



2/10/2025

To the Anchorage Assembly,

We are writing to oppose AO 2024-130, which would walk back a change made to Title 9 in 2023 that removed legal penalties for crossing the street outside of a crosswalk. As we understand it, AO 2024-130 would prohibit crossing outside of a crosswalk if the person is within 150 feet of a marked crosswalk, signalized intersection, or pedestrian bridge or tunnel. It would also prohibit crossing at an oblique angle rather than the most direct route.

This ordinance will not improve safety. Anchorage has a long history of pedestrian fatalities, even when crossing outside of a crosswalk was prohibited. This code change would also be very difficult to follow in practice, or to enforce, because it will be difficult to precisely evaluate whether someone is within 150 feet of a crosswalk. Most importantly, this code change would not change the two key factors in pedestrian fatalities: 1) dangerous road design that allows dangerous driving, and 2) the lack of safe and appealing options for crossing the street.

In lieu of this ordinance, we ask the Assembly to act on, and support, proven countermeasures that are known to measurably improve road safety. [The Multi-Agency Report on Taking Action to Prevent Roadway Deaths](#) (hereafter “the action plan”), which was provided to the Assembly as a laid-on-the-table item at the October 8, 2024 regular meeting, lays out a strategy for improving safety with both immediate and long-term changes. Action to re-criminalize jaywalking was not recommended by that report.

Appendix C of the action plan describes contributing factors for recent pedestrian fatalities in Anchorage. We were shocked by the number of drivers that fled the scene (29%). Of the drivers that stayed (or, rarely, fled and were later identified):

- 31% of drivers were unlicensed;
- 38% were suspected of driving under the influence, with additional pending toxicology results that could increase that percentage;
- 38% of vehicles had illegal window tinting, obstructing the driver’s ability to see at night;
- 30% of drivers were speeding at more than 10% over the speed limit.

This pattern of dangerous driving is a threat to everyone on our streets—pedestrians, bicyclists, and other drivers alike.

Other drivers involved in those crashes were not driving illegally and may not have been overtly reckless. They certainly did not wake up in the morning expecting to kill someone that day, and we’re sure the outcome weighs heavily upon them. No one expects to find themselves in that position; but humans are fallible. We need to design our roads to be as safe as possible. That’s the only way we can be sure that mistakes or moments of inattention, on the part of drivers or pedestrians, will not become fatal.



The action plan is strongly grounded in evidence of what truly works to improve safety, particularly through redesigning our roads to guide safe driving. We urge the Assembly to support the MOA Traffic Department and DOT&PF Central Region Safety Office in implementing the action items. Specifically, we see these opportunities for the Assembly to support the action plan:

- Pass a resolution providing policy guidance that safety is the top priority—higher than traffic flow or reducing private motorized vehicular congestion. If policy states that slower vehicle travel speeds are an acceptable cost to save lives—including the lives of drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians—that will encourage further improvements to transit service and non-motorized facilities in urban areas like Downtown, Midtown, and Muldoon.
- Pass a resolution encouraging MOA Project Management & Engineering (PM&E) and DOT&PF to install signalized midblock crosswalks on major arterials in locations where the intersections are over 0.25 miles apart. More frequent crosswalks will encourage pedestrians to use them, and signalized crosswalks help ensure that drivers will yield.
- Amend Title 9 to support the changes in traffic signals proposed by the action plan, including implementing automatic “walk” phases with every signal phase rather than waiting until the button is pressed, defaulting to red lights in all directions late at night, prohibiting right turns on red, and providing a head start for the crosswalk signal before vehicles get a green light. These changes could be required under code throughout the Anchorage bowl, or under certain circumstances, to bolster the piecemeal changes proposed by the action plan.
- Pass a resolution encouraging PM&E to prioritize the update of the MOA Design Criteria Manual (DCM), particularly the chapters that provide standards for road design. The DCM was last updated in 2007 and thus is badly out of date. An update could be used to specify, and rank by priority, design standards such as the frequency of signalized crosswalks, speed limits, number or width of traffic lanes, snow storage space, and traffic calming. Updating the DCM with these safety countermeasures would ensure that all future road projects improve safety, which would be much more efficient and effective than addressing each road in a piecemeal fashion. The Assembly could specify a timeline for the update via a resolution, and/or could support the update by funding additional staff position(s) if needed to ensure timely work on this critical item.
- Re-legalize automated enforcement via traffic cameras. There is a public perception in Anchorage of increased red-light running, speeding, and other dangerous driving behaviors since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is also indicated by data nationwide. This perception may sway public opinion toward supporting automated enforcement to improve safety.
- Provide annual funding earmarked for low-cost, quick-build safety projects, such as lane reductions, which can be implemented quickly by blocking off a lane with plastic posts like those used for the Downtown Protected Bike Lane Pilot. Such a funding program could be conceptually similar to DOT&PF’s Highway Safety Improvement Program, but focused on lower-cost methods that could quickly and cheaply improve safety on multiple roads per year. The action plan lists a number of high-priority safety projects that could be implemented with such funding.
- Continue supporting the traffic calming program, with increased funding and/or staff capacity.



- Continue working to implement better winter maintenance of sidewalks so pedestrians are not forced into the road, nor into crossing the road when a sidewalk becomes impassable, through additional equipment, additional staff positions, and higher compensation to attract and retain staff. Also consider policies that place a higher priority on sidewalk plowing, as a few inches of snow can be impassable for non-motorized travelers but is only a minor inconvenience for drivers.
- Continue supporting the Neighborhood Greenways program, which will improve safety for non-motorized travel as well as calming traffic. Encouraging a mode shift to walking and biking also reduces the number of trips made by vehicle, thus reducing crashes involving vehicles.

If any of these action items resonate with you, please let us know and we would be happy to help with research, drafting language, or anything else to support your work.

We truly appreciate your recent work to improve transportation safety, including your resolution that prompted the development of the action plan, as well as your support for Neighborhood Greenways and traffic calming. We hope you will pursue the actions listed above, which would be far more effective in saving lives—across all transportation modes—than AO 2024-130.

Sincerely,

Alexa Dobson
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with support from
Bike Anchorage Advocacy Committee and Board of Directors