potential for Lethbridge to be a leader in transportation safety, and that you will take this opportunity to foster a city where all residents can feel secure and confident in their daily journeys, regardless of their mode of transportation.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Aaron Banmann MD FRCSC - General Surgeon at Chinook Regional Hospital

Luke Szobota
Luke Szobota (Apr 26, 2022 21:03 EDT)

Luke Szobota MD FRCSC - General Surgeon and Medical Director South Zone Trauma