

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM

Date: March 14, 2024

To: Honorable City Council
c/o City Clerk, Room 395
Attention: Honorable Heather Hutt, Chair, Transportation Committee

From: Laura Rubio-Cornejo, General Manager 
Department of Transportation

Subject: **ACCIDENT/COLLISION/CRASH/INCIDENT/CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC CRASHES (CF #23-1051)**

SUMMARY

In response to Council File (CF) 23-1051, this report provides a description of how the Department of Transportation has officially adopted the terms “crash,” “collision,” and “incident” in lieu of the term “accident” when discussing traffic crashes in documents and communications.

RECOMMENDATION

LADOT recommends the Los Angeles City Council RECEIVE and FILE this report.

BACKGROUND

In November 2023 City Council directed Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) and other departments to officially adopt the terms “crash,” “collision,” and “incident” in lieu of “accident” when discussing traffic crashes in all communications and documents, and to report back on the implementation of this policy. Many other government agencies have established policies around the use of this terminology, including most recently California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) via a memo issued to staff on June 30, 2021.

DISCUSSION

LADOT agrees with the policy to avoid using the term “accident” when discussing traffic crashes, and instead use the terms “crash,” “collision,” or “incident.” This terminology supports the work LADOT leads to improve streets for safety, as it emphasizes that crashes are not simply unavoidable mistakes, but results of preventable actions and a transportation system that can be improved to reduce such incidents.

Since the Vision Zero program was established in 2015, LADOT has maintained internal and external policies to guide communications in this direction. The Vision Zero Press Kit released in April 2016 specifically asks that media reporting on Vision Zero use “crash,” not “accident,” when describing a traffic-related collision. The LADOT Style Guide (June 2019), an internal document intended as guidance for staff, also contains similar instructions. Under “Approved Messaging and Terms” the Style Guide indicates the terms “crash” or “collision” should be used instead of “accident.” Since the release of those documents, LADOT uses “crash” or “collision” in all contexts and considers those terms as our adopted terminology when addressing street safety.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact associated with this report.

LR:lc

Attachment 1: [Vision Zero Press Kit](#)

Attachment 2: [LADOT Style Guide](#)