

**Executive Committee for Highway Safety
Meeting Minutes; Mtg. #11
February 8, 2006**

Location:

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

Committee Members in Attendance:

David King	Susan Coward	Bob Andrews	Debbie Barbour
Ken Bumgarner	Doug Galyon	Herb Garrison	David Harkey
Darrell Jernigan	Terry Hopkins	Kevin Lacy	Steve Varnedoe
Jim Westmoreland			

Guests in Attendance:

Jessica Jones	Katy Jones	John Stokes	Delisa	Catherine McLaurin
Brad Hibbs	Mary Denning	Major Munday	Joe Geigle	Missy Dickens
Don Voelker	Tom Crosby	Tony Aison	Tony Spence	Jane Stutts
Cliff Braam				

Scribe:

Cliff Braam

Minutes:

- The meeting began at approximately 9:30 a.m.

Task I – Welcome

David opened the meeting and everyone introduced themselves for the benefit of new members and guest that were present.

Task II – Fatal Trends Update

Kevin gave an update on the fatal trends for the year 2005. Although final numbers are not in, the projected fatalities for 2005 is 1,508, down from 1,585 in 2004. This drops N.C.'s fatal rate from 1.66 to 1.55 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled.

Jim Westmoreland commented that although this is significant progress, that everyone needs to stress that we still are not where we need/want to be yet, especially when dealing with the media, legislators, the public, etc. and that we still have a lot of work to do.

David King stressed that 1,508 deaths is not satisfactory.

Don Voelker told the Committee that the new SAFETEA-LU contains a new core safety program and that this has become an even higher priority within the FHWA and is now one of their core programs too.

Task III – Illinois Safety Team

Terry Hopkins briefed the Committee on a recent visit by four members from Illinois; their State Traffic Safety Engineer and her two Chiefs of Staff along with a representative from the Illinois State Police. The Illinois Safety team came to N.C. at the suggestion of Rudy Umbs, because of the great programs that we have in place and the efforts of the Executive Committee. The traffic Safety Unit spent three days with this group sharing programs, projects, ideas, etc. It was considered a beneficial visit by everyone. It was readily evident from the discussions with Illinois, how far ahead of the curve N.C. is compared to other states and how unique of a situation we are in with our ECHS. Illinois can not get their key safety players together as we have here.

Task IV – New Working Group

Kevin Lacy stated that there are still some areas where we are experiencing many fatalities that we do not have working groups established for; Commercial Motor Vehicles (CMV), Bicycle and Pedestrian and Work Zones and Incident Management.

Concerning CMV, N.C. generally ranks in the top 10 in the nation in CMV related fatalities.

David King stated that this is an area of keen interest to DOT Secretary Tippet.

Kevin mentioned that while we do have a significant number of trucks from out of state, that there is also a large number of trucks travelling within the N.C. borders.

This is an issue that needs to be addressed from all aspects; i.e. it is not just an enforcement issue. There needs to be consideration given to components such as education, enforcement, engineering and public information.

Susan Coward motioned that the new working group: Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety be formed.

Bob Andrews Seconded the motion.

The motion was unanimously approved by the Committee.

Darrell Jernigan was asked to chair this working group and David, Kevin, Darrell and Cliff will meet to discuss the composition of the working group members.

Task V – Working Groups; Updates and Strategies

OLDER DRIVERS

Jane Stutts, Chair, reported out on the Older Drivers Working Group. Jane stated that this group has been in existence for over two years, but was just recently formally brought under the

umbrella of the ECHS. The group did not have any strategies to present at this meeting, but Jane said the group should be ready with a strategy for the April meeting. The group has pinpointed six different objectives and will be developing strategies in these areas. Primary areas of focus include 1) Engineering, 2) Education of Consumers and the Public and 3) Medical Fitness of Older Drivers.

MOTORCYCLE SAFETY WORKING GROUP

John Stokes, Chair, reported out on the progress of the group. The group is examining the issue of public information and/or education and is working with Professor Dougall's public information class at UNC Chapel Hill (same class as the KDA worked with last semester; different students). John said that the military was also a big concern now as they are losing more and more soldiers to motorcycle related crashes. Since 2002, the military has lost over 20% more soldiers in these types of crashes than they have in Afghanistan. The working group has recently added a new member from the Marines who is their chief safety officer.

LANE DEPARTURE WORKING GROUP

Steve Varnedoe, Chair, reported. Steve stated that for the past six months or so, that this group has been examining the issues of Driver's Education and young drivers and while this is an important area, as evident in the data, that this was not the original intent of this working group. Steve made the recommendation that a new group be formed to examine the issues of Driver's Education along with possibly young drivers. He stated that the group felt one of the biggest issues with the driver's education was that N.C. does not have a standardized curriculum for what should be taught. Many of the Committee members present felt that this was/is unacceptable and wondered why we do not have a standardized curriculum.

Steve said that his working group was going to refocus their efforts on highway design and operations to take away as many opportunities as possible for lane departure crashes to occur and to minimize the consequences when they do happen. He is planning on coordinating the group's efforts with the DOT's Strategic Plan, thus looking towards strategies that can be implemented more programmatically to utilize available funding sources and looking towards setting 5, 10 and 15 year plans. Steve mentioned that almost half of the categories on the fatal report fall into the Lane Departure working group.

Instead of forming a new working group for young drivers, the Committee decided to expand the Public Information group to include an education component. This group will now be the Public Information and Education Working Group and will be chaired by Ernie Seneca. One of the initial charges of the revised group will be to look into the Driver's Education issue. It was suggested that Michelle Wallen from the Department of Instruction be part of the effort along with a representative from the N.C. Driver's Education Association.

KEEPING DRIVERS ALERT WORKING GROUP

Tom Crosby, Chair, reported out and presented the strategy "DMV Driver's Handbook Revisions; Information on Drowsy and Distracted Driving." Tom said in the present version of the handbook, there is only one sentence about drowsy driving. This strategy seeks to

incorporate more information on these topics in the next revision of the handbook. The online version of the handbook could be updated sooner as the revised verbiage is made ready. The strategy would also seek to put questions in the test pool concerning drowsy and distracted driving.

Tony Spence said that making these changes should not be a problem since the cost were low to minimal.

A motion was made by David King to adopt the strategy, seconded by Darrell Jernigan and unanimously approved by the Committee.

The KDA working group will be responsible for drafting the appropriate language/additional text and working with DMV to get final approval for inclusion in the handbook.

ENSURING DRIVERS ARE LICENSED WORKING GROUP

Tony Spence, Chair, reported that he and Cliff had recently met with Commissioner Tatum concerning the strategy, “Impoundment of License Plates” and that the Commissioner has stated that the ECHS has his full support on anything that needs to come from his office. The strategy was discussed a bit more in detail and the Committee still wants this strategy to apply to the more hardcore revoked drivers (i.e. “habitual” DUI) as a starting point. Cliff mentioned that this strategy would require a lot of resources to implement and that focusing on such a small group may not yield the positive benefits to justify the up front cost. The working group will discuss this further at their next meeting.

SPEED WORKING GROUP

Kevin Lacy, acting Chair, presented the strategy to the group “Compliance Dismissals – Provide for Recovery of Court Costs Associated with Dismissing Minor Traffic Violations.” Essentially, this strategy will seek the appropriate legislation for courts to collect court costs associated with cases that are dismissed due to the violator being in compliance with the charged offense by the time they come to court. For example, presently if someone is issued a citation for an out of date inspection sticker and they have the vehicle inspected prior to coming to court, the District Attorney will dismiss the case and the court collects no court fees. However, all of the resources normally required to process a citation have still been expended. In one court system, these cases account for over 40% of all cases. This is a big drain on resources in an already overburdened system.

A motion was made by David King to adopt the strategy, seconded by Steve Varnedoe and unanimously approved by the Committee.

Kevin and the group will be responsible for assigning this to a host agency to draft the appropriate legislation and follow through.

INCREASING SAFETY BELT USAGE WORKING GROUP

Darrell Jernigan, Chair, informed the Committee that statewide belt usage is at its highest rate of 86.7% (only monitors front seat passengers). Darrell reminded the Committee that Senate Bill SB 774 (requiring all seating positions to be belted) will be coming back onto the house floor for vote and asked that Committee members contact any legislators they know to foster support. Darrell handed out a package of information that can be distributed and played a video showing the devastating effects of unbelted rear seat passengers when they collide with front seat occupants.

INTERSECTION SAFETY WORKING GROUP

Terry Hopkins, Chair, presented the strategy “Advanced Street Name Plaques/Signage for Improved Driver Navigation” to the Committee. The intent of this strategy is to provide advance information at select locations that will help direct the motorist and re-assure the navigating motorist. Lane selection and maneuvers should take place in advance of an intersection thereby reducing vehicular conflicts and friction that often occurs when an operator fails to recognize they have reached their destination. The operator may then attempt a last second lane change or misses the turn entirely and then resorts to a more difficult legal or illegal recovery maneuver beyond the intersection. This strategy targets increasing safety for very experienced, distracted and less familiar drivers.

Terry stated the intent was not to put these signs everywhere, but rather at select locations based upon engineering judgment and where the crash history showed significant sideswipe or rear-end crash patterns. She said this strategy was not meant to be an all inclusive solution, but rather another tool in the engineering toolbox.

Jim Westmoreland said that Greensboro has been doing this for a while, mainly placing the signs on overhead signal poles and that his engineers felt this is a good application on rural roads where speeds may be higher. He said that he has received good feedback from the community.

Terry has spoken with Mike Kenan who is with the City of Raleigh and he said that they are getting ready to rapidly expand their usage of these signs. He said that the positive feedback from the public has been overwhelming in regards to the installation of these signs in Raleigh.

Susan Coward expressed concern that the demand and cost for these signs will greatly exceed the available resources. Steve Varnedoe concurred and said that he would like to get input from his Division Engineers. Steve will put Terry on the agenda of his next operations meeting to discuss this further.

The strategy has been tabled for the interim.

David Harkey commented that it would be beneficial if the strategies coming out of the Working Groups included information on how the strategy would help the Committee reach its ultimate goal of 1.0 fatalities/100 MVM. There was further discussion that this may not be an easy task to do, since not all strategies will have a proven track record and it may be difficult at best for the

working groups to assess the true potential of a strategy and that not having this information should not prevent a strategy from being implemented if it has potential.

Task VII – Next Meeting Date

April 26, 2006; 9:30 – 11:30; Chief Engineer’s Conference Room.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

ACTION ITEMS

Who	Task
Braam	Set up meeting with King, Lacy and Jernigan to discuss new CMV Safety Working Group and it’s member composition.
Braam	Meet with Seneca to discuss PIO/Education Working Group and initial assignment concerning Driver’s Education issues and curriculum.
Crosby/KDA WG	Draft proposed revision to DMV handbook with language regarding distracted and drowsy driving. Work with appropriate staff at DMV to get this approved.
Lacy/Speed WG	Assign the Compliance Dismissal strategy to a host agency and see that the appropriate legislation verbiage is drafted.
Everyone	Contact any legislator or other appropriate party to garner support for SB 774.