

Strategic Highway Safety Plan

Leadership that Saves Lives



Death and serious injury on our roadways have declined every year since 2005, due, in part, to the leadership shown by the nation's transportation safety champions. Traffic safety is a complex field that requires the active involvement of strong leaders who can draw attention to the safety problems wreaking havoc on our roadways. A good example is United States Department of Transportation Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood, who in 2009 saw a problem with distracted driving and marshaled a nationwide effort to address the issue. As a result, 46 state legislatures introduced more than 200 distracted driving bills.

“A leader’s role is to challenge people to think and act beyond their day-to-day responsibilities. In the safety arena effective leaders bring the various disciplines together and leverage the strengths and abilities of everyone into a collective force that brings about positive change on our roads and highways.”

*Susan Martinovich
Director, Nevada Department of Transportation*

By addressing distracted driving, Secretary LaHood demonstrated the qualities that make a good transportation safety leader – perseverance, persistence, patience, intelligence, and dogged follow up.

On the state and local level, leaders have addressed safety improvement by championing the Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) process. Creating SHSPs in every state was a monumental accomplishment, but turning the plans into action is challenging, particularly because many states already picked the “low hanging fruit.” Future safety improvements will require innovative strategies, creative programs, and, most importantly, strong leadership. Effective leadership is necessary to enhance and continue the collaborative relationships created during the planning process. If you were a leader during the development phase it is time to stand up again for safety and keep the momentum going. Your leadership is key to establishing a statewide safety culture and turning ideas in the SHSP into reality.

Last year over 33,000 people lost their lives and over 2.2 million people were injured on America's highways. Each state's SHSP is a blueprint for reducing highway fatalities and serious injuries.

What can individual leaders do to influence safety initiatives, programs, and projects in the SHSP?

Know Your Safety Priorities

A good deal of the heavy lifting is complete with the identification of *emphasis areas* in the SHSP. These areas represent the most critical safety concerns within a state and are matched with strategies and action steps for eliminating roadway fatalities and serious injuries. This is an excellent starting point to focus leadership support. If work zone safety is an issue, then a leader could champion a Work Zone Safety Week every year to bring awareness to the issue. Being visible, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic about safety concerns generates and sustains continued motivation among all safety partners.

Keep Your Partners Energized

Each SHSP offers strategies and action steps for implementing the goals of the Plan. Utilize the collaborative planning process to identify the organizations or individuals responsible for elements of implementation. Set timelines, provide funding incentives, dedicate staff resources to SHSP implementation, and establish formal agreements to reinforce safety stakeholders' commitment to saving lives. If one of the partners is reluctant to jump on board, it may be necessary to meet one-on-one to explain the critical role each agency or organization plays in safety. A leader's position, personality, and prestige motivates others to join the journey.

Organize for Success

Become a champion for the statewide safety goal (e.g. We WILL halve our roadway fatalities by 2030!). This goal can be accomplished by incorporating elements of the SHSP into other planning documents, which ensures funding is available for implementation. For example, safety projects and programs can be incorporated into the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), the Long-Range Transportation Plan, and the planning documents of every other partner.

Maximize Resources

A leader should identify all revenue sources and all personnel and technical resources available for statewide safety initiatives, and influence allocation to optimize safety benefits. By working with other safety partners, a leader is able to combine resources and technical knowledge to advance safety. Section 148 of SAFETEA-LU allows some flexibility in the use of safety funds, which can also serve as incentives to attract and maintain partnerships.

Eliminate Roadblocks

Remove institutional boundaries within and between agencies and organizations. Often the best place to start is within the leader's agency or organization. For instance, one state DOT developed a Safety Management Team with senior leadership from planning, traffic safety, engineering, transit, rail, and research. The purpose was to identify ways to work together to improve safety and reinforce what the then Secretary of the DOT said was the motivation for every employee within the agency to come to work – to make sure friends and family members got home safely every night. Another area where leadership counts is persuading safety partners to support critical legislative changes.

Leading a safety effort is a difficult task, but there are resources available to help every step of the way. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is located in every state plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Please contact us to learn how we can help.

FHWA Division Offices
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/field.html>

FHWA Office of Safety
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Highway Safety Improvement
Program *Data Driven Decisions*

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The Focus is Results



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Federal Highway Administration