

Milwaukee Ald. Murphy: Council approves major ARPA-funded pedestrian safety/anti-reckless driving measure

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The Common Council on Tuesday (September 21) approved a unanimously supported pedestrian safety and anti-reckless driving initiative that will use **\$6 million** in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to install various community-supported pedestrian safety improvements along 25 miles of the City's Pedestrian High Injury Network.

The safety improvements – to be managed and carried out by the Department of Public Works – will focus on reducing motor vehicle speeds and reckless driving, which are primary threats to the safety of people walking and biking, said **Alderman Michael J. Murphy**, co-chair of the City-County Carjacking and Reckless Driving Task Force and chair of the Finance and Personnel Committee.

According to Council file #210745, the proposed improvements may include curb extensions, pedestrian refuge islands, raised crosswalks, pedestrian signals, bike lanes, pavement markings, street trees, and green infrastructure. It includes approximately \$1 million to be used to offset the special assessments (typically billed to property owners) associated with the installation of traffic calming treatments.

“All 15 members rarely agree on one particular item, but this issue (reckless driving and pedestrian safety) hits home for each of us and has brought deadly consequences in nearly every aldermanic district,” Alderman Murphy said.

“I am very pleased that we are all on the same page and unanimous in addressing this top issue together,” he said.

Reckless driving initiative/ADD ONE

With the high level of daily reckless driving behaviors in the city, **Common Council President Cavalier Johnson** said he believes the initiative signals what will be a key part of the future of roadway and pedestrian planning in Milwaukee.

“Reckless driving is an epidemic in our city and a daily reality that takes many innocent lives. I am thankful to my colleagues at the city for supporting this measure to help make our streets safer for all users,” President Johnson said.

Alderman Murphy said the initiative will include rapid implementation improvements that use cost-effective materials such as pavement markings and flexible delineator posts to address traffic safety issues. These improvements can be quickly installed as an interim or pilot measure to address immediate hazards, and this “interim approach” will allow DPW to work closely with community partners to identify solutions that increase traffic safety and are supported by people living and working nearby, he said.

According to the file, seed grants will be distributed to community-based organizations to conduct education and awareness campaigns related to reckless driving and about the new safety improvements. Partner agencies will also spread the messaging by conducting community walks, pedestrian safety action campaigns, and community fairs, and by using physical and social media messaging.

The reduction of speed limits on certain streets will require the DPW to replace existing speed limit signs, and funding will also be used to conduct educational campaigns.

Other **ARPA spending** decisions made by the Council Tuesday:

- Approved file #210743 to provide funding to the Milwaukee Fire Department (MFD) to help augment emergency medical response costs for ambulance services (services that include advanced life support), and additional funding for private ambulance companies that are helping maintain full coverage across the city.

- Approved file #210738 to approve funding for a 'right to counsel' measure to provide preliminary investment in eviction prevention through access to legal representation for residents facing eviction, and evidence-based intervention keeping more residents in their homes and without an eviction record.