

**Executive Committee for Highway Safety
Meeting Minutes
February 16, 2010**

Location:

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

Committee Members in Attendance:

Gene Conti	Kimberly Overton
Susan Coward	Stan Polanis
Bob Andrews	Michael Robertson
Lt. Colonel Gilchrist for Colonel Glover	John Sullivan
Charlie Zegeer for David Harkey	Ted Vaden
Terry Hopkins	David Weinstein
Kevin Lacy	Tom Norman for Jim Westmoreland
Jon Nance	Mike Yaniero

Committee Members Absent:

Debbie Barbour	Terry Gibson
Herb Garrison	Drexdal Pratt

Guests in Attendance:

Dara Demi	Charlie Grady	Chris Hartley	Brad Hibbs	Darrell Jernigan
Brian Purvis	Marie Sutton	Cliff Braam		

Scribe:

Cliff Braam

Task I – Welcome

Gene welcomed and thanked everyone for coming and gave a brief overview of the Committee and its purpose.

Overview:

DOT has always been a leader in highway safety and has developed and implemented many programs that have helped to reduce crashes and save lives.

Our many safety partners such as law enforcement (with the State Highway Patrol and all of the local agencies), various research entities, the medical field, EMS, local governments and all of the others have also individually done their part.

However, back about 8 years ago or so, we took a look at the numbers and even with all of the great efforts underway, the number of crashes, fatalities and injuries was still high. In 2002, when we began these initial discussions, we had 1,578 highway related fatalities on our roads.

We decided then, that it was time to take a different approach to identifying and addressing highway safety issues. Instead of all of the safety partners doing their own thing, we felt it

would be advantageous to identify, prioritize and tackle these issues at a comprehensive statewide level.

That premise, eventually gave life to the North Carolina Executive Committee for Highway Safety. We invited upper management, the ones who controlled resources, who could influence and change policies and in general were at the helm of their respective agencies, to come together, under one umbrella to collectively address highway safety in North Carolina.

The process worked great for nearly 6 years. While there were obstacles that were encountered, there were even more successes that have helped steer us towards our over all goal.

Unfortunately, we allowed these challenges to take the steam out of our progress and things slowed down a bit and the Executive Committee stalled. Since he came back to DOT, it has been his desire and intent to revitalize this important process and get us heading back on track again. That is why you are here. You are an important part of highway safety in our state. You and your staff are critical to making our highways safe for our citizens, our visitors, our businesses and for each of our families.

Purpose

Our purpose is fairly simple: Reduce the number of crashes and associated fatalities and injuries on our highways. The challenge comes in mapping out, implementing and evaluating the best plan of action to accomplish this. In a few minutes, Kevin will get into some more of the specifics on some of these issues.

Task II – Introductions

Next everyone was asked to introduce themselves and briefly tell:

1. Your Name,
2. Who you are,
3. The agency or group you represent
4. How highway safety is part of your core business

Task III – Fatal Trends Update

Terry distributed fatal trend sheets showing the most recent data through the end of 2009. As of now, the total number of fatalities in the crash database for 2009 is 1,297. It was noted that these numbers will still change due to two factors.

- 1) The final numbers will likely *vary slightly* once DMV has processed and reviewed all fatal data.
- 2). The second factor that will have a *more significant impact* on the 2009 fatal count is the fact that there have been reporting issues with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD). Due to these reporting issues, at the present time, *CMPD data is severely under reported for 2009*. This issue is currently being addressed, but until it is corrected, this lack of reporting could potentially have significant impacts on all

2009 safety data, analysis and programs, especially those involving the Mecklenburg County area. CMPD typically comprises nearly 6% of all statewide fatalities and 13% of all statewide crashes. So far for 2009, these numbers are at 3.4% and 7.9% respectively. Once all of the CMPD data is entered into the crash database, this could add an additional 30+ fatalities to the final count.

It was discussed that our fatalities have trended down over the last couple of years, likely in large part due to the economy and high gas prices. The challenge for the Committee and all safety partners will be to hold this numbers steady while developing new strategies to decrease them once the economy fully recovers. Calculated utilizing the currently projected VMT for 2009, the fatal rate is now at 1.3. Final and “official” 2009 VMT data should be available sometime in July.

Crash and fatal data is also kept current on the NCDOT dashboard. This data is updated approximately every 4-6 weeks as new data becomes available. See the following web site for more information. <https://apps.dot.state.nc.us/dot/dashboard/safer.aspx>

Task IV – ECHS Charge

Kevin talked more about the charge of the Committee and the past successes and challenges. This led to a lot of good discussion from the Committee members. Below is a list of some of the comments captured.

- Kevin
- It is obvious from the introductions that there is a lot of overlap in the individual missions and goals.
 - The ECHS is not meant to change the way and process by which the various agencies do business, but rather help to collect efforts and find ways to best help each other accomplish goals.
 - The Committee’s past goal was to achieve a fatality rate of 1.0 fatalities/100 MVMT (million vehicle miles traveled). Currently we are at 1.3.
 - While in the past we have had a lot of successes, we need to determine how to best address the more controversial issues.
 - One of our past challenges has been in successfully dealing with legislative issues. The intent is not for any one agency to provide all support, but rather to share this among all of the agencies represented in the Committee.
- Jon
- We need to be more proactive. It seems that in the past, issues get attention for one reason or another, and then eventually lose their luster and become forgotten.
 - While it may be unpopular, we need to begin taking a harder approach to addressing issues.
 - There needs to be ownership taken of issues and challenges made to others as appropriate to make them become part of the solution.
- Gene
- Part of the role of the ECHS is to empower folks to take ownership of the problems.

- Bob
 - Most people do not realize how big the highway safety issue is.
- Stan
 - The cost of accidents is 2.5-4 times higher than congestion. People understand congestion because they experience it on a regular basis. How do we work on a message along the lines of “What this is really costing us” to help them understand highway safety?
- Mike Y.
 - One avenue may be to educate insurance agents and then let them educate their customers.
 - Should we examine the educational piece more? The Leguine Marines are educating their marines on motorcycle safety and the cost of severe injuries and fatalities to their families and others.
- Susan
 - On the hard stuff, the education is needed up front to educate why the changes are needed.
- David
 - We need to increase the fine for seat belt violations from \$25 to \$100.
- Ted
 - We need to begin to “court” controversy in an effort to get more public attention.
- Chris
 - N.C. is one state that does not have a strong felony charge if there are contributing circumstances (excessive speeding, texting, etc) in a fatal crash. Maybe this should be explored.

Task V – Action Items

There were a lot of great ideas “floated” during the general discussion of the meeting. Gene asked that each of the Committee members go back and discuss with their staff and come up with items/issues/strategies that they felt the Committee should pursue. These should be **submitted to Cliff by no later than April 9th** so that they can be sent out as a package to the entire Committee prior to the next meeting.

Task VI – Schedule Next Meetings

The dates for the next three meeting have been set as follows:

- *April 21, 2010 @ 9:30*
- *September 8, 2010 @ 9:30*
- *January 13, 2011 @ 9:30*

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 a.m.