

May

# Newsletter

Metro Human Relations Commission



## Statement from the Metro Human Relations Commission



**Davie Tucker, Jr.**  
Executive Director

The Metro Human Relations Commission joins people across Nashville and the nation in expressing grief and concern following the tragic shooting in San Diego on Monday, May 18th. We specifically extend our prayers, support, and solidarity to our Muslim brothers and sisters in Nashville and Davidson County, many of whom continue to live with the fear and burden that hateful rhetoric, suspicion, and acts of violence too often create.

Moments like these remind us that hate does not remain confined to words. When prejudice is normalized, when entire communities are spoken of as others, threats, outsiders, or less deserving of dignity, violence can easily follow. Silence in the face of such rhetoric can also create space for fear and dehumanization to grow unchecked.

The Metro Human Relations Commission was established to “protect and promote the personal dignity, peace, safety, security, health and general welfare of all people in Nashville and Davidson County.” That responsibility includes standing publicly with communities who are hurting, targeted, or made to feel unsafe because of their faith, race, ethnicity, or identity.

Nashville’s Muslim community is an important and valued part of the fabric of this city. They are our neighbors, coworkers, business owners, educators, healthcare workers, students, and friends. An attack that causes fear within that community diminishes all of us. At a time when division can seem louder than unity, we must choose something better. We must choose human dignity over hatred, understanding over suspicion, and courage over silence.

The Commission meets the first Monday of every month (unless it’s a holiday) at 4pm at the Howard Office Building. The next full commission meeting is:

Monday, June 1, 4:00– 5:30 pm  
Howard Office Building  
700 2nd Avenue S. Nashville TN  
37201

Submit a public comment  
online.

Through our Humans Over Hate initiative, and our ongoing work throughout Nashville, the Commission remains committed to helping build a city where every person feels seen, respected, and safe.

Nashville must continue striving to be truly what we say we are: One City For All People.

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# On the Tennessee Legislative Session: Historical Chaos, Practice of Hope



**Commissioner  
Dahron Johnson**

Hurry-up-and-wait energy paired with chaos-making—and the ways the former is part of the intentional creation of the latter—feels like an apt enough way to describe any session of the Tennessee General Assembly. Such energies can be anxiety-inducing, and in the event—the regular session that gaveled to a close on April 23; and then, in the special session that was hastily called, convened, and adjourned in less than a week early in May—there proved to be good reason for worry: an array of problematic and harmful laws were delivered by the one-two blows of the rapidly-successive sessions.

Just two days into the regular session in mid-January, a troubling set of bills was introduced in coordination with the White House and its Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller, requiring state and local government offices to act as agents on immigration matters. In each piece of legislation, the state’s animus against Tennessee’s immigrant, asylum seeker, and refugee residents was on full display.

It is important to note that not all of these passed, or passed as first presented, but they weren’t the only bills targeting specific communities with increased policing (figurative and/or literal), data reporting, and surveillance. LGBTQIA+ communities—particularly trans- & gender-diverse persons—were yet again assaulted with over two dozen bills with discriminatory intention.

Any reader of this will know that a discussion of the four months of TN legislative activity we just navigated would be negligently incomplete without mention of the special session. The session took telling, and all-too-eager advantage, of the Louisiana vs. Callais Supreme Court decision, issued on April 31, that essentially erased the consideration of race in drawing Congressional districts as enumerated in Section 2 of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Just as with anti-immigrant measures—and one could argue, with anti-LGBTQ and anti-trans bills as well—the state’s ruling party has been eager to show fealty to the White House, and on May 1, the Governor called for a special session for the purpose of redistricting. Four days later, legislators reconvened, gaveling in the session on May 5, and having brutishly pushed through their rapidly-redrawn districts, concluded their awful business less than 72 hours later on May 7.

One might ask what this overview has to do with the work of the Metro Nashville and Davidson County’s Human Relations Commission. To that, it is of no small importance that each of the areas described here demonstrates a willingness by those in power at both the state and federal level to twist the logic—and more importantly, the political ethics—that helped create the closely-aligned 1964’s Civil Rights and 1965’s Voting Rights Acts against themselves. If the Supreme Court can say—seemingly without irony—that we “have made great strides in ending entrenched racial discrimination,” and that ruling can then be used to rend apart the possibility of accurate representation for majority-minority districts both here in Tennessee and throughout the country, we are in a moment that could all too easily call into question the existence of a body meant to work against (entrenched) (racial and other types of) discriminatory use of public funds and resources.

This Commission, though, remains committed to its founding responsibilities: to those who live in and work for Nashville & Davidson County; to the gift of, and richness derived from, our plural communities; and to a practice of moral seriousness when so much seems to mock the work of reducing discrimination and increasing welcome. Such practice requires these responsibilities, and these responsibilities require us to continue to practice—perhaps never perfectly, but always with intention—our ability to respond to the inequities, be they structural or acute, faced by our fellow residents. Even given the type of rule-by-chaos evidenced by our legislature & others—even though and especially because such behavior cannot be considered a one-off, but part of an ongoing and deepening pattern—the creation of better for all of us remains our continued hope. The improvement of each of our general welfare is still our ongoing task. Let’s continue this good work together.

# MHRC Statement of Concern Regarding Pedestrian Deaths



Photo per Google Maps

On May 4, Billy Ray Swaner was struck and killed by an 18-wheeler at the intersection of Trinity Lane and Gallatin Pike in East Nashville. Mr. Swaner was a familiar presence in the community and, like every Nashvillian, deserved to be safe while navigating our streets and public spaces.

Just days earlier, on April 29, Larry Smith was struck and killed while riding his bicycle on 2nd Avenue North in Germantown, near the location where pedestrian Dot Dobbins was killed last June while walking her dog. On April 18, Hershel Trotter was struck and killed while bicycling on Harding Place in a hit-and-run crash.

These tragedies are deeply painful for the families, neighbors, and communities affected. Mr. Swaner was a vendor for the Contributor. Ms. Dobbins was an attorney. The 18 people in our community who died since the start of 2026 reflect a broader challenge facing Nashville: too many people continue to lose their lives while walking, biking, or accessing transit on our roadways.

As of May 2026, Nashville is in the final year of its five-year Vision Zero plan. Yet pedestrian and cyclist fatalities are still at historically high levels. While we recognize the complexity of this issue and appreciate the work already underway by Metro departments and community partners, these outcomes make clear that additional urgency and investment are needed.

We are particularly concerned about reports that Vision Zero-related funding and implementation timelines may be delayed or scaled back due to broader fiscal pressures. For example, the Main Street/Gallatin Pike corridor, one of the city's highest-crash corridors, was identified through an extensive community engagement process as a priority for multimodal safety improvements, including enhanced pedestrian infrastructure, transit access, and protected bicycle facilities. Delays to those improvements risk prolonging dangerous conditions on a corridor that residents use every day.

At the same time, Nashville is preparing for major investments tied to the East Bank and future large-scale events. We believe these transformational projects present an opportunity to demonstrate that Nashville can prioritize safety, accessibility, and multimodal transportation infrastructure at the same level of ambition as economic development and tourism growth.

The mission of the Metro Human Relations Commission includes promoting the safety, health, security, peace, and general welfare of all people in Nashville and Davidson County. Traffic safety and equitable transportation access are fundamentally connected to that mission, particularly for communities disproportionately impacted by unsafe infrastructure, including people with disabilities, transit riders, pedestrians, bicyclists, seniors, and lower-income residents. **(Continued on next page)**

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# MHRC Statement of Concern Regarding Pedestrian Deaths (continued)

As Metro finalizes the FY 2026–27 budget, we respectfully urge the Mayor’s Office, Metro Council, NDOT, Vision Zero leadership, and Choose How You Move stakeholders to prioritize the following:

- Accelerating safety improvements on corridors within the High Injury Network;
- Preserving and expanding funding dedicated to Vision Zero and multimodal safety infrastructure;
- Ensuring that sidewalks, curb ramps, crossings, and transit access points meet the needs of people with disabilities and mobility challenges;
- Improving safety and accessibility at bus stops through lighting, seating, sidewalk connectivity, and roadway buffering;
- Expanding protected bicycle infrastructure that is physically separated and highly visible;
- Increasing investments in marked crosswalks, pedestrian signals, HAWK beacons, and traffic-calming measures near schools, libraries, transit stops, and other public destinations;
- Advancing the East Bank Boulevard and related projects as truly multimodal, walkable, transit-oriented public spaces;
- Applying the same level of urgency to safety investments across all Nashville neighborhoods, including areas outside the urban core and Tourism Development Zone.

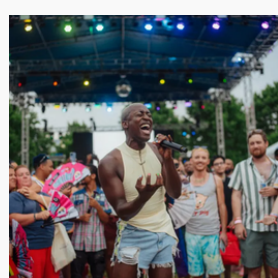
We also encourage continued collaboration on how initial public communications regarding traffic fatalities are reported by MNPd, with an emphasis on accuracy, human dignity, and public understanding of roadway safety issues.

Nashville residents should be able to safely choose how they move throughout the city, whether by walking, biking, taking transit, or driving. Achieving that goal will require sustained commitment, coordinated policy decisions, and investment in infrastructure that reflects the needs of all Nashvillians.

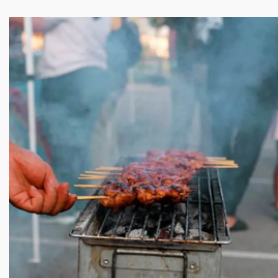
We appreciate the work already accomplished and look forward to continuing to partner in building a safer, more accessible, and more equitable transportation system for everyone.

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## Here are some events that we recommend



- [Nashville Pride Festival](#): June 27, 2026, Bicentennial Capitol Mall State Park 600 James Robertson Pkwy. Nashville, TN, 37243



- [The International Night Market](#): June 13, 2026, GEODIS Park 501 S. Benton Ave. Nashville, TN, 37204



- [Summer of Soul'd Festival](#): June 6, 2026, Kossie Gardner Sr. Park Nashville, TN, 37208



- [An Indigenous Present](#): June 1-26, First Art Museum, 919 Broadway, Nashville, TN, 37203