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Safer streets in East Providence - by Roberto DaSilva

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East Providence is a community that is striving to eliminate serious traffic accidents. Each year, too many families across our region are impacted by crashes, some involving pedestrians or cyclists who are our most vulnerable road users. The goal of these efforts is to continuously improve the quality of life for residents by increasing safety. Many of the city's commercial thoroughfares were developed at a time when moving cars at a high rate of speed was the primary concern of decision-makers. As a result, we are now analyzing our transportation infrastructure for ways other modes of transportation can safely be accommodated. These accommodations offer several benefits for the community including increased safety, health benefits and fewer trips by automobile resulting in less traffic and fewer carbon emissions.

The city is currently working with the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority and project consultants on a citywide "Safe Streets for All" action plan. Funded through the U.S. Department of Transportation, the goal of the plan is to significantly reduce and eventually eliminate fatalities and serious injuries across the community. The project will analyze accident data and develop a safety action plan, which will enable the city to apply for implementation funding. A supplemental analysis of the complex "Six Corners" area is also forthcoming, funded by a separate federal grant.

The city is also working with the Rhode Island Division of Statewide Planning to develop an East Providence bicycle and pedestrian master plan. This plan will identify and address the significant need for non-motorized transportation connections throughout the city. The plan will be a key step in improving safety and connectivity and will prioritize active transportation options in the city's various neighborhoods. Creating more walkable and bikeable neighborhoods improves the quality of life for residents, visitors and those who work in the city by activating neighborhood centers and creating vibrant street life. One of East Providence's main attractions is the popular East Bay Bike Path which traverses the city's riverfront. The plan will provide recommendations to improve connections to the bike path, as well as opportunities to add new bike lanes, walking paths, sidewalks, crosswalks, bus shelters and additional safety treatments throughout the community. The city is proactively implementing projects such as adding sidewalks along Lyon Ave., a street in the heart of the city that has been subject to frequent speeding. Sidewalks have also been added adjacent to the nearby Hennessy Elementary School. This school was also the site of a new crosswalk mural funded by a Bloomberg Asphalt Art grant in 2022.

Another way in which the city has taken action on traffic safety is through its successful public safety camera program. This program includes school zone speed enforcement cameras at five locations throughout the city and ten safety cameras at key intersections. The school zone enforcement cameras have significantly reduced speeding at these locations keeping our children safer. Improving traffic safety is a priority in East Providence and we will continue to seek opportunities to advance this goal.

Roberto DaSilva is the mayor of the city of East Providence, R.I.