



**To:** Place Directorate  
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Top line: Traffic safety culture change requires both transformative actions at societal cultural levels and at the organisational level. Individuals and organisations over time will expect the traffic safety system organisations to expand their efforts to improve safety because the goal of zero fatalities has become embedded into the group culture.

The safety by design paradigm has been effective in reducing traffic fatalities. However, this paradigm alone cannot achieve the zero fatality vision - which is increasingly accepted across the world – that to accept any number above zero is arbitrary, if not defeatist. It cannot achieve zero alone because it does not address the cultural influence on behaviour hazards resulting from the social environment that we always occupy, e.g. road humps are limited to their spatial location whereas our social affiliations that define our social environment are always part of our own identity.

As social beings, the influence of our social environment in terms of our identification with specific groups (e.g. family, community, work) and our roles within these groups (e.g. parent, teacher, police officer) is always present regardless of whether or where we drive. For example, the fear of disappointing a parent when anticipating a drunk drive charge resides in the driver and is not dependent on a specific road location. And so, we can achieve sustainable changes in behaviour across the network by instilling a social environment that intrinsically supports safe behaviours. Therefore, by changing our culture to support safer driving behaviours, we are calling upon our very innate protective nature as humans to be safer drivers. This is a paradigm referred to as “safe by nature”.<sup>1</sup>

Culture can be described in terms of shared values and beliefs. Values are the ideals to which we aspire and judge the merit of behaviours e.g. “the most important thing is to take care of family”. Behavioural beliefs refer to our expectations about the possible consequences of our behaviour and our valuation of those consequences (e.g. “it’s unlikely that by speeding I will get a ticket”, “I don’t care about the fine”). Normative beliefs refer to our perceptions about the behaviours that are common and sanctioned within our group culture (e.g. “All my friends speed and so approve of me speeding too”). Messages can challenge such perceived norms e.g. that friends don’t approve of speeding.<sup>2</sup>

The goal of the traffic safety culture paradigm is to develop a process for changing values and attitudes so that safety is part of every transport decision, whether individual or organisational. The impetus for this process is the safety culture of the organisations that are responsible for managing traffic safety. Only these organisations have the resources and authority to implement and sustain the types of integrated strategies that are necessary to transform traffic safety culture. This will be evidence where priority to safety is given above all other decision criteria. This can be described as *a social climate in which traffic safety is highly valued and rigorously pursued*. This type of climate emerges only with the inspiration and innovation of transformational leaders – those with the professional competence, visionary courage, and personal charisma to instigate and inspire innovative change in the vision, strategy and culture of the organisation.

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<sup>1</sup> Ward, N. et al, 2014. A primer for traffic safety culture, *Institute of Transportation Engineers Journal*, 84(5): 41-47.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpeTo-7ujiA> .