

Dwight Diercks has always been a cautious bicyclist. He wears a helmet, a bright yellow jersey, has a blinking light attached to the back of his bike, and wears a mirror to see behind him.

But it wasn't enough for him to avoid a serious bicycle crash with a vehicle in 2021.

It's the type of crash that Waterloo's Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) project wants to eliminate with the help of Vision Zero – a roadway safety strategy that has a goal of zero roadway deaths and serious injuries.

Dwight survived his crash but suffered deep cuts to his leg and head. His helmet likely saved him from a serious head injury.

"I was very, very fortunate," he recalls.

It happened at the four-way stop at Ridgeway Avenue and Prospect Boulevard in Waterloo. He says he likes to wait for traffic to clear before he crosses such intersections, but this day a driver kept waving him to go through. He still waited and she still waved. He ventured out and was struck broadside by a pickup truck. The pickup driver later said he thought the driver was waving him through.

Dwight, a longtime bicycle enthusiast who recently finished his 11th RAGBRAI ride, rides the Cedar Valley bicycle trail system as much as he can. But his home on the south side of Waterloo is not near a trail so he needs to ride city streets to get there. Many times, that means going through the downtown Waterloo area as he moves from trail to trail and then eventually to the streets.

He advocates for bike lanes on roadways when possible. He feels the more people ride in bike lanes; the more drivers will get used to seeing bicyclists in them. But not all roadways are conducive to bike lanes, so additional multimodal infrastructure is key.

A federal grant awarded to the Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments is a step toward making the roadways safer in the greater downtown area. The result could mean more bike lanes or other safety improvements for both vehicular traffic as well as pedestrians, bicyclists, or any others crossing the roads.

The grant requires public input on the safety of the roadways in the greater downtown area, between Walnut Street, Randolph Street, Mullen Avenue (US 63 S) and 11th Street.

People who live, work, and visit the downtown Waterloo area are invited to several community input opportunities regarding Waterloo's SS4A project. The area was selected due to the high number of serious crashes and fatalities over a five-year period. From 2019 to 2023, there have been 951 crashes in that

area. Two of those were fatal and 14 involved serious injuries. The two fatalities involved a bicyclist and a pedestrian.

The study consists of gathering data and public input and developing a comprehensive plan with a timeline to reach the Vision Zero goal.

Dwight says he advocates for more bike infrastructure around our community.

Community members are invited to take a Vision Zero survey at <https://arcg.is/muD45> to share their own personal experiences and ideas.

Everyone is also invited to join upcoming public meetings to learn more about the Vision Zero plan for Waterloo, which aims to stop serious accidents and deaths on the roads. You can attend online or in person. Experts who are studying the area will be there to answer questions. The virtual meeting will be hosted from 5 to 6 p.m. on Tuesday, August 20th, and the in-person meeting will be hosted from 5 to 6 p.m. on Thursday, August 22nd at the Cedar Valley Sportsplex at 300 Jefferson Street, Waterloo, IA 50701.