

# SAFER TOGETHER

*A Regional Messaging Framework  
for Safer Streets and Communities*

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## Executive Summary

The paper is the first step toward a regional approach to safety messaging that reflects how the Richmond region travels, grows, and shares responsibility for safer streets. The work responds to the unacceptably high number of severe crashes across all nine localities and the recognition that while roadway design remains the most effective way to reduce harm, coordinated communication can help people understand the purpose of safety improvements and reinforce safer habits. The framework proposes a unified identity, consistent structure, and shared set of tools that allow each locality to tailor messages in ways that feel local and culturally grounded. It also acknowledges that safety communication works best when aligned with ongoing engineering, enforcement, and planning activities, rather than operating as a standalone campaign.

This document serves as a foundation for building a sustained and research-informed regional campaign; one that moves away from disconnected, one-off outreach and instead supports a long-term, recognizable communication strategy. It outlines an approach that ties messaging directly to the region's safety priorities, crash trends, and Vision Zero commitments. It also highlights how local arts and culture can strengthen resonance and trust, helping messages reach audiences more effectively. The planned framework does not produce creative materials or public outreach at this stage; instead, it prepares the region to launch a coordinated effort beginning in 2026 with the support of future funding.

The development process focuses on understanding current local practices, identifying shared needs, building a consistent structure for regional coordination, and defining tools each locality can adapt. The document emphasizes clarity in roles among planners, local staff, schools, enforcement partners, and future creative collaborators. It also outlines key elements such as brand structure, message architecture, local adaptation, governance, evaluation, and a phased roadmap that aligns with the upcoming regional safety action plan update and grant cycles. Ultimately, the goal is to create a flexible but cohesive system that strengthens public understanding, complements physical roadway improvements, and reinforces a regional culture of care.

## Safety Context

Across the Richmond region, roadway safety remains one of the most pressing shared transportation challenges. This issue affects everyone who uses the system, whether walking, rolling, biking, driving, or riding transit, and extends to freight and other essential transportation that keeps the region moving. Despite progress in infrastructure and planning, serious crashes continue to claim lives and cause lasting harm in every

jurisdiction. The region’s residents, workers, and visitors travel daily along interconnected corridors that cross city and county boundaries, meaning that **safety outcomes depend on a combination of engineering, enforcement, education, coordinated emergency response, and consistent public messaging that builds a culture of safety.**



To meet this challenge, PlanRVA is developing a coordinated regional framework for roadway safety messaging and education. This effort builds on the region’s Vision Zero and Arrive Alive commitments and aligns with principles and guidance from state and federal sources. It recognizes that behavior change in how we move requires more than one-off campaigns. It calls for sustained and recognizable communication that reinforces a culture of care on our streets.

Each locality already undertakes some form of outreach, from school presentations and enforcement campaigns to neighborhood safety events. However effective, these efforts are often disconnected or short-term, limiting their overall reach and impact. By establishing a unified regional approach that can be tailored to local audiences while maintaining a consistent messaging identity, the region can amplify its safety messages, share resources more efficiently, and demonstrate collective leadership in preventing traffic deaths and serious injuries.

The timing of this effort is deliberate. The Richmond Regional Transportation Safety Plan update, along with local Vision Zero and Safe Streets initiatives, underscores both the urgency of addressing persistent safety risks and the opportunity to unify efforts already underway. Crash data continues to show that a small number of behaviors such as speeding, impairment, and distraction account for a majority of severe outcomes. These patterns suggest enforcement alone cannot fully solve the problem; changes in behavior, social norms, and the built environment are also needed. This safety messaging strategy recognizes that while roadway design and infrastructure improvements are the most direct and effective means of reducing crashes and saving lives, communication plays an essential supporting role in helping people understand, accept, and engage with those changes while reinforcing safer habits across the region.

A coordinated safety messaging framework provides the means to educate the public about how behavior and design influence the safety of our roadways. By aligning communication strategies across jurisdictions, the region can develop consistent, research-backed messaging that complements engineering improvements and supports enforcement and education. This will also enable regional partners to share materials, pool funding, and coordinate outreach during key campaigns such as safety awareness months, school-year kickoffs, or seasonal driving periods.



**This messaging framework will also help position the region competitively for future funding.** Federal and state safety programs increasingly emphasize not just infrastructure but also education and outreach as core elements of comprehensive safety strategies. A well-defined, research-based regional approach demonstrates readiness and coordination needed to strengthen future grant applications in the area of roadway safety.

These guidelines mark the transition from idea to strategy. They provide a structure for how the Richmond region can speak with one voice on roadway safety while leaving room for each locality to bring its own experience, culture, and creativity to the table. The result will be a shared foundation for long-term, sustainable messaging that fosters safer behaviors, supports meaningful engagement, and ultimately helps achieve the region’s vision of zero deaths on its roadways.

The development of this document represents the first step toward that goal. It will outline how a regional framework can connect existing local initiatives, incorporate creative partnerships with artists and schools, and prepare the region to pursue funding opportunities such as DMV Safety Grants and the Safe Streets and Roads For All (SS4A) program. Ultimately, the intent is to move from fragmented outreach toward a shared, sustained campaign that helps every community across the Richmond region make safety a visible and lived value.

## A Reflection of Local Culture

There is growing agreement across the region that safety communication must reflect local identity and move beyond traditional public service announcements. People connect more with messages grounded in familiar language, recognizable places, and authentic creative expression. This framework emphasizes storytelling, collaboration with local artists, and partnerships with cultural organizations to translate safety concepts into approachable visuals, public art, and youth-focused activities.

### Safety & Health

Safety messaging can strengthen the connection between transportation, health, and everyday quality of life. When communication explains how design changes improve safety while supporting healthier communities it helps people understand that these improvements are not just about preventing severe crashes but also about creating environments where walking, rolling, biking, and taking transit feel comfortable and inviting. Clear, consistent messages can reinforce how safer streets reduce stress, expand mobility options, and support cleaner air and more active daily routines. In this way, safety becomes a link between the region’s health goals and its transportation investments, helping residents see safety as a shared responsibility that protects both lives and long-term well-being.

The framework was shaped with input from planners, public information officers, schools, and law enforcement to ensure accuracy and inclusiveness. Including more creative partners such as local artists will help bring safety messages into public spaces in ways that feel relevant to each community. These elements can help bridge the gap between policy and everyday experience, making safety something people can see and relate to.

## Purpose of this Framework

**The purpose of this document is to establish a clear and actionable foundation for how the Richmond region can coordinate roadway safety messaging** moving forward. It defines shared goals, identifies opportunities for alignment, and outlines how consistent, data-informed communication stressing education can support engineering and enforcement strategies. The aim is for residents in all nine localities to encounter messages that are recognizable, trustworthy, and relevant.



By setting common language and themes, the framework allows each locality to personalize communication while maintaining a regional identity. It also positions the region for future grants by presenting a unified concept and structure for a coordinated campaign. Ultimately, the framework supports a shift toward long-term, research-driven messaging that reinforces shared responsibility and complements the region's broader safety commitments.

## Desired Outcomes

The framework aims to align regional communication efforts with the broader goal of making streets safer through design, policy, and cultural change. It defines how coordinated messaging can support, explain, and sustain the impact of physical safety improvements while fostering a shared sense of responsibility among all roadway users.

Some future goals to target with the completion of this framework are to:

- 1. Establish a unified regional identity for roadway safety**

Develop a recognizable and adaptable brand that reinforces the region's collective commitment to safety. This identity will connect local campaigns under a consistent theme while allowing each locality to adapt it to their community's tone and needs.

- 2. Strengthen collaboration among regional partners**

Improve coordination among transportation planners, public information officers, schools, and law enforcement so that communication aligns with ongoing safety initiatives. Shared messaging can help ensure consistent outreach during project rollouts, enforcement campaigns, and community events.

### **3. Focus messages on high-impact safety behaviors**

Base communication priorities on data that highlight the behaviors most tied to severe crashes such as speeding, distraction, impairment, failure to yield, and unbelted occupants. Messaging should complement physical design efforts by reinforcing the intended use of safer streets and intersections.

### **4. Incorporate creative and cultural relevance**

Engage local artists, schools, and community groups to craft messages that reflect the character of each place. Art and design can help make safety messages more relatable, encourage community ownership, and visually connect with ongoing improvements in the built environment.

### **5. Build a sustainable structure for consistent outreach**

Develop a coordinated regional framework developed from national and state best practices that supports regular communication such as seasonal campaigns, project-based announcements, and community education. This structure will help maintain public attention and support over time.

### **6. Position the region for implementation and funding**

Prepare the region to pursue grants and partnerships, including federal, state, and private opportunities, by providing a clear concept, shared strategy, and defined roles. A unified approach demonstrates readiness and regional alignment to funding agencies.

### **7. Advance the long-term goal of zero deaths and serious injuries**

Use consistent, evidence-based communication to build awareness, trust, and support for the broader suite of safety strategies, particularly those that redesign streets to prevent crashes and protect vulnerable users. Together, infrastructure and education will help strengthen a culture of safety across the Richmond region.

## **Framework Development Approach**

The development of this framework follows a phased, research-based approach designed to build a practical foundation for coordinated safety communication across the region. The process emphasizes collaboration with local partners, alignment with ongoing safety planning efforts, and readiness for future implementation. The framework was completed in December 2025 to provide time for early integration into the regional Safety Action Plan update in early 2026 and to set the stage for full implementation beginning in Fiscal Year 2027 (July 2026).

### **Coordination and Listening (Summer–Fall 2025)**

The first phase focused on engagement with local government partners such as transportation planners, police, school representatives, and public information officers to

understand how safety messaging is currently approached across jurisdictions. This phase looked at examples of local campaigns, identified common goals and gaps, and documented the needs of smaller localities that may have limited communications capacity. This groundwork clarified how messaging can better support existing engineering, enforcement, and education activities. By identifying overlapping audiences and priorities, the process highlighted where regional coordination can add efficiency and impact.

### **Research and Framework Development (Fall 2025)**

The second phase translated findings into a structured, regionwide model for safety messaging. Drawing from best practices at the state and national level, the framework defined key components such as shared themes, tone, and design approach; coordination procedures between agencies; and mechanisms for local customization. Research centered around how audience perceptions around speeding, pedestrian visibility, and yielding behavior can inform future message testing and evaluation. Lessons from comparable regional campaigns were analyzed to guide the creation of adaptable templates and consistent branding that can evolve over time.

### **Validation and Refinement (Late 2025)**

Once the draft framework was developed, it was circulated among locality partners for review and refinement. Solicited input focused on practicality, adaptability, and alignment with regional priorities. This step ensured the final product reflects both the diversity and interconnectedness of the region's communities.

This framework will also support future applications for implementation funding and serve as a reference for early pilot efforts in 2026.

### **Integration and Next Steps (2026–2027)**

While completion of the framework in December 2025 marks the end of its development phase, select lessons and tools will begin to inform outreach activities during the Safety Action Plan update, set to be complete in spring 2026. Following the adoption of the Safety Action Plan, the majority of implementation activities are envisioned to begin in July 2026, supported by new grant funding.

Throughout the process, the work will remain guided by **three core principles**:

- **Collaboration:** Aligning partners and ensuring local perspectives shape regional consistency
- **Credibility:** Grounding messages in data and behavioral research
- **Creativity:** Making communication authentic, relatable, and supportive of tangible roadway safety improvements

Together, these steps will create a framework that is ready to support real-world implementation, helping the region communicate clearly, consistently, and effectively as it transforms its streets to be safer for everyone.

## Elements of Safety Messaging Campaign

This framework will serve as a regional guide for how communication, design, and partnership can reinforce one another in advancing roadway safety. It is meant to be practical and adaptable, to provide structure where consistency is beneficial, and flexibility where local customization strengthens connection with the public. The framework will include the following key elements.

### **1. Hypothetical Regional Brand and Identity**

A sample unifying brand will establish a consistent visual and verbal identity for safety messaging across the nine localities. This brand will use clear, relatable language and visuals that reflect the shared regional value of looking out for one another on the road. The identity will be flexible enough for each locality to adapt it through sub-brands, colors, or imagery while retaining an overall look and feel recognizable across the region.

### **2. Message Architecture**

The framework will identify priority messages that reflect the data and values of the region. Each message will be tied to specific behaviors contributing most to severe crashes, such as speeding, distraction, impairment, or unsafe crossings. Messages will also link to ongoing roadway improvements, reinforcing why design changes are happening and how they make travel safer. The goal is to keep communication direct, behavior-focused, and aligned with physical and policy actions on the ground.

### **3. Local Adaptation**

Each locality can tailor messages to its audiences while keeping a consistent regional tone and branding. Practical templates and image guidelines will support easy customization. This keeps the framework flexible while preserving a shared regional voice.

### **4. Coordination and Governance Structure**

A shared governance model will outline how partners collaborate to plan, approve, and roll out messaging. This may include a small working group or steering team composed of representatives from regional and state partners. The structure will clarify roles for coordination, content review, data sharing, and performance

tracking, ensuring that safety messaging remains a standing regional function rather than a one-time effort.

#### **5. Channels and Delivery Methods**

The framework will define preferred outreach methods such as social media, school programming, press coordination, event materials, and digital engagement platforms. These channels will be chosen based on reach, cost, and adaptability across localities. Guidance will also cover integration with capital project outreach, so that communication about safety improvements is timely, consistent, and easy for the public to connect with physical changes on the street.

#### **6. Creative Partnerships**

Recognizing the power of art to communicate values and create a sense of place, the framework will explore how local artists and creative organizations can be engaged in later phases. This may include partnerships for murals, intersection treatments, or educational art projects that visually reinforce key safety messages. These creative efforts will extend the life and visibility of the campaign while supporting local cultural identity.

#### **7. Evaluation**

To ensure accountability and learning, the framework will include suggested performance indicators, such as engagement reach, community sentiment, and correlation with behavioral or crash trends over time. Evaluation will focus on continuous improvement rather than one-time outcomes, allowing the region to refine its approach and identify where messaging best supports design and enforcement efforts.

Together, these elements will create a regional campaign structure that is not only visually coherent and behaviorally grounded but also structurally equipped for long-term use. It will give localities a shared language, a flexible toolkit, and a consistent process for communicating about roadway safety as the region continues to make physical, policy, and cultural progress toward zero deaths.

## **Messaging Campaign Roadmap**

This roadmap summarizes how the framework moves from development to implementation in coordination with regional safety initiatives. These are the next steps to follow the completion of this document.

### **Phase 1 – Early Integration and Testing (Early 2026)**

Early 2026 will focus on small-scale testing of messaging tone, visuals, and themes.

### **Phase 2 – Launch Preparation and Funding (Spring–Summer 2026)**

PlanRVA and partners will prepare grant applications and establish a coordination structure for implementation.

### **Phase 3 – Full Implementation and Pilot Campaign (Beginning July 2026)**

A pilot campaign will launch in 2026–2027 to test the regional brand and messaging toolkit.

### **Phase 4 – Evaluation and Iteration (2027–2029)**

Evaluation will inform refinements for the next messaging cycle and align future efforts with regional safety planning.

This phased roadmap ensures that communication capacity builds steadily alongside the region’s physical and policy investments in safety. By grounding communication in design, data, and collaboration, this framework will position the Richmond region for a long-term, sustainable approach to roadway safety messaging that reinforces its broader Vision Zero and Safe Streets goals.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

Clear coordination across partners will support consistent, data-informed communication.

**PlanRVA / Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RRTPO)** will coordinate regional messaging, maintain the framework, and manage funding activities.

**RRTPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)** will serve as an advisory group and provide oversight.

**Local Governments** will adapt regional messaging to their community context and support evaluation.

**State Partners (DMV, VDOT, and Related Agencies)** will support data access, funding coordination, and message amplification.

**Law Enforcement and Emergency Services** will connect messaging to on-the-ground safety needs.

**Schools and Educational Institutions** will support youth-focused messaging and integrate safety themes into existing programs.

**Arts and Community Organizations** will support culturally resonant messaging in later implementation phases.

**Regional Coordination Team (Implementation Phase)** will manage implementation and ongoing refinement of the campaign.

Together, these partners form a connected network that can sustain consistent, evidence-based, and locally meaningful safety messaging across the Richmond region. Each plays a role not just in communicating about safety, but in reinforcing and supporting the physical and policy changes that make safer streets a reality.

## Messaging Toolkit and Visual Identity Guidelines

The regional messaging toolkit and visual identity system are designed to strengthen how communication supports the region's physical safety improvements. **The underlying goal is to help people understand, trust, and engage with changes to their streets.** The toolkit provides a consistent but flexible outline for communicating about safety, grounded in the understanding that infrastructure and design are the most effective tools for reducing severe crashes, while messaging plays a supporting role by building awareness, reinforcing safe behaviors, and upholding public confidence in those investments.



This approach emphasizes that roadway safety is a shared responsibility among road users but is also influenced by other factors including street design, vehicle size, and technology. Because different road users face different risks and levels of exposure, messaging will acknowledge that everyone has a role to play in keeping our streets safe. The goal is not to place blame, but to foster understanding and cooperation so that all travelers can move safely and predictably within the same system.

### Core Messaging

All messaging should connect directly to what people experience in their communities. Safety communication works best when it helps residents see the benefits of changes (like slower traffic, improved crosswalks, or better lighting) and encourages them to actively engage with these environments. Unifying all messaging is the principle of **shared safety in shared spaces**: everyone benefits when streets are designed and used with care and predictability.

#### Primary Message Pillars

Messages will be grounded in three guiding ideas:

- **Awareness:** Explain why changes are happening and how design supports safety.
- **Empathy:** Encourage people to notice and respect the needs of others on the street.
- **Action:** Reinforce simple, specific choices that contribute to safer streets.

#### Tone and Voice

- **Positive and helpful:** Focus on what's working and what's improving.

- **Practical:** Use plain language that explains safety in real terms.
- **Respectful:** Speak to all types of travelers without assigning blame.
- **Local:** Reflect neighborhood character and real places in the Richmond region.

### Example Message

*“The new [neighborhood greenway] helps everyone safely share the street whether you’re walking, biking, or driving. Move smart, stay alert, and make eye contact or give a friendly wave to show you’re looking out for your neighbors. Small changes save lives.”*

### Example Regional Tagline and Concept

**Introducing the model regional tagline and concept below serves as a hypothetical creative anchor for the framework.** Prior to an official campaign name, it helps illustrate how consistent messaging, tone, and visuals could function in practice. Presenting a working example makes the framework more tangible, helping partners visualize how regional coordination, local adaptation, and audience connection might look once implemented.



#### Campaign Family Name: *Good Lookin’ Out RVA*

- **Sub-Brand Adaptations:** *Good Lookin’ Out Powhatan, Good Lookin’ Out Hanover, Good Lookin’ Out Goochland, etc.*
- **Tagline Options:**
  - “Looking out for everyone on every street.”
  - “Small changes save lives.”
  - “Safe moves look good.”



### Messaging Themes

Each theme aligns with regional crash data, emphasizing behaviors most strongly tied to serious and fatal crashes.

Theme	Message Focus	Example Message Concepts	Connection to Design
<b>Speed Management</b>	Encourage driving at safe speeds for conditions	“It’s not about getting there fast. It’s about getting there.”	Complement traffic calming, road diets, and reduced speed zones.

Theme	Message Focus	Example Message Concepts	Connection to Design
<b>Distraction</b>	Eyes and attention on the road	“Pay attention. Lives depend on it.”	Supports crosswalk visibility and intersection upgrades.
<b>Visibility</b>	Encourage awareness of people walking or biking	“If you can see them, you can save them.”	Connects to lighting improvements and reflective materials.
<b>Seatbelt Use</b>	Reinforce everyday protection	“Click. Every. Trip.”	Aligns with overall injury prevention strategies.
<b>Impairment</b>	Promote safe decisions and alternatives	“There’s always another ride home.”	Transit, walking, late-night transportation options.
<b>Integrating Multimodal Culture</b>	Encourage safe interaction between people walking, rolling, biking, and driving	“We’re all people here.”	Bike routes, crosswalk design, and intersection improvements that clarify right-of-way for all users
<b>Rural Road Safety</b>	Encourage safe speeds and attention on rural roads	“Keep our roads friendly.”	Reflects rural signage, shoulder, and curve improvements

## Visual Identity System

### Logo and Wordmark

- A simple, flexible wordmark that incorporates the campaign family name (*Good Lookin’ Out RVA*).
- Sub-brand options allow each locality to replace the regional suffix while retaining the same font, layout, and proportions (*Good Lookin’ Out Charles City*, *Good Lookin’ Out Chesterfield*, etc.).



### Color Palette

Designed for visibility, legibility, and versatility across media. Consider a palette that covers at least the following areas.

- Primary attention color for headlines and icons.
- Core brand anchor color symbolizing trust and reliability.
- Used sparingly for emphasis or alerts.

- Background and text contrast tones.

Localities may incorporate one additional accent color from their civic palette for localized materials. This can be used for purposes like the campaign name suffix, which uses the locality name, such as “*Good Lookin’ Out Richmond.*”

### Typography

- **Primary Fonts:** The main font to use in documents and web resources, including headlines
- **Secondary Fonts:** Use for emphasis and in social media elements

### Photography and Illustration Style

- Use real, local imagery whenever possible (streets, intersections, landmarks, and residents).
- Favor candid, everyday moments over staged photos.
- Illustrations or graphics should be simple and clear.
- Avoid fear-based or crash-related imagery; focus on how safe streets look and feel.

## Application Guidelines

### Digital and Print Materials

- Use consistent margins, type hierarchy, and logo placement.
- Keep visual clutter low. Each message should have one main idea.
- Provide branded banners, handouts, and safety equipment giveaways featuring brand imagery (bike light giveaways during dark winter months=holiday lights).
- Include QR codes linking to campaign resources or engagement surveys.

### Integration with Infrastructure Projects

- Apply campaign branding on temporary signage and project boards where safety improvements are underway. Pair educational messages with real safety improvements, such as: “*We redesigned this street to make crossings safer! Looking out for everyone on every street.*”
- Coordinate ribbon cuttings or pop-up events with demonstrations, campaign visuals, and local art installations.

## Accessibility Standards

- All designs meet ADA contrast and legibility standards.

- Materials available in English and Spanish (additional languages as needed).
- Imagery reflects the diversity of the region in age, race, ability, and travel mode.
- Digital materials include alt text and closed captioning for videos.

## Template Library and File Formats

The messaging campaign will include a toolkit with editable templates and assets that localities can easily adapt. Examples include:

- Poster and flyer templates (11x17, 8.5x11)
- Social media graphics (1080x1080, 1080x1920)
- Email header and newsletter banners
- Project signboards and temporary construction notice layouts
- PowerPoint/slide deck template for presentations
- Vector logo package for regional and local versions

## Coordination and Use

PlanRVA will maintain a shared digital asset library with version control and provide periodic updates to reflect new campaigns, data insights, and best practices. Localities are encouraged to submit examples of how they have adapted materials to share lessons and promote a sense of regional cohesion.

The messaging toolkit and visual identity guidelines will give every locality a practical, ready-to-use set of materials for promoting roadway safety. By combining consistency with flexibility, and grounding all messages in empathy, visibility, and action, the region can build a recognizable and enduring communications identity that supports its broader effort to design safer streets and eliminate traffic deaths.

## Messaging Structure and Implementation Model

The recommended messaging structure and implementation model provides a practical blueprint for how the Richmond region can communicate roadway safety in a unified, consistent, and locally adaptable way. The intent is to create a clear system that connects message development, regional coordination, and local delivery, ensuring that every campaign contributes to a cohesive regional identity that supports the design and policy changes shaping safer streets.

## Regional Messaging Structure

### Hierarchy of Messaging

The framework organizes communication into three layers, each with a defined function:

- **Regional Layer:** Establishes the overall identity and voice of the campaign (*Good Lookin' Out RVA*). This level defines the unifying tagline, tone, and visuals shared across all materials.
- **Local Layer:** Allows each locality to adapt the message to its audience, culture, and geography. Local governments can customize imagery, examples, or sub-taglines (*Good Lookin' Out Henrico*).
- **Thematic Layer:** Focuses on specific safety emphasis areas derived from crash data (school zones, speeding, impairment, pedestrians, and bicyclists). Each theme has its own messaging, designed to stay consistent with the core brand while allowing creative variation.

This structure ensures both regional consistency and local flexibility, giving every message a clear place within the broader campaign ecosystem.

### Message Development Process

1. **Identify Focus Areas:** Align with regional crash trends and emphasis areas.
2. **Draft Key Messages:** Translate data into simple, relatable statements that connect to lived experiences.
3. **Review for Tone and Consistency:** Ensure the message fits the campaign voice and visual system.
4. **Localize:** Adapt visuals and examples to reflect community context (schools, intersections, neighborhoods).
5. **Validate:** Test through short public surveys, focus groups, or social media polls before wide release.

Each step includes opportunities for input from PlanRVA, local staff, and creative partners to maintain alignment and authenticity.

## Messaging Implementation

### Regional Coordination

PlanRVA will serve as the central coordinator for campaign management, asset distribution, and reporting. A **Regional Safety Messaging Working Group** composed of

representatives from each locality and key partners will guide implementation. This group will:

- Select campaign themes each year based on emphasis areas, data, and need.
- Approve design templates and localized adaptations.
- Share outreach calendars and coordinate media timing.
- Collect metrics for annual evaluation and refinement.

Meetings will occur quarterly, with additional coordination around major launches or grant cycles.

### **Local Applications**

Local governments will be responsible for community-level rollout. Each jurisdiction can choose which regional campaigns to activate based on local needs, available staff, and ongoing projects. Examples include:

- Launching pedestrian visibility messaging in corridors undergoing crosswalk or lighting improvements.
- Aligning speeding campaigns with new traffic calming projects or school zones.
- Partnering with schools, police departments, and neighborhood associations for targeted outreach.

Local programs can use shared templates provided through the regional asset library—social media graphics, flyers, press releases, and signage—while customizing tone and imagery for local relevance.

### **Communication Channels and Tactics**

The campaign will use a **multi-channel approach** to maximize reach and resonance:

- **Digital:** Social media, regional websites, and newsletters.
- **Environmental:** Temporary or permanent signage near project sites and high-visibility corridors.
- **Experiential:** Pop-up events, public art activations, and school activities.
- **Traditional Media:** Local TV, radio, and print when appropriate.

All materials will include the regional logo and web link for consistency.

## **Assessment and Refinement**

Evaluation will occur through a mix of quantitative and qualitative measures:

- Engagement metrics (social media reach, event attendance)
- Community perception surveys

- Observed behavioral changes (yielding rates, speed compliance)
- Integration of messaging presence with crash trend data

PlanRVA will compile an annual regional report summarizing results, highlighting standout local initiatives, and recommending refinements for the next cycle.

This structure establishes a clear, scalable system for implementing regional roadway safety messaging. It ensures that every campaign in the region shares a common voice, reinforces design-led safety improvements, and builds toward a sustained regional culture of looking out for one another on the road.

## Best Practices

The Richmond region’s coordinated messaging framework draws from established research and real-world campaigns that have demonstrated measurable improvements in safety culture, public awareness, and alignment with roadway design interventions. The following best practices and case studies illustrate how education, creative communication, and behavioral understanding can effectively complement infrastructure-led safety strategies across urban, suburban, and rural contexts.

### Best Practices in Safety Messaging

#### 1. Integrate Messaging with Physical Design Changes

Safety communication is most effective when it reinforces what people experience on the street. Campaigns tied directly to new crosswalks, traffic calming, or speed limit changes help residents understand why improvements are happening and encourage compliance. Messages such as “We’re slowing speeds here to save lives” or “We’re narrowing this lane to slow speeds” connect the dots between design and intent, reducing public resistance and promoting shared ownership.

#### 2. Keep Messages Simple, Local, and Human

Behavioral studies show that short, relatable messages using everyday language and familiar imagery are more memorable and actionable than technical or fear-based communication. Using people’s own voices or local references strengthens credibility. Safety becomes a shared value, not a lecture.

#### 3. Use Consistent Branding Across Jurisdictions

A unified visual identity builds long-term recognition. When residents repeatedly see the same colors, icons, and tone across communities, they begin to associate those visuals with regional care and accountability. Consistency is especially powerful in regions with shared travel patterns and overlapping media markets. Coordination with

other organizations with similar goals such as Drive Smart Virginia, Virginia Bicycling Federation, and Bike Walk RVA can amplify the message.

**4. Leverage Social Norms, Not Just Warnings**

Campaigns that highlight what most people already do safely are more persuasive than those emphasizing rule breaking. For example, “Most drivers in Richmond stop for pedestrians. Thank you for being one of them” appeals to positive identity rather than fear or punishment.

**5. Combine Traditional and Creative Outreach**

Pairing digital campaigns with on-the-ground engagement like murals, temporary art installations, or pop-up events extend visibility and deepen emotional connection. This mix keeps safety top of mind across different audiences and settings.

**6. Make Evaluation Part of the Process**

Effective campaigns establish baseline measures and track change over time using surveys, engagement metrics, and crash data. The goal is not just awareness but measurable improvement in behaviors that support safe street design.

**7. Exhibit Cultural Relevance**

Messages should reflect and respect the diverse identities of the people they serve. Inclusive imagery, multilingual materials, and partnerships with community-based organizations ensure messages reach all audiences and build trust.

Together, these best practices and case studies illustrate how the Richmond region can build a coordinated, credible, and enduring approach to roadway safety messaging that supports the physical transformation of streets while cultivating a safety culture that lasts.

## Case Studies

### **Toronto Road Safety Educational Campaigns & Outreach (Ontario, Canada)**

Toronto has implemented a long-running suite of safety outreach campaigns as part of its Vision Zero Road Safety Plan. These efforts focus on speeding, pedestrian visibility, turning awareness, and vulnerable road users, and they are launched in coordination with major engineering projects such as redesigned intersections, reduced speed limits, school-zone safety improvements, and traffic-calming installations. Toronto pairs citywide branding with targeted neighborhood outreach and seasonal pushes, creating a consistent and recognizable safety presence throughout the city.

Toronto illustrates how messaging can reinforce the intent and benefits of engineering improvements across a large, diverse urban setting. Its seasonal and project-specific approach can help the Richmond region synchronize communication with physical safety upgrades, emphasize reduced speeds, and maintain a consistent identity while allowing

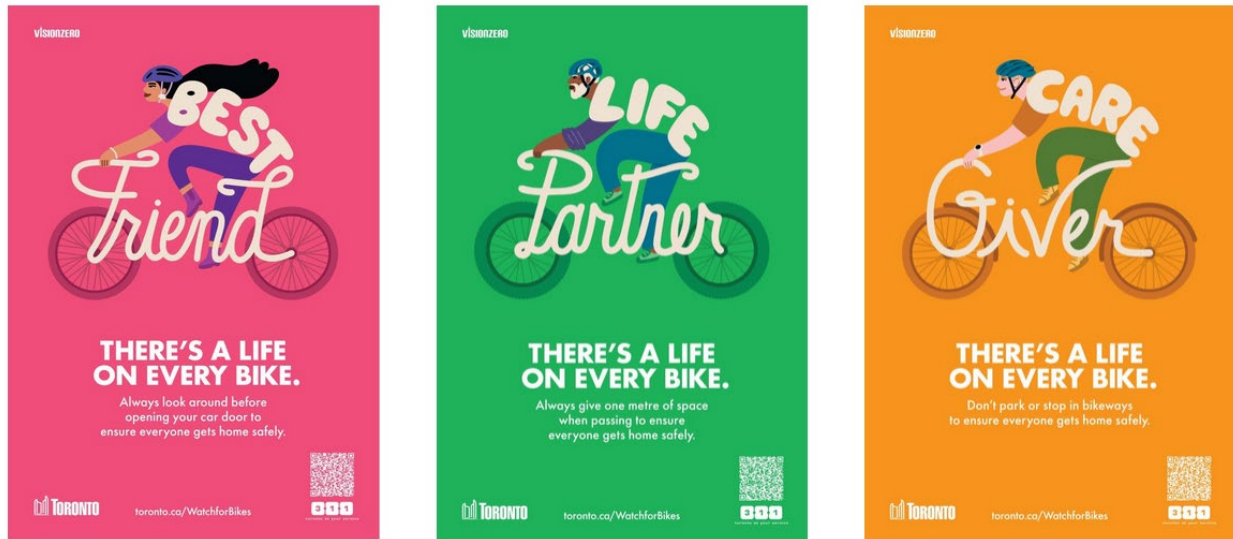
local variation. Toronto also shows that sustained messaging helps normalize safe behavior and strengthen the public’s acceptance of design changes.

Key Features

- Multi-year campaign family tied directly to engineering and policy changes
- Citywide brand identity with seasonal themes (winter visibility, back-to-school)
- Heavy use of localized imagery and messaging reflecting diverse communities
- Consistent coordination across departments including public health, transportation, and transit
- Public-facing dashboards and updates that make safety progress visible
- Mix of media channels: social, transit shelters, TV/radio, street posters

Outcomes

- Increased public awareness of speed management, yielding, and pedestrian visibility
- Higher compliance with reduced speed limits in areas paired with targeted messaging
- Supportive public sentiment toward engineering-led changes such as school-zone retrofits and speed-calming
- Demonstrated staying power as a year-round, evolving communication program



Source: <https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/streets-parking-transportation/road-safety/vision-zero/educational-campaigns/>

**Street Smart (Washington, D.C. Region)**

*Street Smart* is one of the longest-running regional roadway safety campaigns in the United States. Managed by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOCG), the campaign spans multiple counties and cities across D.C., Maryland, and Virginia. *Street Smart* focuses on crosswalk safety, yielding, speed management, and distraction, and it coordinates messaging with seasonal enforcement waves and major safety initiatives throughout the region.

### Key Features

- Regionwide branding consistently used across dozens of jurisdictions
- Shared toolkits for local governments and transit agencies to adapt messages
- Seasonal, synchronized campaign waves tied to enforcement and engineering
- Media mix including bus ads, billboards, radio, social media, and street teams
- Extensive use of multilingual materials
- Evaluation studies conducted routinely to measure message reach and behavior change

### Outcomes

- Strong regional recognition of *Street Smart* branding
- Documented increases in awareness of pedestrian safety messages across the region
- Higher compliance during enforcement periods associated with campaign waves
- Demonstrated effectiveness of regionwide coordination, particularly for cross-border travel markets



Source: <https://www.mwcog.org/transportation/planning-areas/walking-and-biking/streetsmart-safety-campaign/>

*Street Smart* provides a clear model for how a shared regional identity can strengthen safety outreach across multiple jurisdictions. Its use of toolkits, adaptable messages, multi-agency coordination, and seasonal rhythms mirrors the structure envisioned for the Richmond regional framework. Like *Street Smart*, Richmond has a cross-region travel network where consistent messaging can reinforce design changes and reduce confusion for people moving between jurisdictions.

### **Look Alive (Baltimore, Maryland Region)**

*Look Alive* is a regional pedestrian and bicyclist safety campaign led by the Baltimore Metropolitan Council. It uses a distinctive creative strategy including humor, mascots, character-driven videos, and interactive engagement to heighten awareness of crosswalk safety, yielding, and distraction. *Look Alive* is paired with regional enforcement, project rollouts, open-streets events, and community outreach, with materials designed for customization across cities and counties.

### Key Features

- Highly recognizable mascots and visual style that appeal to broad audiences
- Emphasis on vulnerable road user visibility and driver yielding
- Strong partnerships with police, transit agencies, and local governments
- On-the-ground events and street activations to support message retention
- Social media campaigns that use humor to increase engagement
- Supportive toolkits for local customization

### Outcomes

- High engagement and public recognition of campaign mascots and messages
- Increased yielding rates at key targeted corridors during outreach and enforcement waves
- Strong social media performance due to humor-based creative direction
- Demonstrated success in reaching audiences who may tune out traditional PSA-style messaging

*Look Alive* shows how creative direction, especially humor and character-driven imagery, can make safety messaging more memorable and culturally relevant. Its approach aligns well with the interest in artist-informed messages and local expression. The campaign demonstrates how place-based creativity can boost visibility and complement engineering, project rollouts, school engagement, and regional coordination.



Source: <https://www.lookalivemd.org/>

## Conclusion

While this document lays out a framework for coordinated regional safety messaging, we recognize that the heavy lifting of putting together a campaign will require more time and input from our regional partners. Detailed messaging, standards, coordination, and themes are part of the future scope of work and will need sustained input from a dedicated regional safety messaging working group, marketing professionals, local artists, and the general public.

Additionally, for a truly regional campaign, the context of various communities within the PlanRVA footprint will need to be considered. As stressed throughout the development of this report, how we approach the problem of death and severe injuries on our roadways will depend on who we are talking to and where they live, work, and play. Even semantics can go a long way toward reaching people and helping them understand the stakes. For our rural residents, terms like “roadway safety” or “highway safety” may be more intuitive than “safe streets” or “complete streets.” The idea of “traffic safety” may make more sense to suburban commuters. While roadway departures happen in all settings and contexts, their frequency and effects often look different on a rural road than on a busy city street. Heavy and slow-moving vehicles are present throughout the region, but possible approaches to safety improvements look different if we are examining agricultural or construction vehicles and where they are operating.

However the contexts differ and by what extent, the overall need is a safe transportation network where everyone gets home— whether they are walking, rolling, biking, driving, or taking transit. While some of us are more vulnerable in how we travel, what unites us is our humanity and our fallibility. We are all susceptible to mistakes and an overall safe system approach is what can minimize the harm that arises from those mistakes. Effective messaging can help communicate these needs, challenges, and changes required to create a safer travel environment.

The reality we are contending with has altered dramatically in just the past two decades. Due to changes in technology and daily life, we are struggling with *inhuman* demands on our attention inside and outside the home, more lethal vehicles, worsening sleep patterns, and increased alienation from one another. In this environment, it is necessary to reexamine our priorities in our transportation system. Education and enforcement have roles to play, but their impact will hardly be felt without a strong emphasis on engineering as our main concern. We should re-evaluate the education piece not just as an attempt to change the behavior of people on our roadways, but as a way to effectively communicate *why* infrastructure influences how we move on our roadways.

Education at its most successful offers more opportunities to make effective engineering improvements and rely less on enforcement because community members will have a deeper understanding of how design influences behavior. We will begin to see a dramatic change in our safety culture as more people intuitively recognize the reason behind a lane narrowing, a protected bike lane, a HAWK beacon, or a speed camera. With broader recognition of the engineering element among the people who use these systems every day, changes that seem almost impossible today will be commonplace tomorrow.

## Resources

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