

Safer speeds on local streets: Communication guide

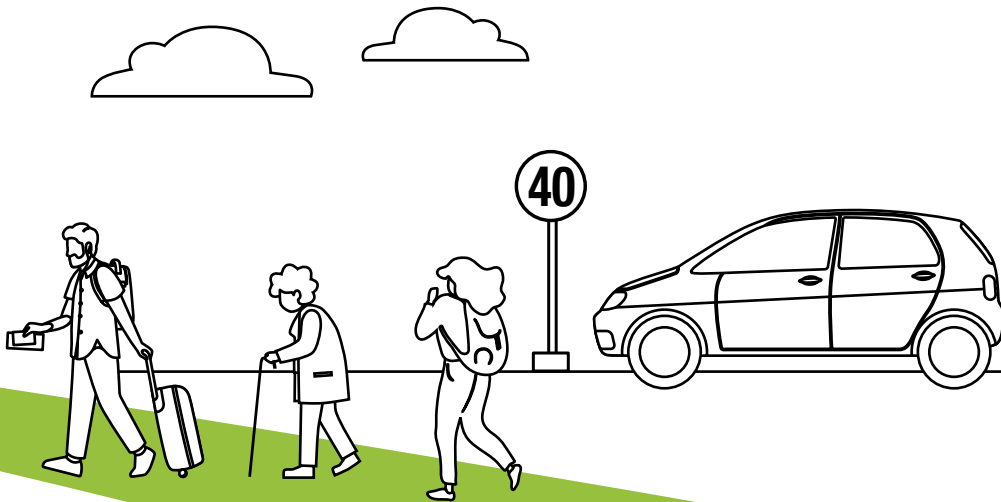


Introduction

This resource provides guidance on messaging that is proven to build public support for safer speeds of 40 and 30km/h on local streets. It also provides tactical tips to assist councils to successfully implement safer speeds projects.

It has been developed by Common Cause Australia, Victoria Walks and the Municipal Association of Victoria, based on:

- Interviews with a range of metro and regional councils across Victoria, as well as the WA and NZ transport authorities
- A review of council materials about the introduction of safer speed limits (e.g. websites, social media posts, consultation materials)
- Focus groups of Victorians
- A public survey of 2,258 people, representative of the Victorian population by age, gender and location. The survey included 'dial tests', whereby respondents were played several audio messages and dialled up (support/agree) or down (oppose/disagree) in response, providing a moment-by-moment read of the effectiveness of particular words and phrases.
- A user testing workshop with representatives of Victorian councils, who provided feedback on the draft tips and examples.



How to use this guide

The guidance presented here is evidence-based and incorporates lessons learnt by a range of councils. You will need to consider and adapt the guidance to fit your local context and the purpose of your communication. Examples are provided for illustrative purposes and can be reproduced verbatim or adapted as required.

The following sections provide:

- **Communication principles** underlying the messaging tips
- **Messaging tips** for communicating safer speeds on local streets
- **Tactical tips** for successfully implementing safer speeds projects
- An eight-point **checklist**, comprising key elements of the messaging and tactical tips
- An **appendix** summarising evidence on the benefits of safer speed that may be used to support public communication.

The guide is accompanied by three other documents that together comprise the Safer Speeds Communication Toolkit:

- *Safer speeds on local streets: Conversations and objection handling* – provides suggestions for how to address some common objections to safer speeds³
- *Safer speeds on local streets: Messaging survey report* – a summary of survey findings across five regions of Victoria: inner metro, rest of metro, interface, regional cities and regional shires
- *Safer speeds on local streets: Evidence summary* – outlines the science around why 40 and 30km/h are safer and the evidence of road safety and other improvements where safer speeds have been introduced.

Summary of the guidance

MESSAGING TIPS



M1. Speak from our frame: 'streets are for everyone'



M2. Tell our story, not theirs



M3. Focus on positives



M4. Keep it real: simple, personal, tangible



M5. Use a Vision-Barrier-Action story structure

TACTICAL TIPS



T1. Secure commitment within council



T2. Build councillor support and ongoing commitment



T3. Choose safer speed areas carefully



T4. Community engagement



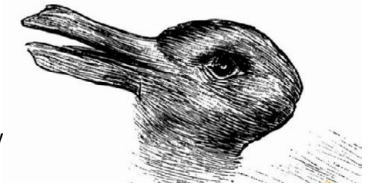
T5. Evaluation and improvement

Communication Principles

The messaging tips are informed by the following evidence-based principles around frames, values, audiences, the status quo bias and message repetition.

Frames and framing

Frames are ways of thinking and talking about an issue. The image below represents most people's ability to see any issue from one perspective or frame – the duck, or from a completely different perspective – the rabbit.



Framing is the art and science of deciding which frame to use in our communications. Some frames are helpful in encouraging support for our issue, while other frames encourage opposition and so are unhelpful. Research into walking and bike riding frames has identified these as **'streets are for everyone'** and **'roads are for cars'** respectively.¹

Unhelpful frame: 'roads are for cars'

- People need to drive
- Government shouldn't give special treatment to pedestrians and cyclists – who get in the way of cars
- **Goal: fast movement of cars**

Helpful frame: 'streets are for everyone'

- People love walking and bike riding; essential activities for many people
- Government should ensure everyone has safe options to walk and ride
- **Goal: safe access for everyone**

Values-based messaging

Values are motivations or guiding principles in life. Decades of research from around the world demonstrates the importance of values in shaping people's attitudes and behaviours.² The tips in this guide are based on a **values-based messaging** approach to communications, built on evidence that people primarily form opinions based on values and emotions, rather than facts and logic.

Importantly, values are not static but can be activated or turned 'on' by different message frames. Activating the following values tends to boost public support for social issues in general³ and specifically for measures that enable safer walking and bike riding⁴:

- **Care values:** care for family, friends and neighbours as well as members of the broader community
- **Self-direction values:** independence and choosing own goals.

¹ VicHealth (2021), Framing walking and bike riding: Message guide

² Crompton, T. (2010), Common Cause: The Case for Working with our Cultural Values, WWF UK

³ Ibid

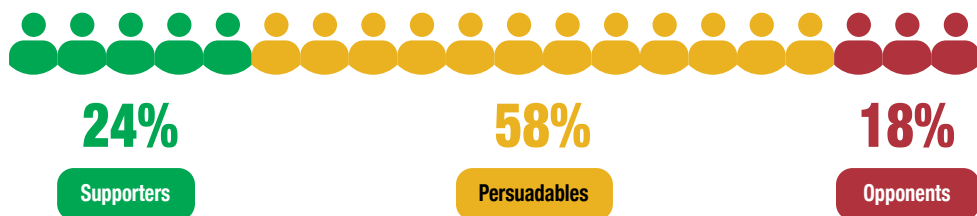
⁴ VicHealth (2021) Framing walking and bike riding: Message guide

Audiences

Based on messaging research on a wide range of topics, public audiences typically comprise three groups:

- Supporters are people who strongly support an issue or initiative – in this case, safer speeds on local streets.
- Persuadables are the ‘moveable middle’, the majority of people who readily toggle between supportive and oppositional frames. Over time, persuadables tend to gravitate towards the frames they hear the most frequently and persuasively.
- Opponents are the small numbers of people who strongly oppose an issue or initiative.

Our survey of 2,258 adult Victorians, representative by age, gender and location, revealed the following percentages of supporters, persuadables and opponents for 40 and 30 km/h speed limits:



This shows the opportunity available to bring the vast majority of people on board by **enthusing supporters** and **moving persuadables** to a supportive position. In our focus groups and survey, we found one of the most effective ways to do this is to show the pedestrian survival graphic illustrated on page 6, together with framing of care for others in the community.

Note that our engagement efforts are unlikely to bring steadfast opponents on board. Expect some vocal opposition, which tends to taper off in the months post-implementation. As seen in shifts in support for initiatives such as seat belt laws, gaining the support of most people helps to shift social norms and attitudes over time, as initiatives become normalised. Opposition may then soften in line with these cultural shifts.



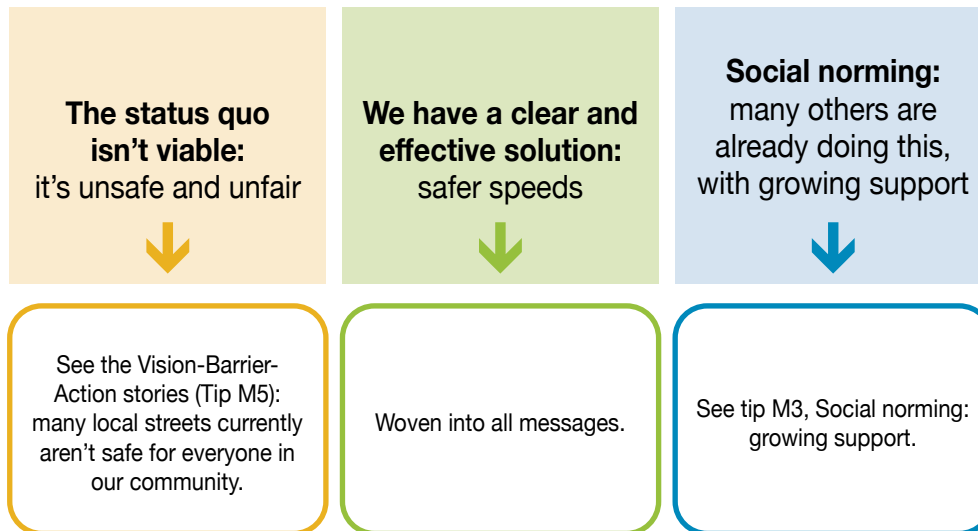
Overcoming the status quo bias

The **status quo bias** refers to a commonly held preference to leave things the way they are rather than changing them.

In the absence of any communications convincing them otherwise, most people believe that the current speed limits in any given location are the right limits and should stay the way they are.⁵

Fortunately, this means that once people get used to safer speeds, they are likely to believe those limits are the right limits. However, bringing in safer speeds necessarily means changing limits and running counter to the status quo bias.

Social psychology points to three ways of overcoming the status quo bias, no matter the issue. The first two are essential and the third is optional but helpful.



Repeat, repeat, repeat

There is a communications saying: *“When you’re getting sick of saying something is when other people are just starting to hear it”* – hence the need to repeat our messages.

The issue of safer urban speeds of 40 and 30km/h is a new one for many Victorians. Our survey showed very conclusively that people are open to considering the reasons for and benefits of safer speeds. While 40km/h limits are already relatively familiar and uncontentious, there was a very significant boost in support for 30km/h in response to values-based messages by the end of the survey.⁶

To keep communications fresh, try using the *“same frame, different execution”*: use the same values and frame, with different stories and messengers. The following tips will help you do that effectively.



⁵ Unpublished survey report prepared for TAC, 2022

⁶ The 15 minute survey included a wide variety of values-based messages in support of safer speeds, as well as a few oppositional messages. See Safer speeds on local streets: Messaging survey report.

Messaging tips

The following five messaging tips are based on the communication principles as well as safer speeds messages we tested in the survey, focus groups and user testing workshop with councils.





Tip M1.

Speak from our frame: 'streets are for everyone'

The following five messaging tips are based on the communication principles as well as safer speeds messages we tested in the survey, focus groups and user testing workshop with councils.

Summary

- Improving safety. Care values + safety = "safety for everyone who uses our streets".
- Creating nicer neighbourhoods
- Paint the picture of "local streets" suited to 40 or 30km/h
- Council acts for the whole community
- Safer speeds as the "foundation" or within a "package" of measures

Improving safety

Care values:

care for family, friends and community means looking after each other, keeping each other safe.



Safety:

the most compelling reason for 40 and 30km/h. Streets for everyone means safety for everyone.



"Safety for everyone who uses our streets"

In our survey and focus groups, **improving safety** was supported as a key reason for bringing in 40 and 30km/h zones, particularly for children, people with disability and older people. Talking about safety in this way encourages audiences to think about the needs of everyone in the community, rather than only their own needs and desires.

The two example statements below received strong support in the survey. The second statement taps into the very strong community support for safer speeds in school zones and builds upon this with a common sense proposition to expand these areas.

EXAMPLES

- “ 40 and 30km/h speed zones help save lives and prevent lifelong injuries. ”
- “ For children who walk or ride to school, it makes sense to keep them safe for the whole journey, not just outside the school grounds. ”

We recommend using the pedestrian survival graphic shown below, as our survey demonstrated much stronger support (+34%) for 30km/h amongst respondents who saw the graphic compared with those who didn't. Based on focus group findings, it is important to provide a simple written description of the graphic as well as the source.

EXAMPLES

IMPACT SPEED (KM/H)

SURVIVAL RATE

 30		90%
 40		60%
 50		10%

A person hit by a car travelling at 30km/h has a **90%** chance of surviving. If they are hit at 40km/h, they have a **60%** chance of surviving. At 50km/h this drops to **10%** chance of surviving.

Source: Victoria Government Road Safety Partners (2023). Submission to Victorian Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee Inquiry into the impact of road safety behaviours on vulnerable road users.

Creating nicer neighbourhoods

Alongside safety, local communities value nicer neighbourhoods as another important reason for bringing in 40 and 30km/h. When safer speed projects include placemaking or streetscape upgrades, be sure to highlight these in your communications.

EXAMPLES

“ In 40 and 30km/h zones, neighbourhoods are friendlier: families let their children play in the street and more people walk and say hello to each other. ” ⁷

“ Safer speed zones of 40 and 30km/h sometimes include street upgrades, with new landscaping and tree plantings that make local streets more attractive. ”

Local streets

“**Local streets**” works as a catch-all term for the types of streets suited to 40 or 30km/h. It taps into the commonsense ‘horses for courses’ idea that different types of streets and roads are suited to different speeds. Once people understand the significant safety benefits, most agree that 40 or 30km/h is the appropriate speed limit around schools and in busy areas where many people walk, ride and drive, such as shopping and dining strips.

Describe what “local streets” mean to people in personal and tangible terms, as shown below. These descriptions can evoke both ‘safety for all’ and the types of neighbourhoods most people would like to live in.

EXAMPLES

“ Local streets shared by people walking, bike riding and driving. ”

“ Local streets, where people live and children play. ”

“ Local streets, where children walk and ride to school. ”

⁷ Note the use of “families” rather than “parents”. Message testing on a range of topics has shown that “parents” tends to cue the unhelpful “parental responsibility” frame, placing responsibility for safety on parents rather than on governments to create safer street environments. “Families” does this much less so.



Council acts for the whole community

Councils have a responsibility to plan for *everyone* in the community and help keep everyone safe. It's worth reminding audiences of this responsibility and framing safer speeds within this remit. See *first example below*.

Where possible, let community visioning drive safer speed proposals. It then becomes possible to position safer speed proposals as fulfilling community needs and desires. See *second example below*, also *tip T4, Community engagement*.

Note that community visioning allows people to voice the outcomes they want in their street or area; it won't necessarily include many calls for 40 or 30km/h limits as such. However, communities often express strong support for safety and amenity, which is what safer speeds enable. Councils' public communications can help make the link between safer speeds and safety and amenity. See *third example below*.

EXAMPLES

- “ At Samletown Council, one of our jobs is to help keep everyone in our community safe. That's why we're rolling out safer speeds of [40 / 30km/h] on local streets. ”
- “ The Samletown community identified a vibrant, walk-friendly city centre as a top priority. We're now delivering that by rolling out safer speeds of [40 / 30km/h] together with [list other measures]. ”
- “ Safer speeds help deliver the nicer, safer, friendlier neighbourhoods that most people want. ”

Safer speeds as the 'foundation' or within a 'package' of measures

Safer speeds can be framed as the **foundation** for other road safety measures to work well. They can also be framed within a **package** of proposed measures that together deliver safer and nicer neighbourhoods. It's possible to use the specific words of 'foundation' and 'package', or to convey these concepts in other words.

EXAMPLES

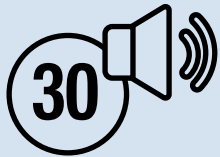
Foundation

- “ With safer speeds of 40 and 30km/h, pedestrian crossings work better, because drivers are more likely to see people walking and stop in time for them to cross safely. ”

Package

- “ Through *Your Say Samletown*, we heard calls for more speed humps, crossings and footpaths, as well as ways to tackle rat-running in local streets. Council is currently prioritising many of these important measures. In addition, we know the most effective way of creating safer local streets is through safer speeds of 40 or 30km/h, which we are rolling out in priority areas such as where children walk and ride to school. ”





Tip M2.

Tell our story, not theirs

Summary

- Tell our safer speeds story, rather than myth-busting or negating (saying what something is 'not')
- Avoid foregrounding the impact on driving journey times, even if it is small
- Use person-first terms

Avoid mythbusting or negation

In a nutshell, our story is:

“Safety for everyone
who uses our streets”

It can be tempting to address publicly aired untruths or unhelpful assertions by **myth-busting** (headlining a myth to then explain why it is false) or **negation** (saying what something is 'not'). Unfortunately, these techniques tend to reinforce the unhelpful idea that is being debunked. Audiences hear the concepts being linked together (e.g. in the first example at right: 30km/h equals more crashes because drivers watch their speedos) while ignoring the words 'myth' or 'not'.⁸ Such statements either remind audiences of an unhelpful idea and thereby reinforce it, or worse, seed an unhelpful idea they have never considered before.

Whether you are proactively messaging safer speeds, for example on a council webpage, or responding to a persistent myth on social media, ensure you are telling audiences our story rather than reinforcing what you don't want them to think.

More examples of objections against safer speeds and suggested responses are provided in Safer Speeds on local streets: Conversations and objection handling.

FROM

- “It's a common myth that 30km/h speed limits cause more crashes because drivers are concentrating on their speedos rather than the road.”
- “There's no evidence that 30km/h speed limits cause more crashes because drivers are concentrating on their speedos rather than the road.”

TO

Proactive messaging

“30km/h speed zones are proven to be safer, with fewer crashes, injuries and fatalities.”

or:

“30km/h speed zones are much safer because drivers have more time to see people walking, riding and driving, and to avoid a crash.”

Reactive messaging, when the myth is put to us

“Checking our speed is part of good driving practice, something we should all be doing no matter the speed limit. 30km/h zones allow us to see much more of what's happening on the street, as well as to check our speed.”

FROM

“30 and 40km/h speed limits are not anti-car.”

TO

“Safer speeds of 40 and 30km/h help keep everyone safe.”⁹

⁸ Newman, E., Dawel, A., Jalbert, M., & Schwarz, N. (2020). Seeing is believing: how media mythbusting can actually make false beliefs stronger. *The Conversation*.

⁹ See also tip M3, which explains the rationale for “safer speeds of 40 and 30km/h” rather than “30 and 40km/h speed limits”.

Avoid foregrounding the impact on driving journey times

The impact of safer speeds on driving journey times is a concern commonly expressed in public consultations and on social media. In most scenarios, the impact on driving times will be negligible, so it will be tempting to say that. But in councils' public communications, it is important to **lead with the benefits of safer speeds** rather than foregrounding the impact on driving times, for two reasons:

- Talking about the benefits such as improved safety for all reinforces our 'streets are for everyone' frame – whereas it's all too easy to invoke the 'roads are for cars' frame when talking about journey times. Remember that **'roads are for the fast movement of cars' is the opponent frame**. Leading communications with the impact on driving journey times plays into the opponent frame, suggesting that lower speed limits are undesirable because they inconvenience drivers, even if only by a little.
- In the survey, messages that focused on improving safety and creating nicer neighbourhoods performed much better than those describing the minimal impact on driver journey times.

Nonetheless, it can be worth responding to concerns or providing an FAQ about driving journey times because:

- There is a helpful way to do it that involves pivoting to safety and the types of streets that are well suited to 40 and 30km/h.
- Based on our focus groups, some persuadable people agree 40 and 30km/h are important measures for improving safety, but find the thought of substantially longer journey times a sticking point. It is relatively easy to dispel this concern for at least some people by explaining why speed limits are only a small part of what determines journey times in busy urban areas (see example below). Until such an explanation was provided, focus group participants tended to dismiss claims of "only seconds extra" as implausible.

EXAMPLE

“ Let's remember: safer speed zones save lives and reduce lifelong injuries from crashes. In Samletown, the safer speed zone will have very little impact on car journey times. That's because drivers already travel quite slowly here, as they reduce speed for turns and parking, and wait at intersections and traffic lights. The streets are well-suited to [40km/h or 30km/h]. ”

Use person-first terms

Remind audiences that safer speeds are for **people** by using person-first terms (e.g. "people bike riding") or focusing on activities ("whether we're walking, bike riding or driving") rather than divisive identities ("cyclist"; "motorist").

To avoid undue repetition, it's fine to use a person-first term such as "people bike riding" the first time in a paragraph, followed by "bike riders" or "riders". It is especially important to avoid the term "cyclist" which has negative connotations. "Pedestrian" is acceptable as it does not have the same degree of negativity attached to it and is a common way of describing people in the street, but "people walking" or "walkers" are preferable.

FROM

Cyclist
Motorist

TO

People bike riding
Bike riders
Riders
People driving
Drivers

FROM

“ Whether we're a pedestrian, cyclist or motorist... ”

TO

“ Whether we're walking, bike riding or driving... ”



Focus on positives

Tip M3.

Summary

- Safer speeds, nicer neighbourhoods – rather than limits
- Benefits and solutions: including drivers helping to keep everyone safe
- Social norming: there is growing support for safer speeds.

Safer speeds, nicer neighbourhoods

Persadable audiences tend to dislike governments “limiting”, “reducing” or otherwise constraining people’s actions. They are much more supportive of governments “improving”, “upgrading”, “helping” and “creating” places that are “safer”, “nicer” and “better”. Exactly the same policy measure of “lower speed limits” can be helpfully reframed as “safer speeds”.

The order matters: to maximise support, talk about “safer speeds” where possible, ahead of and more often than “40km/h” or “30km/h”. When mentioning both speed limits, it’s best to say “safer speeds of 40 and 30km/h”, which again leads with “safer speeds” and puts “40” first. The first thing people hear tends to ‘anchor’ their perceptions of what follows, with 40 being more familiar and accepted than 30.

Talking about 40 or 30km/h as being “the best” or “the most effective” way to create safer streets goes with the concept of safer speeds being the “foundation” for other road safety measures to work well (see tip M1). Avoid describing 40 or 30km/h as the “cheapest” / “easiest” / “quickest” way to create safer streets. Focus group participants said this suggests councils are taking the easy way out rather than doing what is really needed.

FROM

Limiting
Reducing
Lowering

TO

Safer speeds
Improve safety
Help to keep everyone safe
Create nicer neighbourhoods
Road safety improvement program
CBD upgrade
Revitalise

FROM

“ Council will lower speed limits ”

TO

“ Council will [set/bring in/roll out] safer speeds ”

“ Safer speed limits ”

“ Safer speeds ” or
“ safer speed zones ”

“ 30 and 40km/h ”

“ Safer speeds of 40 and 30km/h ”

“ The “cheapest” / “easiest” / “quickest” way to create safer streets. ”

“ The “best” or “most effective” way to create safer streets. ”

Benefits and solutions

Consistently talk about the **benefits** of safer speeds and the **people** who will benefit or are benefiting. See tip M1 for the types of benefits many audiences find compelling.

Talk **solutions** more than problems. In particular, help drivers move past feelings of guilt and defensiveness by focusing on what they can do to help keep everyone safe: they can make safer streets possible by driving at 30 or 40 instead of 50 or 60.

FROM

“ You’re much less likely to hit someone crossing the street when you’re driving at 40 or 30km/h. ”

TO

“ It’s much easier to help keep everyone safe, including people crossing the street, when we’re driving at 40 or 30km/h. ”

EXAMPLES

- “ Samletown is set to join a growing number of towns across Australia that are rolling out safer speeds of 40 and 30km/h in local streets. ”
- “ Council is continuing to roll out safer speeds, based on the benefits to everyone in our community whether we’re walking, riding or driving. ”
- “ As the Samletown community experiences the benefits of safer speeds, support for the 30km/h zone continues to grow, from 52% pre-trial, to 61% in 2022 and 68% in 2024. ”
- “ Safer speed limits of 30km/h are like seat belt laws. People didn’t like using seatbelts when they were first introduced, but now everyone knows they save lives. In a few years time, we’ll wonder why we used to drive so fast in local neighbourhoods. ”¹⁰



¹⁰ A similar statement comparing safer speeds with seat belts received strong support in our survey.



Tip M4.

Keep it real: simple, personal, tangible

Summary

- Use everyday language and provide simple explanations. Avoid jargon.
- Include positive imagery – show people enjoying safer speeds on local streets.
- The messenger matters: use local and trusted messengers where possible.

Everyday language

In public communications, use everyday language and provide simple explanations for why 40 and 30km/h zones are safer and essential on local streets.

EXAMPLES

Why 40 or 30 are safer

- “ With safer speeds [of 40 or 30km/h], pedestrian crossings work better, because drivers are more likely to see people walking and stop in time for them to cross safely. ”
- “ Safer speeds [of 40 or 30km/h] mean there is enough time for people who walk more slowly to cross the street, including older people and people with disability. ”

Why 40 or 30 are essential on local streets

- “ Children sometimes act without stopping to look and think, no matter how well they’ve been taught about road safety. ”
- “ In busy shopping and dining strips, there are many people walking and driving, including drivers pulling out of parking spots. ”



Avoid jargon such as “kinetic energy transfer”, “road diets” or “residential amenity”. Using such terms risks alienating people who don’t understand what they mean, and misses the opportunity to connect on values. It’s more effective to translate technical details into what safer speeds mean for people and the things we value in life.

FROM

- “ The kinetic energy transfer from a vehicle to a human is much greater at higher speed. ”
- “ Residential amenity. ”

TO

- “ The force of a vehicle crashing into a person is much greater at higher speed. ”
- “ Nicer neighbourhoods. ”
- “ Nicer neighbourhoods, where traffic is calmer and more people enjoy walking. ”

Include positive imagery

'A picture paints a thousand words' – so it is worth using photos and videos to illustrate what safer streets look like, and the people who benefit from them. Use imagery showing people using safer speed zones, for example, enjoying a safer, more relaxed experience while walking, riding and driving. See the Healthy Streets Imagery Guidance for tips on choice of imagery.

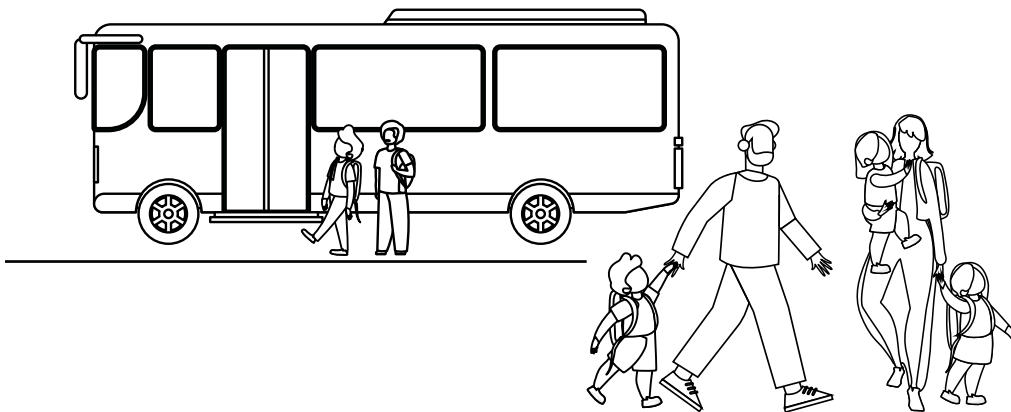
Local and trusted messengers

The **messenger** matters: the effectiveness of a message depends not only on what is said or how it is said but who says it. Elevating the voices of multiple messengers beyond council also helps convey that many parties see the value in safer speeds.

As a general rule, facts alone rarely change people's minds. In fact, research shows that confronting people with facts that contradict how they feel about an issue often serves to entrench their position further.¹¹ In contrast, personal stories can help connect with audiences' values and emotions, changing how they feel about an issue which opens the door to changing how they think about it. Often one or two personal stories can have more impact than a plethora of facts.

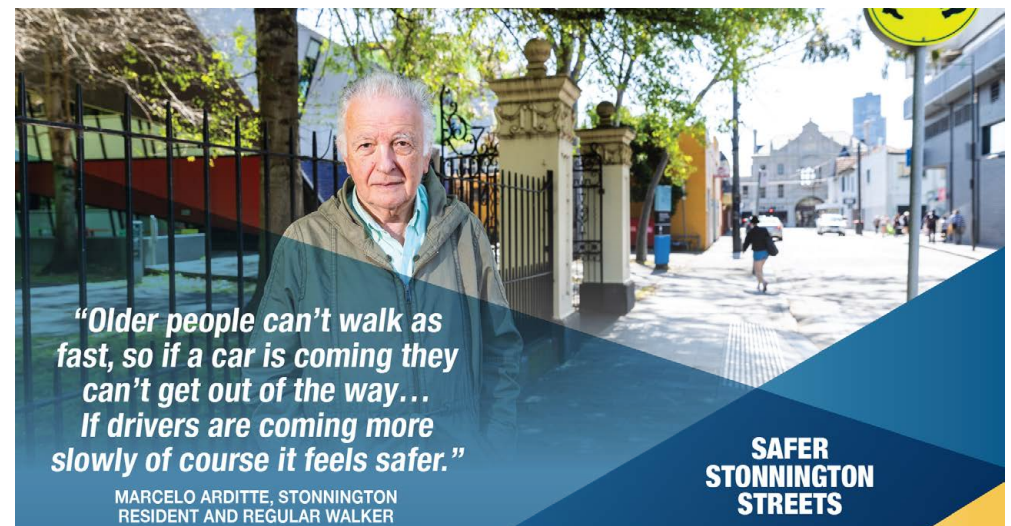
Including the voices of community spokespeople can be a great way to humanise the issue, as they tend to talk about friends, neighbours, school children, sons and daughters, aunts and uncles and so on. Councils should also use this language where possible.

Other trusted messengers could include first responders (ambulance, police, fire), healthcare workers, school principals and teachers.



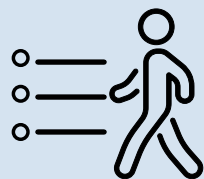
EXAMPLES

Safer Stonnington Streets features Stonnington residents sharing why safer speeds matter to them and their local community.¹² Note the image illustrating “caring for others in my community” while driving (see tip M3: drivers can help keep everyone safe).



¹¹ Baumeister, R. F et al, eds (2007). Encyclopedia of Social Psychology, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage. pp. 109–110.

¹² These stories were developed by the City of Stonnington, with support from Victoria Walks and Common Cause Australia.



Tip M5.

Use a Vision-Barrier-Action story structure

Message testing on a range of topics has shown **Vision-Barrier-Action** to be the most effective story structure to enthuse supporters and move persuadables to a supportive mindset.

Vision:

A positive outcome that most people would value

Barrier:

Something that stands in the way of that outcome

Action:

A solution that will help overcome the barrier and achieve the vision

Most people like positive outcomes and benefits ('vision') and solutions ('action') much more than problems – which is why it works best to 'sandwich' the barrier between vision and action.

The short version, a framework

The core elements of the safer speeds message are:

[Vision] Streets for everyone means safety for everyone.

[Barrier] But speeds of 50 and 60km/h are making our local streets unsafe, especially for people walking and bike riding.

[Action] That's why we need safer speeds of 40 or 30km/h.

This provides a useful framework for developing longer and shorter messages.

A longer version, which implies the barrier

It's important to apply the Vision-Barrier-Action story structure in ways that fit council's 'tone of voice' or other communication guidelines. Sometimes this might mean implying, rather than overtly stating, a barrier. In the example below, the underlined phrases imply that streets currently do not enable safe access for all, or safer walking and riding for all.

EXAMPLE

[Vision] "Everyone should be able to move around our streets safely, whether we're walking, bike riding or driving."

[Implied barrier] It's important for our streets to provide safe access for the 8 year old and the 80 year old, the injured person on crutches and the parent pushing a pram.

[Action] By enabling safer walking and bike riding, safer speeds make a real difference in people's lives. Walking and riding are essential for many people to move around, including children, older people and people with disability.

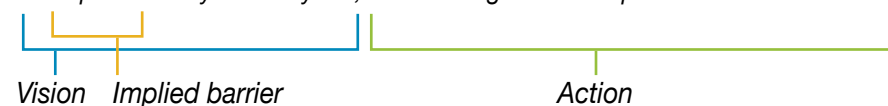
[wrap up by linking the action back to the vision] Safer speeds help create streets for everyone."

A one-sentence version, which implies the barrier

A one-sentence version can focus on the vision and action, while implying or even omitting the barrier. The example below implies that safety for everyone needs to be improved – hence the need for action.

EXAMPLE

"To improve safety for everyone, we're rolling out safer speed zones in X locations."



Tactical tips

The following tips bring together the recommendations of a wide range of metro and regional Victorian councils, based on their lessons learnt from bringing in safer speeds.

Summary

- Tips T1 to T3 focus on processes within council: building council and councillor support, and selecting safer speed areas.
- Tip T4 covers community engagement, and T5 evaluation





Tip T1.

Secure commitment within council

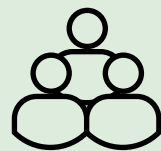
Ensure there is support for safer speeds at both officer and senior management level. The same concepts that boost public support can also boost support within council. For example, share the strong case for road safety. Reinforce that council is fulfilling community needs and desire for attractive walk-friendly neighbourhoods and town centres. *Also see suggestions in tip T2.*

Endeavour to have safer speeds endorsed in council's multi-year transport strategy and Council Plan, so that implementation becomes a question of 'when' not 'if'. It can also help to create an interlocking set of plans by incorporating safer speeds into several council strategies. These might be general (e.g. municipal plan; health and wellbeing strategy; economic development plan) or specific to particular places, such as an urban design framework for a town centre.

To provide reassurance to council leadership, it may help to remind them that 30km/h zones are "trials" that allow for refinement. Changes could entail repositioning of a sign or modifying the extent of a zone rather than a change in proposed speed. If 40 km/h limits are new to your area (besides school zones), it may also help to frame proposed 40km/h zones in a similar way, in internal communications.

Right from the start of safer speed proposals, set up a project team that includes transport, communications and community engagement members, and potentially others.

Develop a communications and community engagement plan for safer speed proposals that covers both proactive and reactive communications and engagement.



Tip T2.

Build councillor support and ongoing commitment

Take the time to secure and build councillor support. Hold briefings, separate to induction, to allow councillors sufficient time to discuss and ask questions.

Consider inviting experts (e.g. in road safety or active transport), previous councillors or those from other councils with 40 or 30km/h implementation experience, and community members (e.g. school staff or parents) to present to councillors on the importance of safer speeds.

Present the safety case – the significant reductions in crashes, injuries and fatalities – as well as evidence of the community desire for safer speeds (e.g. survey data)

Share that while there will be some opposition, it will likely be reduced by effective messaging as well as by exposure (getting used to the changes) over time.

Post-implementation, share evidence around increasing public support, and showing that safer speeds are working, e.g. reductions in crashes or near-misses; more people walking and bike riding.





Tip T3.

Choose safer speed areas carefully

Introducing small patches of 40 or 30km/h allows residents and visitors to get used to these speeds, which opens the door to more safer speed zones in surrounding areas.

It is especially important to carefully choose the first area to apply 40 and particularly 30 km/h in your municipality, to set a successful precedent for your community. Where possible, choose the area that you think will be most positively received by your community, rather than another area that is expedient for other reasons.

The following prompts are designed to help you decide on your approach to selecting 30 or 40km/h areas.

Suitable streets

Our survey found support for 40 and 30km/h was strongest in existing school zones (typically short stretches of 40 km/h outside school gates, often limited to certain times of day). This was followed by extended school zones, shopping strips, dining strips and inner city residential streets. For suburban residential streets, support for 40km/h was stronger than opposition, but the reverse was true for 30km/h.

The following prompts will help you select suitable streets, based on your local context.

- Where are the streets best suited to 40 or 30km/h, due to their configuration or existing street treatments? Or where council is considering street treatments? Note that not all street treatments are created equal. Public support is generally stronger for initiatives that improve residential amenity (such as landscaping and ‘pocket parks’) than for those that are perceived to make driving more difficult (such as road closures or loss of parking).
- Where is there a clear need to improve safety, e.g. around schools, or where there are many crashes or near misses?

- On which routes do many people walk and ride? Are there streets that connect key destinations where people walk and ride or would be inclined to do so? (e.g. activity centres, parks, schools, public transport)
- Where is there a lot of street activity, including people walking and riding? (e.g. shopping and dining strips with many parking cars and venues with outdoor seating)
- Which areas are suited to or already earmarked for urban renewal or placemaking initiatives?
- Which streets are adjacent to existing 40 or 30km/h zones? Look for opportunities to create a much larger safer speed zone around an existing 40 or 30km/h street in a high activity area.

In tandem with council’s identification of suitable streets, consider establishing ongoing community engagement or visioning processes that invite local communities to identify high priority locations for safety and amenity improvements.¹³

Public support

- Where is there likely to be strong support for safer speeds from local residents, schools and businesses?
- Can community visioning be built into the community engagement process, to both drive and demonstrate support?

See also tip T4 on community engagement.

Councillor support

- Which councillors, and how many, support safer speeds and how strong is their support? Ideally there would be universal support amongst councillors when community engagement begins.
- Timing: Which projects could get approved and implemented within the term of current councillors, ideally early in their term?

Funding and approval requirements

- How will implementation be funded, and what are the requirements of that funding? Consider how this may impact community engagement and talk to funding agencies about their expectations.
- What approvals are required (Department of Transport and Planning in Victoria)? Integrate approval requirements into planning for project delivery and community engagement.

¹³ For example, see Your Street Your Say (Darebin) and Map your thoughts (Mornington Peninsula).



Tip T4.

Community engagement

See also *Safer speeds on local streets: Conversations and objection handling*.

1. Do the work to position safer speeds as delivering on community aspirations

Play the long game. Consider ways to gain community support for safer speeds through **visioning processes and consultation on council plans and strategies**. This helps position council to roll out specific safer speed projects by presenting these as delivering on community aspirations.

In practice, the approach might entail:

- Conduct in-depth consultation on the concept of safer speeds through council strategy documents (such as road safety or transport strategies, or structure plans and urban design frameworks for particular places) before getting to details of how it might apply to particular streets. This can help the community see the bigger picture and benefits of enabling sustainable active transport and creating nicer neighbourhoods, rather than only considering a specific proposal on a particular street causing a perceived loss (slower driving).
- Conduct surveys of local residents, schools and businesses to gauge public opinion. Be sure to ask about people's local experiences of safety and amenity in their neighbourhood, phrased in everyday language, e.g. "do people drive too fast on your street?"
- In visioning and strategy-level consultation as well as specific speed limit proposals, emphasise the safety imperative: Council is planning to roll out 40 km/h (or 30 km/h) in local streets because it's best practice, essential for road safety, creates street environments that facilitate safety (Safe Systems).
- In visioning processes, help people make the link between their visions and road speed: provide simple explanations and examples of how safer speeds enable the types of safer, nicer neighbourhoods that most people want (see examples in tip M1: Creating nicer neighbourhoods and Council acts for the whole community). When specific speed changes are proposed, they can then be positioned as delivering on the community's vision.

As noted in the section on Audiences, all our best communication and engagement efforts are unlikely to bring steadfast opponents on board. Our survey presenting both the values and factual case for safer speeds strongly boosted support amongst persuadables but did very little to convince opponents. Expect some vocal opposition to safer speeds proposals, and be reassured that it tends to taper off in the months post-implementation.

A note on State approvals: Start a conversation with your relevant state government department officer and the speed management team early. It may be prudent to ensure there are no significant concerns around the proposal, before undertaking community engagement and seeking final approval.

2. Consider targeted early engagement with schools, community groups and local residents living within proposed safer speed zones, who are more likely to see the proposal from a 'place' perspective than people who live elsewhere and occasionally drive through the area.

This type of localised targeted engagement can also:

- Be the first stage in 'activation' – getting people excited about walking and riding in the safer speed zone¹⁴
- Identify supportive community ambassadors or spokespeople
- Form part of data collection for project evaluation, providing baseline sentiment for comparison post-implementation.

3. Equip councillors and council staff for community conversations and media engagement, to inform community engagement in constructive ways.

Provide speaking points:

- At the proposal stage: about the safety case and community desire for safer speeds
- Post-implementation: demonstrating that safer speeds are working, benefiting the community, and supported by the community. Use personal stories and data where available. See *tip T5 for more detail on evaluation*.



"Safer speeds in local streets just makes sense."

Glen Yates, parent
Kingsville Primary School

#LoveWalking

¹⁴ See WA Department of Transport (2023) Activation, Consultation and Evaluation (ACE) Guidance.



Evaluation and improvement

Tip T5.

Collecting and communicating **data** and **positive community stories** about safer speeds projects is vitally important. It can build community and councillor support, paving the way for future projects. It enables Council to highlight its leadership in taking action on this important issue, with demonstrable benefits for the community.

Evaluation data also supports improvement and refinement in developing, communicating and delivering safer speeds on local streets. Review the data collected to see what insights can be drawn to improve future engagements or modify current actions.

Data: collect pre- and post- data to demonstrate the success of safer speeds projects.

Evaluation needs to be planned from the start, to enable collection of pre- and post- data on:

- **Community sentiment**, comprising qualitative and/or quantitative data, e.g. collected through online and field surveys; ongoing engagement with stakeholder reference groups or community groups; monitoring social media channels
- **Vehicle speeds**
- **Safety benefits**, e.g. reductions in crashes, injuries and fatalities
- **Potential transport mode shift**. Assessing how a speed reduction project increases the proportion of trips that are walked and ridden can provide valuable information. This can illustrate wider impacts relating to public health, emissions, noise, social connectivity and so on. Together, these data points can assist councils in demonstrating the worth and holistic value of the project and communicating this back to the community and stakeholders.

Stories: As outlined in tip M4, even one personal story can have a big impact where facts may provoke cynicism or resistance. For example, you may have collected data showing that treatments on a particular street were successful in significantly reducing vehicle speeds and crashes. Rather than just reporting such facts and stats to residents, it may be more effective to find a supportive local spokesperson and *lead* with their statements ahead of any facts, e.g. “I’ve noticed a big difference in vehicle speeds and the street feels much safer”.



Checklist

This checklist brings together key elements of the messaging and tactical tips for safer speed projects.

- ✓ **1. Streets are for everyone:**
Speak from our frame: safer speeds make our streets safer for all.
- ✓ **2. Safety:**
Safety is the key reason and a major benefit of safer speeds. Use the pedestrian survival graphic early and often. Emphasise the safety benefits for children, people with disability and older people.
- ✓ **3. Strategy:**
Position the changes to speed as part of a broader transport and/or road safety strategy and Council Plan. This builds council support and repositions safer speeds engagement more towards notification.
- ✓ **4. Staged:**
Start small and expand, doing the most obvious and likely to be supported areas first.
- ✓ **5. Streetscape:**
Where possible, connect the introduction of safer speeds to broader streetscape upgrades.
- ✓ **6. Schools:**
There is strong public support for safer speeds around schools, so highlight schools within proposed safer speed zones and encourage school communities to speak up.
- ✓ **7. Simple, personal, tangible:**
Less technical language, more painting the picture of what safer speeds mean for people's lives. Use imagery and community messengers where possible.
- ✓ **8. Success:**
Provide ongoing feedback to the community and councillors that your safer speed project is working and the community is benefiting.



Appendix: Communicating the benefits of safer speeds

This appendix draws on The benefits of safer speeds: evidence summary. It provides information about the benefits of safer speed that may be used to support public communication.

Speed zones of 40 km/h have been applied to many areas of Melbourne and a range of regional town centres like Wonthaggi and Shepparton. Speed zones of 30 km/h are not yet so common in Australia, but are commonly used for city centres in New Zealand and across many cities in Europe. Victorian towns and suburbs with 30km/h zones include Mildura, Warrnambool and Fitzroy and Collingwood in Melbourne.

Why are 40 and 30 km/h so much safer?

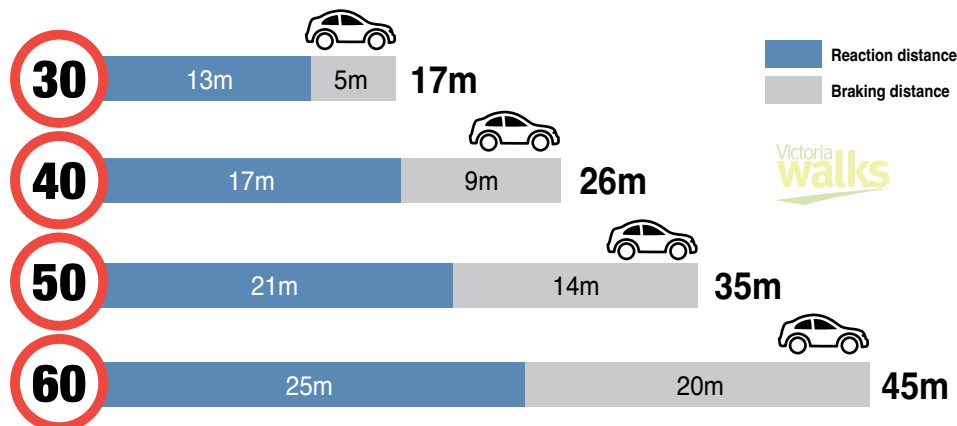
Lower speeds:

1. Reduce the risk of a crash; and
2. Reduce the risk of death or injury if a crash still happens^{15,16}

Regardless of how good a driver you are, the same physics apply to everyone. As shown in the diagram, the faster you go, the longer it takes to stop. A crash at 60 km/h means someone walking or riding a bike is hit with four times the force compared to a crash at 30 km/h, even though the speed is only two times as much.

STOPPING DISTANCE AT DIFFERENT SPEEDS²³

Minimum stopping distances, for dry roads. Braking distance will be longer on wet surfaces.



Older people's bodies are not as strong as younger people, so they are much more likely to be injured or killed if they are hit by a car. And road crashes are the leading cause of death for children. Safer streets are especially important to protect our kids and their grandparents.

The results

Safer speeds generally bring big reductions in crashes and injuries. For example, reducing speed limits from 50 to 40 km/h in the Melbourne suburbs of Toorak and Prahran resulted in crashes being reduced by 46% and injuries by 42%.¹⁷

In New Zealand, 30 km/h speed zones in city centres have significantly reduced crashes, for example by 45% in the regional city of New Plymouth.¹⁸

Other benefits of safer speed

In addition to the significant road safety benefits, other positives of safer speeds include:

- Encouraging walking and bike riding – a 20 mph (32 km/h) trial in Edinburgh saw a 7% increase in walking and a 5% increase in bike riding.¹⁹
- Reduced air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions – an 18% reduction for 30 km/h zones in Europe.²⁰
- Less noise pollution – an average 2.5 decibel reduction for 30 km/h zones in Europe.⁸
- Economics – implementation of 30 km/h in local streets across Australia would save costs of \$3.5 billion a year.²¹

For all these reasons, many organisations in Australia and worldwide now recommend 30 km/h speed limits. These include the Victorian Government Road Safety Partners: VicRoads, Victoria Police, the Department of Justice and the Transport Accident Commission (TAC).²²

Feel free to copy any of the information above to use in the background to your communications.

For more evidence on safer speeds, refer to 'Safer speeds on local streets: Evidence summary'

¹⁵ Global Road Safety Partnership (2023). Speed management: a road safety manual for decision-makers and practitioners, second edition. Global Road Safety Partnership, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Geneva.

¹⁶ Austroads (2024). Guide to Road Safety Part 3: Safe Speed.

¹⁷ City of Stonnington (2024). 'Road Safety Improvement Program,' <https://connectstonnington.vic.gov.au/RSIP>, accessed 16 December 2024.

¹⁸ Radio NZ, 'New Plymouth officials propose lower speed limits after spike in crashes' <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/498249/new-plymouth-officials-propose-lower-speed-limits-after-spike-in-crashes>, 18 September 2023, accessed 13 December 2024.

¹⁹ RSPA (2023). 'Road safety factsheet: 20mph zones and speed limits,' The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, September 2023.

²⁰ Van den Dool, D; Tranter, P and Boss, A (2017). Safe-Street Neighbourhoods: the role of lower speed limits. Journal of the Australian College of Road Safety – Volume 28 No. 3, 2017

²¹ Van den Dool, D; Tranter, P and Boss, A (2017). Safe-Street Neighbourhoods: the role of lower speed limits. Journal of the Australian College of Road Safety – Volume 28 No. 3, 2017

²² Victoria Government Road Safety Partners (2023). Submission to Victorian Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee Inquiry into the impact of road safety behaviours on vulnerable road users.

²³ Queensland Government (2016). 'Stopping distances: speed and braking' <https://www.qld.gov.au/transport/safety/road-safety/driving-safely/stopping-distances>. Distances for 30 km/h calculated by Victoria Walks.

This report is part of the *Safer Speeds Communication Toolkit* prepared by Dr Eleanor Glenn, from Common Cause Australia, Duane Burtt (Project Manager) and Dr Ben Rossiter of Victoria Walks, and Geoff Oulton from the Municipal Association of Victoria, March 2025.

Victoria Walks Inc is a walking health promotion charity. Our vision is healthier, connected communities through more people walking more every day.

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