

Executive Committee for Highway Safety
Meeting Minutes; Mtg. #6
October 20, 2004

Location:

Chief Engineer's Conference Room, Beryl Drive @ 9:30 a.m.

Committee Members in Attendance:

David King	Len Sanderson	Bob Andrews	Debbie Barbour
Nicole Burris	Adam Fisher	Herb Garrison	Lt. Colonel Lockley
George Tatum	Don Nail	Kevin Lacy	Doug Robertson
John Sullivan	Axel Lluch	Ashley Memory	John Crone

Guests in Attendance:

Katy Jones Libby Allen

Scribe:

Libby Allen

Minutes:

- The meeting began at approximately 9:45 a.m.

Task I – Welcome

David welcomed the new members to the committee and had everyone introduce themselves.

Fatality Update

Kevin gave the group an update on fatalities. Currently, fatalities are down 3% from last year and it is hoped that when the data is available, the three year trend will “flatten” out the fatality rates.

Doug	Requested that a comprehensive total be added to the fatality distribution e-mail that is sent out three times a week. Doug also inquired as to how long after January 1, 2005 will it be before we have final numbers available for 2004.
Kevin	He will periodically provide a percent change in the fatalities and provide this information to the ECHS.
?	When will final crash numbers be available?
Kevin	Final numbers for 2004 will not be available from DMV for likely six months (this is the present delay in getting crash data).
Kevin	Goal – 1.0 fatalities per calendar year which is now 1.67.

Task II – Working Groups; Updates, Strategies & Recommendations

Lane Departure Working Group

- Lane Departure Workgroup met September 29, 2004.

Steve told the committee that he would like Laura Cove to come to the next committee meeting to give the committee an overview of the NCDOT Long Range Transportation Plan, which is a 25 year plan outlining DOT's future way of doing business. The NCDOT Board of Transportation and the 14 Division Engineers are all in support of this plan which has a strong emphasis on safety. Steve has asked the ECHS for support of this plan.

Next, Steve gave the committee an overview of lane departure related collisions in preparation for submitting the strategy "Provide Roadway Design & Geometric Enhancements" to the committee. Steve gave each member a copy of the strategy.

Steve	Consider providing GPS/GIS system coordinates to allow Departments to pull queries of data.
Chief	GIS coordinates could be added to all fatality reports. This would not be an unreasonable request.
Len	Many agencies are interested in a shared GPS/GIS coordinate database. There appears to be a need for all agencies to come forward and take this issue before the legislature and ask them to allocate money for funding a system to better assist the entire state and all agencies.
Susan	Bring all to legislature as one Transportation Package
Doug	Need to make an effort to bring these agencies together.
Kevin	Traffic Records Group could help address this issue.

- Submitted Strategy of Workgroup to ECHS
- The ECHS approved the strategy as submitted by Steve for lane departure crashes.

Speed Working Group

Kevin introduced the Strategy of this work group to implement the *Safe Speed Act*; Establishing uniform sentencing for speeding offenses. He provided background about the need for a strategy that addresses the issue of speed and makes the adjudication process more administrative to help alleviate the burdens on the court system. Speeding is the primary cause of more than 35% of all vehicle crashes and is the primary factor in nearly 50% of all fatal crashes on North Carolina's highways, resulting in approximately 700 people dying in speed related crashes each year. One of the primary concerns with speed related citations is that relatively few are adjudicated as charged when the offender goes to court. Presently, with the current case loads in the court systems, both prosecutors and judges are reluctant and some even very adamant about **NOT** trying these types of citations. If they go to court, the charges are greatly reduced or dropped so that there is essentially no consequence to the individual

Kevin gave background about the need for a strategy that addresses the issue of speed and makes the adjudication process more administrative to help alleviate the burdens on the court system. A handout was provided to the group and a corrected copy is attached.

Keeping Drivers Alert & Increasing Driver Safety Awareness

Doug introduced information on the strategy and focus of this group.

- Strategy 1 – Conduct Education and Awareness Campaigns to Increase Younger Drivers' Awareness of the Risks of Driver Distractions

It is estimated that 1.2 millions (Jane Stutts, HSRC) or 1.5 – 3.0 million (AAA) crashes occur annually as a result of distracted drivers, and NHTSA data shows that drivers aged 16 – 20 are four times as likely to be involved in a distraction related crash. In 2002, North Carolina experienced 21,082 distraction related crashes with 263 of them being fatal crashes, and drivers aged 16-21 accounted for 14% of the total.

This strategy focuses on educating young drivers and teens who are approaching the driving age of the risks involved with distracted driving. The intent is to target teens with a long-term, multi-faceted educational program to make them aware of the dangers involved in distracted driving and to eventually make it as socially unacceptable as drinking and driving.

- Campaign must be multi-faceted and long term
- Parent involvement
- Must recognize the characteristics of this age group (known as “echo boomers,” and construct/target the messages accordingly
- Make effort to utilize low cost avenues, such as the Internet
- Awareness, partnerships, and action between government and private sector.
- Specific partnership with Drivers Education programs.
- Need to have successful marketing plan and slogan
- Celebrity Spokesperson
- Bilingual
- Public Affairs Offices of relevant agencies must work together to ensure a consistent and coordinated campaign

One positive is that there are a lot of smaller programs that focus on improving driver behavior. It would be fairly easy to adopt appropriate sections of these programs into our own – wouldn't be reinventing the wheel. However, getting permission from other agencies and customizing these programs to fit our need will take time.

Agencies given the task of developing messages, planning the campaign, and coordinating/implementing the campaign must fit this activity into already busy schedules and reach the target audience through a variety of resources.

- TV air time
- Radio air time
- Fliers/Brochures
- Internet
- Presentations to schools and school resource officers
- Focus Groups

Doug referred to the target group as “Echo Boomers” and will send a copy of an article he obtained to the group. A copy of this article is attached.

Ashley Memory volunteered interns to help coordinate and discuss ways to reach the target audience.

Increasing Seat Belt Usage

The strategy is to push the existing law requirements for seat belt usage and increase public information. A few ways to increase awareness and provide results quickly would be to take driver’s license points and insurance points when found guilty.

Commercial and farm tag vehicles are currently exempt from adherence to these laws. It was discussed that this issue needed more consideration due to the number vehicles on the road with this type tag designation. A strategy to push a change in the existing law on this subject is suggested.

Ensuring Drivers are Licensed & Fully Competent

George provided an update for the group stressing the issue that removing a person’s driving privilege does not ensure the individuals are not still driving. Nationally, approximately 20% of all drivers that are involved in a fatal accident are not properly licensed. In North Carolina, it is closer to 25%. Two keys in enforcing the DWLR are to remove the opportunity to repeat the offense and alter the measures to increase compliance with the law.

One strategy discussed was to temporarily impound the vehicle being driven by the offender for 48 hours. This will also deter people from lending their vehicles to unlicensed drivers. This has been used in other states and has been proven to be effective in reducing these type offenses.

New legislation would be required to allow impoundment of the vehicles and to establish maximum towing fees and storage fees. Then strict adherence to the violation would be necessary. The public would have to be educated and made aware of the new law as well.

George provided a handout detailing issues surrounding this strategy.

Susan Coward suggested the committee assemble all issues requiring legislation into one Highway Safety package before taken to the legislature for consideration. All items being considered should be prepared and finalized for review prior to March of 2005. The deadline for introducing bills is mid March.

Task III – ECHS Schedule Next Meeting

◆ **Next Meeting: January 26, 2005 9:30 – 11:30 Chief Engineer’s Conference Room**

Task IV – Adjourn