

Executive Committee for Highway Safety
Meeting Minutes; Mtg. #15
January 16, 2007

Location:

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

Committee Members in Attendance:

Susan Coward	Bob Andrews	Debbie Barbour	Roberto Canales
Fletcher Clay	John Crone	Doug Galyon	David Harkey
Darrell Jernigan	Terry Hopkins	Kimberly Overton	Bill Rosser
John Sullivan	Steve Varnedoe	Jim Westmoreland	

Guests in Attendance:

Shelly Winters	Katy Jones	John Stokes	Tom Crosby	Mary Meletiou
Brad Hibbs	Don Voekler	Mark Johnson	Brian Mayhew	Jane Stutts
Don Nail	Joe Geigle	Tom Norman	Chris Hartley	Cliff Braam

Scribe:

Cliff Braam

Minutes:

- The meeting began at approximately 9:40 a.m.

Task I – Welcome

Susan welcomed and thanked everyone for coming and introduced Bill Rosser, DOT Administrator as the newest member of the Committee.

Task II – Fatal Trends Update

The number of fatal crashes and fatal injuries have increased this year as compared to last year. However, the trend lines are still down as since 2002. The 2006 numbers are estimates based upon the reported crashes in the Crash Database. **These numbers will change**, however, this is the best information that we have at this time. If you look at the trends from the 90's you will see a sharp decrease and increase in fatal crashes and injuries. These peaks coincide with the economy. Notice that while we did not have a sharp drop in fatalities in the early 2000's we have not seen the sharp increase with pulling out of the economic slump either. The numbers continue to be flat which is a good thing in a growing state. However, we want and need to do better.

The fatal rate is down mainly due to the increase vehicle miles traveled as we continue to see an increase in vehicle miles traveled in the state as our population continues to grow.

Task III – North Carolina Crash Costs

Brian Mayhew distributed a sheet containing the 2005 Estimated Crash Cost for North Carolina. Crash cost are available in both monetary and comprehensive costs. Monetary cost take into account factors such as medical, public service, work loss, employer costs, travel delay and property damage. Comprehensive cost take into account all monetary cost plus a quality of life factor. Presently, the comprehensive cost of a fatal crash is \$3.9 million. More information on crash cost can be found on the Traffic Safety Unit's web page at: <http://www.ncdot.org/doh/preconstruct/traffic/safety/ses/costs/2005crashcosts.pdf> or by contacting Brian Murphy at 919-733-3668.

John Stokes asked if crash cost could be developed for motorcycle related crashes. Brian said that his unit can determine the cost of motorcycle crashes by isolating the crashes, injuries and fatalities associated with motorcycle crashes.

Jim Westmoreland said he felt it would be beneficial to get the crash cost information to the Public Information and Education Working Group and have them develop some type of press release on the actual cost of these crashes to the our state.

Task IV – Working Groups

1. COMMERCIAL MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY

Darrel Jernigan presented two strategies from the CMV working group.

Required Headlights on for all CMV during the Day

This strategy would require all CMV to burn their headlights at all times in an effort to increase visibility. CMVs were defined as any vehicle with a GVW of 26,001 or larger. It was noted that several other states (Virginia and Oregon were given as examples) already have this requirement. This strategy will require legislation.

The motion to adopt this strategy was made by Tom Crosby and seconded by Bob Andrews.

ACTION ITEMS:

Darrell – Have the working group research Virginia's program and legislation and prepare draft legislation for this strategy.

Bob – Several years ago, DOT began requiring all of its heavy trucks to burn headlights during the day. Bob was asked to look at the data that DOT has in regards to the safety benefits of this program.

Mandatory Mud Flaps on CMVs

The second strategy presented would require all CMVs (>26,001 pounds) to have mud flaps installed in an effort to reduce the splash and spray of water on the road as well as to reduce flying debris that may be on the roadway. This strategy will require legislation.

The motion to adopt this strategy was made by John Crone and seconded by Tom Crosby.

ACTION ITEMS:

Darrell – Have the working group prepare draft legislation for this strategy.

2. OLDER DRIVERS

Jane Stutts presented two strategies to the Committee for consideration and approval.

Improve the Roadway and Driving Environment to Better Accommodate the Special Needs of Older Road Users

This strategy focuses on conducting workshops based upon the FHWA's *Highway Design Handbook for Older Drivers and Pedestrians* along with participating in FHWA's train the trainer program in an effort to provide training and education to designers on the special needs of older drivers and pedestrians.

While North Carolina was one of the first states to host one of the FHWA workshops, it has been over five years since the training occurred, and many local engineers and planners in the state have never been exposed to the material in the *Handbook*, or sensitized to the special needs of an aging population of road users. As part of this strategy, NC DOT would lead efforts to:

- a. Host three FHWA *Highway Design Handbook for Older Drivers and Pedestrians* Practitioner Workshops;
- b. Participate in FHWA's "train the trainer" program, and identify an approach for ensuring that the Workshop or comparable training can be offered to additional engineers and planners in the future (e.g., through collaboration with University engineering and planning departments, ITE, ITRE);
- c. Review current state standards to determine their compatibility with the recommendations in the *Highway Design Handbook*, and consider modifications to the standards as appropriate;
- d. Continue to analyze state crash data to identify locations and situations in the state that pose a particular risk to older drivers and take steps to remedy these, drawing from the *Highway Design Handbook* and engineering expertise and judgment;
- e. Document changes made and evaluate the effectiveness of the changes.

The motion to adopt this strategy was made by Jim Westmoreland and seconded by Colonel Clay.

Increase Public Awareness of Issues Affecting Older Drivers and Access to Resources for Maintaining Safe Mobility

This strategy involves creating and marketing a web site for making important safety information and resources available to North Carolina's growing population of older drivers. The strategy draws upon the expertise of partners of the State's Senior Driver Safety Coalition, including AARP, DHHS Division of Aging and Adult Services, DMV, AAA, NC

Medical Society, and others. At a minimum, it is envision the web site will incorporating information on:

- How aging can affect functional abilities important for safe driving;
- The effects of medical conditions and medications on driving performance;
- Resources and tips to keep driving safer longer, including information on available driver safety courses, self-assessment tools, booklets for downloading and printing, etc.
- Resources for family members or friends concerned about the safety of an older driver;
- Resources for driving assessments by a qualified occupational therapist or other driving rehabilitation specialist;
- NC driver licensing requirements and rules of the road
- How to report an unsafe driver to the DMV (information for physicians and for the general public);
- NCDOT's efforts to improve roadways for older drivers, and how to report a potentially unsafe roadway location;
- Alternatives to driving, with links to available resources in each county/city.

The motion to adopt this strategy was made by Bob Andrews and seconded by Bill Rosser.

3. KEEPING DRIVERS ALERT WORKING GROUP

Tom Crosby presented the basis for a new strategy that his group is developing. Essentially the strategy will look to partner with hotels across the state to offer substantial discount rates for drowsy motorists to allow them a safe place to pull off of the road and get rest. Tom mentioned that he has already spoken with several major hotel chains and that everyone to date is supportive of the idea and concept. He mentioned that there are still details to work out, but before pursuing this idea any farther, he was seeking the support of the idea from the committee members.

The motion to move forward with this strategy was made by Jim Westmoreland and seconded by Steve Varnedoe.

4. BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Tom Norman presented a resolution in support of DOT's upcoming efforts to revise G.S. 136-98 which would allow county governments to construct and maintain roads and related infrastructure in the vicinity of schools. It was discussed that this issue is part of a bigger issue being looked at by the DOT and that the Department still needs time to talk with the other various partners involved before moving forward. While everyone in attendance was in agreement with the resolution, it was decided to table the resolution until the DOT has a chance to resolve some of the other issues at hand.

Mary mentioned that the group has worked to move forward with a previously approved strategy to provide law enforcement officers with training in regards to bicycle and pedestrian laws. She stated that contact had been made with Peggy Shaefer at the N.C. Justice Academy to get this included as a module in the required training, but to date there has been no response. Colonel Clay mentioned that another possible alternative would be to provide the

information to individual law enforcement agencies and let them train their staff. Chief Crone mentioned that this could even be presented during role call meetings.

5. SPEED

In Kevin's absence, Brian Mayhew reported on the efforts of the group along with some additional topics of interest that Kevin provided as listed below.

Median Barrier info

There have been several articles and editorials in the local media and across the state that have been prompted by a very unfortunate across median crash. Kevin wanted to remind the members of this committee that the North Carolina Median Barrier program has been a model for other states and even some foreign countries. Since 1999 more than 150 lives have been saved by the barriers and countless severe injuries. NCDOT has continued to work with both the FHWA and other states in efforts to improve the barrier system. It is anticipated that the new maintenance procedures announced by the Secretary will make an outstanding barrier program even better.

It was noted that we as a state, need to do better to inform motorist that they should slow down when it is raining as the posted speed limit is considered an appropriate speed when conditions are ideal.

Reasonable speed limits

The Traffic Engineering Branch has completed a multi year activity in establishing reasonable speed limits and has began implementing this on several high designed facilities across the state. These are roadways that have high design standards that look and feel like a freeway for the most part, but are not full controlled facilities. The Regional Traffic Engineers and Division staff have been working on increasing the speed limit on the roads where it is believed we can do so safely. These facilities are being monitored and adjustments will be made as necessary. The reason this is important is to make sure we are sending the appropriate message to drivers as the speed limit should match the roadway and meet driver expectations.

Placing Improper Equipment violations on the Driver Records

The group has only discussed the basic operations of how a conviction is placed on a driver's record. It appears that the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) sends a file to the DMV and they place the information on the appropriate record. The group will work with DMV and AOC in the next quarter to identify the challenges of accomplishing this strategy. The reason this is important is than many DAs do allow people to plea to a lesser charge. This is one of the charges that is often used rather than a lower speed. Lower speeds show up on the driver record but improper equipment does not. The idea is that in many cases DAs require people to bring a copy of their driving record to court. If a driver has a lot of improper equipment, then the DAs office can use this information to determine if leniency is suitable or not.

Safe Speed Act

Since this strategy was brought this before the committee last year, there have not been any additional revisions completed as of yet.

Advisory Speed Plates

There has been discussions about the use of advisory speed plates and their use across the state. In some cases, people believe the plates are used too frequently and we have therefore conditioned drivers to not observing or respecting the advisory speed plate. We have had some discussion of this issue but have not made any changes as of yet. This issue has also received some national attention from the State Traffic Engineers across the country.

Compliance Dismissal

The strategy for addressing compliance dismissals was approved to be pursued in a previous ECHS meeting. In the 2006 legislative session there were two bills that had the compliance dismissal issue covered. The first, House Bill 2771, did not make it out of the committee to which it was referred. This draft was initiated by someone other than the speed working group, but it looks as though a lot of thought went into it. We will contact the sponsors to see who worked to have this introduced so we can work with them this year. The issue was also in Section 30.2 of HB 1048 which was passed; however, the compliance dismissal portion was removed from the last version that was approved and ratified. We want to pursue this issue again for the 2007 session. It has been brought to our attention that there may be issues with the constitutionality of a court cost being associated with a dismissal. We will discuss the constitutionality of the issue with our legal people and may make revisions. One idea is rather than make it a compliance dismissal, to make these infractions that are punishable by ½ court cost with no fine with proof of compliance to the general statute.

There was discussion about House Bill 2771, specifically in regards to the types of offenses that a compliance dismissal could be applied towards. The item that warranted most of the discussion was item 11 "Allowing an unlicensed person to drive in violation of G.S. 20-32" and why would we allow a compliance dismissal for someone who did not have a license. Kimberly explained that the compliance dismissal would only be applicable if the violator had come into compliance with the original charge and that in the case of someone being unlicensed, this would not apply to a DUI, but rather someone whose license had been revoked for an offense that had been corrected.

Resolution – Providing Access to Crash Records Data

At the previous ECHS meeting there was discussion and concern with the recent changes in DOT IT policy that has removed direct access for many data users to crash data. Brian presented this resolution for the Committee's approval that would hopefully expedite the process to re-establish direct access for these users where applicable and make it readily available to all others.

The motion to approve the resolution was made by Darrell Jernigan and seconded by Tom Crosby.

6. PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Katy Jones announced that the first edition of the quarterly newsletter had been completed and that copies were available on the back table. Katy urged both committee and working group members to forward her any items that needed to be included in future editions.

There were no reports by the following groups:

- Lane Departure
- Intersection Safety
- Ensuring Drivers Are Licensed
- Motorcycle Safety
- Driver Education
- Increasing Safety Belt Usage Working Group
- Incident Management

Task V – Next Meeting Date

April 24, 2006; 9:30 – 11:30; Chief Engineer's Conference Room.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.