

From: Lisa Pierce [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, February 20, 2026 12:54 PM
To: Mary Gourley <mgourley@cityofsebastopol.gov>
Cc: Amie Windsor [REDACTED]; Laura Hagar
[REDACTED]

Subject: About Those Traffic Safety Ratings- Please share with Council & Planning Commission

Lately, we've been hearing about how dangerous Sebastopol is for pedestrians and bicyclists. (The Press Democrat wrote about this on Feb. 19th.) *"In 2023, the city was ranked worst — or most dangerous — out of 74 California cities of similar size for pedestrian safety, according to the state." "The city also ranks in the bottom third for bicycle safety, with 2023 the latest year for which data was available. Sebastopol also has one of the highest collision rates on its roadways when compared to cities of similar size"* This data comes from the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS). There are some things we should understand when looking at these rankings.

1. OTS groups all cities by population and then ranks them according to number of accidents. Cities with a population between 2,501-10,000 are in Group F. Sebastopol's latest population on the OTS website is 7,338, putting us slightly on the larger side for Group F.

Here's the problematic issue: Sebastopol's OTS *accident* counts include the entire area with a "Sebastopol, 95472" address, which has a population of approx. 28,000. Most cities don't have a large percentage of their population living outside their city limits. So, we are basically comparing apples and oranges.

With our entire population of 28,000 being more accurately considered, we would belong in Group D (pop. 25,000-50,000) and ranked with other larger cities in that group, since the accident data comes from the greater Sebastopol area. Our safety ranking would look quite different within Group D.

2. The other problematic issue with the TSO ranking has to do with traffic counts. Because Sebastopol has two busy highways going right through downtown, we have much more traffic than most cities with a similar population size.

For example: Calistoga has approx. 5,300 vehicles going through their town on an average day. Sebastopol has closer to 30,000. Since Calistoga is also in Group F, it's no wonder they score better than we do. Their streets are much quieter than ours. Remember, grouping is determined by population, not vehicle counts. Calistoga's population, according to OTS is 5,181. (Note: OTS uses DVMT, a different traffic count metric. Calistoga's DVMT: 5,181. Sebastopol's DVMT: 31,020.)

So, in conclusion, the ranking from OTS can be misleading. When we compare Sebastopol, 95472 both with population (28,000) and compare traffic counts, we look better as far as safety goes. Of course, any accident is one too many, and there are always ways we can improve.

Rather than relying on TSO's ranking, the Sonoma County Transit Authority's Dashboard gives us a much clearer and more detailed understanding.

Another resource for more detailed information is the 95 page "Local Road Safety Plan" produced by the City of Sebastopol in 2023. The image below shows all traffic accidents, including pedestrian and bicycle accidents within City limits from 2015-2020. As we can see, during this time period, the majority of the accidents happened outside of the current study area in the heart of downtown.

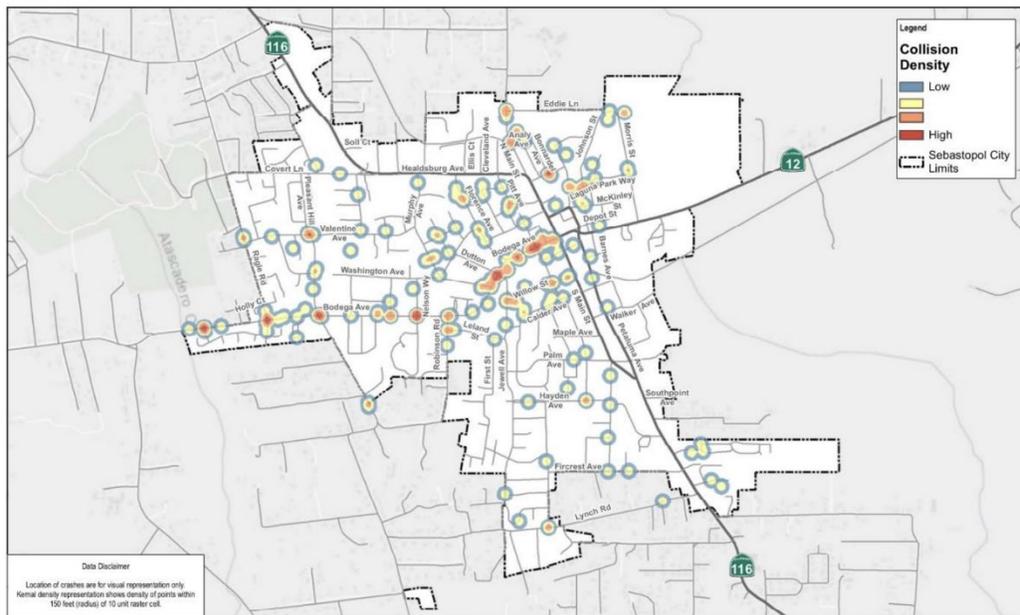


Figure 10 Collision Density on City Roads (2015-2020)