

# National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002-4290 (202) 962-3310 Fax: (202) 962-3202 TDD: (202) 962-3213

## **TRANSPORTATION SAFETY SUBCOMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Monday, June 30, 2014

**TIME:** Noon to 2 p.m.

**PLACE:** COG, Room 3, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
777 North Capitol Street NE  
Washington, DC 20002

**CHAIR:** Tim Davis, City of Frederick

### Attendance:

Cina Dabestani – VDOT-NOVA  
Michael Farrell – COG/TPB  
Neil Freschman – Fairfax County DOT  
Christine Green – Safe Routes to School (by phone)  
Polly Hanson – Amtrak  
Barb Petito – Amtrak  
Mike Sabol – MHSO  
Jon Schermann – COG/TPB  
Marco Trigueros – COG/TPB  
Malcolm Watson – Fairfax County DOT (by phone)

## **AGENDA**

Lunch will be available at 11:30 AM

### **1. Introductions and Review of Meeting Notes from April 28, 2014 (12:00 – 12:05)**

Participants introduced themselves.

### **2. Presentation on Operation Lifesaver (12:05 - 12:30)**

**Polly Hanson, Chief of Police, Amtrak**

**Barb Petito, Operation Lifesaver, Amtrak**

Chief Hanson and Ms. Petito presented on Operation Lifesaver, a program focusing on safety along railroads. Chief Hanson provided an introduction on the topic and described the safety issues that railroad operators are trying to address. Dangers include vehicles ignoring warning signs at grade crossings and pedestrians trespassing onto the railroad ROW. Amtrak has been reaching out to people through a variety of programs to raise awareness on these issues. Through Operation Lifesaver, they offer materials that local jurisdictions and states can distribute and use in their own education initiatives (e.g. driver's education, DARE programs). The handouts provided will be posted in the subcommittee website.

Ms. Petito went into more detail on the Operation Lifesaver message. She talked about the slogan "See tracks, think train", and described the materials available for distribution: billboards, posters, 10 and 15 second PSAs. Another initiative that has launched is the text-a-tip hotline where

## **Transportation Safety Subcommittee**

**June 30, 2014**

Page 2 of 4

passengers can report suspicious activity via text to APD11. They distributed a card with safety tips and contact information to report problems or emergencies along a railroad. They showed an Operation Lifesaver video that describes the story of a crash in Florida that killed five people. It is being used in five states as part of a driver's education program, and they are looking to expand.

Railroad safety hotspots have been identified and can be found on the FRA website. Multidisciplinary Trespassing and Rail Grade Education Teams (TARGET) are being dispatched to hot spots to lead initiatives to reduce the number of incidents at these locations.

In response to a question regarding the inability of pedestrians to hear an approaching train, Chief Hanson noted that many people have headphones on or are otherwise distracted and locomotives are becoming quieter – even though they are traveling at high speeds. People trespass on the railroad ROW and are not expecting high speed travel. Some people are committing suicide or looking to steal wire, and these present different challenges.

In response to a question regarding infrastructure improvements to prevent trespassing, Chief Hanson noted that fencing along the railroad ROW is not widely used. Much of the rail network that Amtrak runs on is not owned by Amtrak so these decisions lie with the railroad owners and operators. There are more treatments available for grade crossings, but protecting 20,000 miles worth of track is more challenging.

### **3. Presentation on Pedestrian Crashes in Maryland (12:30 - 12:55)**

**Mike Sabol, MHSO**

Mr. Sabol presented on a review of fatal pedestrian crashes in Maryland for 2012 and the portion of 2013 data available to understand what factors have driven an increase in pedestrian fatalities in recent years. Staff looked at contributing factors such as impairment, time of day, lighting, weather, age of driver and pedestrian, crosswalk use, person at fault, etc. There were some limitations to the analysis: reports were incomplete or illegible, some crash reports were delayed due to extended investigation, some included references to the full reconstruction report (which was not available to the researchers). Additionally, given the fact that pedestrians were unable to give testimony of the events, their point of view is not included in the report.

The crashes were separated into 4 regions: DC metro, Baltimore metro, Ocean City, and the rest of the state. One third of all pedestrian fatalities in the state occurred in the Baltimore region and one fourth occurred in the Maryland portion of the Washington region. The results show that in 73% of cases, the pedestrian was found to be at fault – as determined by the officer at the scene. 62% of those involved in these crashes were male, and in 10% of the cases, the gender of the driver is unknown due to it being a hit and run. The most vulnerable age range seems to be pedestrians between 50 and 59 years old. The assumption is that people in this age range are still highly active but less likely to recover from serious injuries.

The report concludes with several recommendations along the “4 E’s” of traffic safety. Under enforcement, there needs to be improvement in data collection as well as enforcement of crosswalk use. Recommendations for engineering improvements include better lighting, reduced speeds, and more crosswalks and refuges. Also, wider shoulders are recommended to accommodate broken

## **Transportation Safety Subcommittee**

**June 30, 2014**

Page 3 of 4

down cars and people fixing them. The focus on the education recommendations is to target the most vulnerable group – males between 30 and 60. For emergency services, the recommendation is to offer greater help to drivers of broken down vehicles.

To a question regarding the prevalence of fatalities along high speed arterials, Mr. Sabol noted that this study did not focus on the precise location of the incidents but that the pedestrian road safety audit program is looking at high incidence roadway segments to prioritize engineering improvements.

Mr. Dabestani suggested cross-tabulating the factors identified (e.g. lighting, alcohol impairment, crosswalk use...) to explore any relationships between them.

In a discussion about crosswalk treatments, Mr. Freshman noted that he would be interested in hearing a presentation on HAWK signals from an agency with experience with these as there is increasing interest in Fairfax County to install them.

#### **4. Briefing on Montgomery County's Pedestrian Safety Initiative (12:55 – 1:20)** **Jeff Dunckel, Montgomery County**

The County Executive's Pedestrian Safety Initiative outlines a comprehensive approach to implement strategies to enhance pedestrian safety. Mr. Dunckel briefed the committee on their latest preliminary data. In 2000, a blue ribbon panel developed 50 recommendations to improve pedestrian safety – this led to the creation of the County Executive's Pedestrian Safety Initiative. The Initiative outlines seven strategies to achieve this goal in a data-oriented targeted approach. Since its implementation, the Initiative has been successful in reducing pedestrian crashes – 7% overall reduction in collisions, 21% reduction in severe collisions, 38% reduction in fatalities, and 43% reduction in targeted high incidence areas, 50% reduction in traffic calmed areas, and 79% in safe routes to school areas (as of 2012 compared to the three years before plan implementation). However, recent data from 2013 shows that numbers have risen in the past year. The full report will be available on the subcommittee website after it is publicly released.

The data shows a strong correlation between lighting and crashes between 5PM and 8PM – showing a potential area to focus on. In response to the question of improved reporting resulting in higher reported crash rates, Mr. Dunckel noted that this is a possibility they have thought of but cannot prove to be true. The numbers show that at the beginning of the campaign, pedestrians were more likely to be at fault but in recent years the driver is found to be at fault in most pedestrian collisions – this is attributed to education and enforcement campaigns targeting pedestrians. The most vulnerable group was found to be 10 through 29 year olds, and the County will be undertaking a high school campaign to target distracted walking. The launch of the parking lot safety awareness campaign correlates to a decrease in pedestrian collisions in parking lots. Based on these data, recommendations on education, enforcement, and engineering improvements are made to target the specific problem areas and populations. In response to a question regarding the ethnicity of pedestrians involved, Mr. Dunckel noted that this information was not available to them.

The County is now looking at the factors behind the recent increase in pedestrian collisions. There may be a need to revisit high incidence areas a few years after their initial treatment to remind the

## **Transportation Safety Subcommittee**

**June 30, 2014**

Page 4 of 4

area population of the original safety concerns as well as to educate newcomers. There is also some correlation between construction zones and increase in number of pedestrian collisions.

Mr. Dabestani suggested looking at the limits for roadway safety audits to match COG's regional model segments so that information can be shared more easily between the agencies. To a question regarding how the programming of improvements matches the maintenance schedule, Mr. Dunckel noted that traffic calming projects are generally scheduled to coincide with major maintenance work to combine funding and minimize disruption.

### **5. Discussion of MAP-21 Rules (1:20 - 1:25)**

**Marco Trigueros, COG/TPB**

Following the discussion at previous meetings, the subcommittee did not submit its own comments to the register as member agencies handled these individually.

### **6. Discussion on Upcoming Data Needs (1:25 -1:35)**

**Marco Trigueros, COG/TPB**

To a question regarding Maryland's switch to Automated Crash Reporting System (ACRS), Mr. Sabol noted that 2013 data will be delayed due to the ongoing switch. Mr. Dunckel added that local jurisdictions do not have access to their own 2014 data while this transition is underway.

### **7. Jurisdictional Roundtable (1:35 - 1:55)**

### **8. Other Business (1:55 to 2:00)**

### **9. Adjourn (2:00 p.m.)**

**Next meeting scheduled for August 25, 2014**