

# **Tribal Safety Management System Implementation Plan**

## **Introduction**

Traveling on our national roadways—whether by car, truck, motorcycle, bicycle, or on foot—is a daily requirement for a large segment of our population, but tragically, too many road users are involved in crashes that leave an indelible mark on virtually every community. For Native Americans and others traveling through tribal lands, the risks associated with highway use are far higher. Thus, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the Indian Health Service (IHS), tribes and states are working to improve highway safety on tribal lands to save lives in native communities.

Under the auspices of FHWA's Office of Federal Lands Highway, a Safety Management System (SMS) Steering Committee has been assembled to marshal all stakeholders. The Committee consists of 17 members, including five tribal transportation planning representatives, 11 federal agency delegates, and one FHWA tribal technical assistance contractor. The committee's purpose is to identify and promote resources available for a fully-coordinated transportation safety planning process carried out by tribes, and to improve government-to-government communication and consultation with the tribes to better highway safety.

The SMS Steering Committee works from two documents, the FHWA/BIA Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) and an accompanying Implementation Plan, to assess and promote strategies that tribes can tailor to develop in-house, self-sustaining expertise to improve safety on tribal lands. Because tribal transportation programs and tribally-run highway safety programs are still in their beginning stages around the country, this Implementation Plan is intended to: aid tribal governments in collaborating with federal agencies and state departments of transportation (DOTs); pursue training to increase the capacity and expertise of tribal governments in the roadway safety arena; and stimulate tribal innovation through peer-to-peer and best practice exchanges to save lives in Indian Country. Safety solutions occur at the local level, and tribes will need to make critical decisions on how to prioritize, staff, fund, and sustain highway safety projects in the future. This said, while the strategies should be part of a comprehensive highway safety program, they can stand alone as effective safety strategies if implemented incrementally while program development occurs.

Most importantly, the Implementation Plan and Committee affirm conviction in a national federal Indian policy of tribal self-determination, as well as transportation safety programs that are tribally-driven. Federal agencies support tribal initiatives within existing authorities, and this approach accomplishes the requirements of tribal consultation as set forth in Executive Order 13175.

## **Strategies**

### **Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee will meet twice annually to review ongoing activities, accomplishments, and funding priorities. That may include reviewing Tribal Safety Plans, Safety Summit Reports, crash data, emerging issues, and resources to assist in executing the Implementation Plan. As part of the evaluation, the Committee will review national, regional

and state crash data trends to determine the impact that cumulative safety efforts are making in Indian Country.

### **Tribal Safety Programs**

Reducing highway fatalities and serious injuries with any sustained success requires that all four elements of highway safety be addressed – engineering, enforcement, education, and emergency services. A Tribal Safety Program, whether large or small, should work to address the 4 E's, and its foundation, data. Data collection and analysis provide technical staff and decision makers the ability to identify and prioritize safety needs. Crash data, roadway data, and citation information will provide a basis for developing safety plans, proposing countermeasures, and developing needed education programs on tribal lands. The strategies that follow in this Implementation Plan will support tribal governments as they develop and manage their own safety programs.

### **Safety Summits, Tribal and National**

Since 2008, the FHWA has sponsored a number of Tribal Safety Summits. The summits give Tribal leaders an opportunity to focus on and find solutions for critical road safety issues that take the lives of more than 700 Native Americans each year. Summits have been held in Arizona, Minnesota, Washington, Wisconsin, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Alaska. FHWA will continue to sponsor two or three Tribal Safety Summits each year.

To ensure all aspects of safety are addressed, participants representing engineering, enforcement, education, and emergency medical services (EMS) rely heavily on safety data to identify challenges, discuss opportunities, resources, and solutions, and make commitments to advance traffic safety on their tribal roadways.

While the FHWA provides technical, planning and financial assistance for the summits, the Tribes are encouraged to take ownership, establish goals and objectives, and work with their partners to achieve the summit outcomes. As such, a commitment to set individualized goals and timelines after each summit is the key to success.

At the national level, FHWA will sponsor annual safety meetings including summits, workshops, and peer exchanges. Stemming from participants' input at the 2009 National Tribal Safety Summit, FHWA plans to hold a Safety Summit bi-annually.

### **Tribal Safety Plans**

Tribal Safety Plans are an essential component of the Tribal Highway Safety Improvement Plans (HSIPs), as well as an effective planning tool for prioritizing and implementing safety solutions. Annually, FHWA, BIA, and NHTSA will work with at least 12 tribal governments that are interested in developing safety plans specific to the needs of their communities or on their reservations. The plan will identify and prioritize safety needs in the 4 E's, utilize the emphasis areas identified in the *Strategic Highway Safety Plan for Indian Lands*, and include a safety policy statement. Continuing technical assistance will be offered to the tribal governments in implementing their safety plans, as requested.

### **Model Tribal Highway Safety Improvement Program**

The overall goal of the SMS Implementation Plan is to assist in the development of self-determined and self-sustaining Tribal Highway Safety Improvement Programs. To this end,

FHWA will establish a pilot program to develop and implement safety programs at the tribal level and document the results. The pilot effort will solicit participation from three to five tribal governments depending on funding availability. Tribes selected will vary in size, geography, and infrastructure capabilities to make replicable the strategies in other tribal areas.

Reports will be developed and shared as tribes implement safety programs. FHWA, tribes and the steering committee will evaluate the pilot program to determine the effectiveness of the pilot.

### **Data Collection & Use**

Information about motor vehicle crashes that occur on Indian Country roadways is vital to identifying and remedying safety problems in tribal communities. BIA, FHWA, and NHTSA, with assistance from other federal and state agencies, will work with tribes to assess the availability and adoption of electronic crash record reporting systems for tribal and BIA police departments. Contractual arrangements will outline roles, responsibilities, and considerations for data sharing and use among BIA, FHWA, NHTSA, tribes, and states. Also, to assist tribes in obtaining and using data for advanced problem identification purposes, FHWA has developed a contact list with state DOTs, law enforcement, and other users partners; this list is available on the Federal Lands Web site.

### **Training**

Educating and training individuals in BIA and in Tribal Governments on transportation safety is important to the success of improving the Indian Reservation Roads (IRR) system. The Steering Committee, with help from the Tribal Transportation Assistance Program (TTAP) Center at Colorado State University, will develop a training plan, available highway safety curricula, and a training schedule for interested tribes. The primary provider for highway safety training will be the TTAP centers, with assistance from FHWA, NHTSA, BIA, IHS, tribal partners and others.

### **Case Studies/Peer Exchanges**

#### ***Safety Case Studies***

Six case studies will be crafted on successful tribal safety projects. The case studies will cover a variety of areas and programs, but will emphasize the 4Es, data sharing, and safety planning. The case studies will be written for transportation professionals, as well as for Tribal elected officials.

#### ***Peer Exchanges***

The Committee will work with the FHWA Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program and the Office of Safety to establish peer exchanges on tribal transportation safety. The peer exchanges will cover planning issues, data collection, and sharing of successful practices.

### **Tribal Safety Awards Program**

The SMS Steering Committee will develop an annual Tribal Safety Awards Program to recognize successful programs and efforts at the National Tribal Transportation Safety Conference. The intent of this program is to highlight successful programs and encourage others to emulate the award winners.

## **Research**

The SMS instruments identify research gaps in tribal safety, which may not be identical to general safety research. These results can be fed back to SMS for consideration and possible actions, including:

- Coordination with sub-committees to review research gaps and develop tribal safety research need statements;
- Nomination of appropriate members to safety research panels
- Encouragement of attendance at Transportation Research Board (TRB)-sponsored functions, such as the annual TRB conferences and mid-year conferences

## **Marketing & Messaging**

### ***For Tribes***

We know that Native Americans are between two and three times more likely than other road users to be killed in motor vehicle crashes, and that the majority of Native American highway deaths are preventable. However, the Committee learned that roadway safety challenges compete with other issues at the local tribal level, and may not be fully understood as a leading cause of preventable death. Thus, the SMS Committee will work to increase the awareness of and importance given to behavioral *and* infrastructure safety improvements (engineering solutions).

The Committee will offer tools to aid tribal partners in reaching their membership with concise, memorable, and compelling behavioral safety messages that resonate with audiences (e.g. through native images, languages and song). Also, the SMS Committee will share available safety services and products with tribal decision-makers and facilitate the dedication of tribal resources to roadway safety improvements.

### ***For Other Partners***

The ultimate goal to reduce injuries and fatalities in Indian Country hinges on identifying new partners to consolidate and multiply limited resources. The SMS Committee will work to leverage existing relationships and identify new partners, such as the Centers of Disease Control (CDC), to support tribally-determined safety priorities consist with their individual missions.

Concurrently, the SMS Committee will work to improve internal communication and coordination, offering guidance to FHWA staff on: (1) planning and coordinating with other divisions, modes, and agencies; (2) effective publication styles and formats for local audiences; and, (3) effective distribution channels.

## **Other Safety Activities**

Recognizing the need to be flexible as additional safety opportunities become available, the SMS Steering Committee and its partner agencies may identify and support other strategies not identified specifically in this plan, if they are consistent with the overall goal of the SMS Implementation Plan and have a high potential for success. Some examples may include conducting/supporting Road Safety Audits, Work Zone safety programs, Safe Routes to School, public awareness campaigns, internships, sign retroreflectivity efforts, or other activities as requested.

## **Evaluation**

### **National Performance Measures**

To track progress and measure success, an annual report will be prepared that details tribal safety successes at the local and national levels. The report will utilize FARS, state, tribal, IHS and other relevant data and information sources to assess whether injuries and fatalities are being positively reduced.

### **Tribal Performance Measures**

Tribal performance measures, particularly those that assist tribes in development of their own safety programs, will be included in the report. Some of these indicators may include:

- Number of Tribes that have drafted and are working from a Safety Plan
- Number of Tribal Road Safety Audits (RSAs) conducted
- Seatbelt usage rates
- Number of Tribes with standard enforcement (primary seat belt) laws or ordinances
- Individual Tribal reductions in crash data categories
- BIA's behavioral safety performance measures (NHTSA's 14 Core Performance Measures)

## **Conclusion**

This Implementation Plan outlines federal activities and resources to support and bolster the efforts of tribal governments to establish tribally-driven highway safety priorities, plans, and programs to achieve our shared priority of reducing highway injuries and fatalities in Indian Country. This plan has been reviewed, and strives to be consistent with other safety plans, initiatives, and priorities by FHWA, NHTSA, IHS and BIA. These agencies endorse proven countermeasures to reduce highway fatalities on tribal lands and contribute their respective resources to support these efforts.