



TRANSPORTATION SAFETY SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

Tuesday, April 13, 2021
1:00 – 3:00 P.M.
Virtual Meeting

Chair: Jon Schermann, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, for
Vanessa Holt, Fairfax County Department of Transportation

Attendees (all participating by phone):

Usman Ali - FHWA
Christine Sherman Baker – Arlington County
Pam Beer – Cambridge Systematics
Michael Bomgardner - MDOT
Antonio Castaneda – COG/TPB
Jeff Dunckel – Maryland Highway Safety Office
Christy Fang – City of Laurel
Neil Freschman – Fairfax County
Enrique Gonzalez – Loudoun County
Wade Holland – Montgomery County
Cory Hopwood – Cambridge Systematics
Tim Kerns – Maryland Highway Safety Office
Arianna Koudounas – COG/TPB
Andrea Lasker – Prince George’s County
Rene Lord-Attivor – Prince George’s County
Karen McAlister - DDOT
Andrew Meese – COG/TPB
Anne Messner – Centre County MPO
Heidi Mitter - VDOT
Jaleh Moslehi – Town of Herndon
Janie Nham COG/TPB
David Olney – Frederick County
Chloe Ritter – Fairfax County
Stephen Read - VDOT
Richard Retting - Sam Schwartz Engineering
Laura Richards – Cambridge Systematics
Cicero Salles – Prince George’s County
Jon Schermann – COG/TPB
Kanti Srikanth – COG/TPB
Eric Tang - VHB
Nima Upadhyay – Prince George’s County
Stephanie Walder – Prince George’s County
Nicole Waldheim – Burgess Niple
Malcom Watson – Fairfax County
Myra Wieman – Maryland Highway Safety Office
Richard Weinmann – Prince William County

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MEETING NOTES

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Jon welcomed participants to the meeting. As a result of the large number of meeting participants, individual introductions were skipped.

2. MARYLAND STRATEGIC HIGHWAY SAFETY PLAN

Myra Wieman, Maryland Highway Safety Office

Deputy Director Wieman briefed the subcommittee on the Maryland Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP).

The Plan is intended to be a vehicle for achieving Maryland's goal of zero traffic fatalities and serious injuries by 2030. The Plan identifies six emphasis areas (primary contributing factors to crashes on Maryland roadways) to focus strategies – distracted driving, speed and aggressive driving, pedestrians and bicyclists, occupant protection, impaired driving, and highway infrastructure. Each emphasis area is supported by strategies, which result in actions. The Plan relies on a data-driven approach to identify and evaluate safety measures. The Plan also features smaller subsections that address special vehicles and roadway environments. The Maryland SHSP is very broad, but the state encourages localities to create their own SHSPs. Education and awareness campaigns, such as Street Smart, are a key element of the plan. The Maryland Highway Safety Office also runs the “Be the driver” campaign, which focuses on safe driving behavior. The program, which raises awareness among road users about their individual responsibility, is unique in that it is all-encompassing, messages are tailored to target specific audiences, and the campaign will run continuously throughout the year.

Questions:

Have there been any developments with local and/or county SHSPs in Maryland? *Montgomery and Prince George's Counties have plans. Frederick has working groups formed to develop a plan.*

3. TPB REGIONAL SAFETY PROGRAM UPDATE

Jon Schermann, TPB System Performance Analysis Manager

Mr. Schermann updated the subcommittee on the progress of the Regional Road Safety Program.

The application process for the first round of the program closed on March 22, 2021, and COG received 11 applications requesting approximately \$700,000 in funds total. Maryland jurisdictions submitted four of the applications, while Virginia jurisdictions submitted seven. Since the first round of the program is limited to \$250,000 in program funds, COG will pursue a process to select candidate projects. A selection panel comprised of five members representing different jurisdictions



and/or agencies will meet on May 6, 2021, to identify and select projects to recommend to the Transportation Planning Board for approval. The TPB will take action at the June meeting.

Ultimately, the program will require consultants to implement the projects upon approval. An RFQ is currently available for consulting services and will close on May 14, 2021. A set of firms will be selected to be placed on master contracts. COG hopes to select consultants in July 2021. Another application window (Round 2) will likely open Summer 2021, and a third round will likely open in January or February 2022.

Questions:

Can the COG provide a summary of who applied and what the proposed projects are? *We will publish the projects after the selection panel reviews them.*

4. PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC FATALITIES REPORT – 2020 PRELIMINARY DATA

Richard Retting, Sam Schwartz Consulting

Mr. Retting briefed the subcommittee on the recently released Governor’s Highway Safety Association (GHSA) Pedestrian Spotlight report on pedestrian traffic fatalities in 2020.

The report provides a limited preview of fatality counts months before NHTSA releases FARS data. Historically, pedestrian fatalities were in decline from the 1979 to 2009, but they started to climb in 2010. Over 10 years (2010 to 2019), there has been a 46 percent increase in pedestrian traffic deaths. The GHSA projects 2,957 pedestrian deaths for the first six months of 2020. During this same time period, however, there was a large drop in VMT as a result of the COVID pandemic. When compared with 2019 fatalities on a mileage basis, GHSA projects a 20 percent increase in the pedestrian fatality rate per VMT compared to the first half of 2019. In a state-by-state comparison, Maryland’s pedestrian traffic fatality count increased 22% in 2020 based on projections, while Virginia and the District had decreases. The number of states with pedestrian fatality rates is increasing. The majority of pedestrian fatalities occur at dark and on arterials. Light conditions is also a factor, with a 54 percent increase in fatalities during nighttime since 2010. At least half of pedestrian deaths involve alcohol. Among COG member jurisdictions, the COG region had its highest number of traffic fatalities in 2019 compared to the previous five years. There are several strategies that can help to reduce fatalities. These include speed management, pedestrian crossing devices, vehicle technology, infrastructure improvements (e.g., refuge islands, street lighting, etc.), enforcement, education, and improved EMS services.

Questions:

[Comment only] Having less traffic and more people walking on the roads may have increased exposure for pedestrians during the pandemic. *I’m not convinced that there is an exposure metric. The vast majority of fatalities happen at night and a lot of the exposure happens during the daytime when people are out. I’m not convinced that there’s a exposure justification. We’re all trying to get at the “why” but not sure that exposure explains the “why.”*

Why are the most successful states successful, and what can we emulate? *Only Delaware and Kentucky have multiple years of pedestrian death declines. There are almost no states that have*



that consistency. It would take a research effort to understand that question, and the GSHA effort does not allow for that effort.

Is this report presented to governors? I believe the Governors are fairly separated from the GSHA membership, and I am not sure about the extent that they are involved on a regular basis on highway safety matters in any state.

[Comment only] We did not implement long-term solutions thirty years ago to address fatalities and now we are doing short-term to mid-term retrofits. The challenge is finding a way back to long-term solutions to accommodate pedestrians where there is less chance of these incidents.

Did you look at combining both SUVs and light trucks in analysis of vehicle types? I was simply saying that there are some who may lead you to believe that SUVs are the main factor in pedestrian fatalities. SUVs are a part of the problem but not the problem. More pedestrians are killed by passenger cars than by SUVs alone. We should not look at SUVs as a single contributing factor.

5. REGIONAL SAFETY STUDY – EQUITY EMPHASIS AREA ANALYSIS

Cory Hopwood, Cambridge Systematics

Mr. Hopwood briefed the subcommittee on findings from the Equity Emphasis Area Analysis section of the Regional Safety Study.

Equity Emphasis Areas (EEAs) are geographic areas with significant concentrations of low-income, minority populations, or both. This definition was approved by the TPB in 2017. In the region, EEAs are clustered around the urban cores. The percentage of fatalities and serious injuries in EEAs is over-represented in several jurisdictions based on population. When reviewing fatalities per 100,000 population, the rate is higher for EEAs in inner suburbs, outer suburbs, and the urban core. This pattern is also true by jurisdiction. The most common contributing factors for fatal and serious injury crashes inside EEAs include pedestrian involvement and intersection related crashes. Fatal and serious injury crashes on major arterials are over-represented. Overall, EEAs contain 29 percent of the region's population, yet they account for 34 percent of the region's fatalities. They have higher percentages of fatalities involving young drivers, pedestrians, crashes at intersections, and crashes on major arterials. They have lower percentages of fatalities involving older drivers, excessive speed, fixed objects, and minor arterials.

Questions:

Was there an analysis completed per County, and did it explore right-of-way constraints? It is something that is not available in the data sets but is obviously something that could play into the difference.

Is there a jurisdictional breakdown of the contributing factors? No, we haven't gone that deep in our analysis, but it could be explored in a future analysis.

Is it possible to see more context for the comparison between suburban/urban/rural splits? It could be an area for further analysis.

Did the study investigate whether intersection crashes occurred at signalized or non-signalized intersections? No, the study did not, but it is possible to explore in the future.

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Did the study look at temporal conditions (nighttime vs. daytime) or bus stop coverage? *There is a larger network screening which has not yet been presented to the committee. Adding bus stop data can be an opportunity for improvement. We did not do any time of day or light condition analysis for this EEA analysis just yet but adding that layer could be a future step.*

Can our safety campaigns ask pedestrians to take a second look before they walk/cross roadways? *[Reply from another attendee] We always encourage pedestrians, drivers, and cyclists to be defensive. The primary responsibility is on the driver and we have to be careful of how we promote it.*

Was VMT utilized in the study? *We did not have that information for the EEAs.*

6. ROUNDTABLE UPDATES

Montgomery County will be releasing its Vision Zero Action Plan in the next week.

Prince George's County has been tweeting the distracted driving materials shared by state and hopes to host a Street Smart display in May.

Maryland just released its 2020 traffic fatality numbers. It shows fatalities increased by 6.4 percent in the state, and VMT declined by 11 percent. Pedestrian fatalities increased by 8 percent, and bicycle fatality counts jumped from 10 to 14. The numbers for the first quarter of 2020 were consistent with the state's five-year average. There is much work to be done.

The Maryland State legislature passed a Vulnerable Road User bill which has more stringent penalties for those who hit or kill vulnerable road users.

Arlington County is finalizing its Vision Zero Action Plan and then will go to the County Board for adoption in May. Arlington also saw a huge decrease in overall crashes this year, but it had almost the same number of severe crashes.

The District's Strategic Highway Safety Plan has been approved by the Federal Highway Administration. The second phase of the plan will be to develop action items. Similar to other jurisdictions, the District is similarly seeing fewer crashes but the severity is increasing and fatalities are increasing. This is continuing in 2021 as well. Pedestrian fatalities are rising.

TRB is hosting a conference on advancing transportation equity. It is planned to be a hybrid conference, both in-person and virtual. The local programming committee is looking for opportunities to engage local partners and jurisdictions to provide tours.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 pm.

