

Submitter: Steve Piercy  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation  
Measure: HB3374

I am writing to support HB 3374 to change the wording of "traffic accident" and "traffic collision" to "traffic crash".

Words have power through the meaning we give them.

By definition, "accident" is an unforeseen or unplanned event. An accident implies nothing could be done to prevent it. Accidents absolve humans of the responsibility for their decisions and actions that led to the event happening.

A "crash", unlike "accident", neither implies nor denies fault, blame, or liability. It is a neutral term, simply an event.

In some transportation systems where deadly events are subjected to intensive investigations—such as a space shuttle explosion or train derailment—flaws in human behavior, judgment, engineering, and design are usually determined to be the underlying causes. These causes are entirely preventable. Humans can make decisions and take actions to prevent or sufficiently reduce risks from these causes. This is why "plane crash" is the most frequently used term to describe a plane that smashes into the ground.

How we describe a deadly traffic event has significant influence over these decisions and actions. When we call an event an "accident", we dismiss the preventable causes: impaired or inattentive driving, excessive speed, not using seat belts or child seats, poor design of intersections and roadways, and not providing safe transportation options. Traffic engineers have designed our transportation systems to facilitate speed and the movement of vehicles over people, literally. Each of these causes was a deliberate choice, not an accident.

We can change our decisions by changing the information and wording we use to describe tragedy and destruction.

We can repair dangerous transportation systems by prioritizing the safe movement of people on foot, bicycle, and personal mobility devices over cars. Changing the terms we use to describe tragic events to be more accurate will significantly help push safety forward.

Our reporting systems will use "traffic crash". Reports filed by law enforcement officers and issued by public information officers in press releases and news alerts

will refer to a "traffic crash". Media will continue to lazily copy these reports in their publications and broadcasts, spreading the concept that a crash is no accident. As these concepts are heard and learned, human behavior and decisions will change for the better, reducing deaths and injuries from traffic crashes.

I believe we all want safer transportation systems. HB 3374 will help in this effort. I urge you to support passage of this bill.

Thank you for your consideration.