

The Safety Advocate



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A Regional Approach to Implementation

“If you want to truly understand something, try to change it.” Kurt Lewin, psychologist

When it comes to changing traffic safety in Louisiana, the Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) and its partners at the Louisiana State Police (LSP) and the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission (LHSC) are betting it happens at the regional, local level. Louisiana is one of the few states that has taken a regional approach to implementing the Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) and is establishing regional coalitions to identify and implement SHSP related programs and activities that address the unique needs and concerns of each of the state’s diverse areas.

The map shows the location of each of the nine coalitions. So far, coalitions have been established in:

- Houma – South Central Safe Communities Partnership
- Lafayette – Acadiana Transportation Safety Coalition
- North Shore – North Shore Regional Transportation Safety Coalition
- New Orleans – New Orleans Regional Traffic Safety Coalition
- Baton Rouge – Capital Region Transportation Safety Coalition



Regional coalitions are in the planning stages in the Northeast (Monroe), Northwest (Shreveport), Southwest (Lake Charles), and Central (Alexandria) portions of the state.

At the outset the coalitions reach out to safety stakeholders from the 4 Es of safety: Enforcement, Engineering, Education, and Emergency Medical Services and invite them to participate in the development of a regional safety plan. The plan uses the state's SHSP as a guide, but directly relates strategies and action steps to regional problems and issues. Data is provided to help each coalition identify traffic safety issues and develop the plan.

Emphasis Area Teams Push Forward

The SHSP Statewide emphasis area teams met in May 2014 and updated their progress on a variety of safety related programs and projects.

Infrastructure and Operations

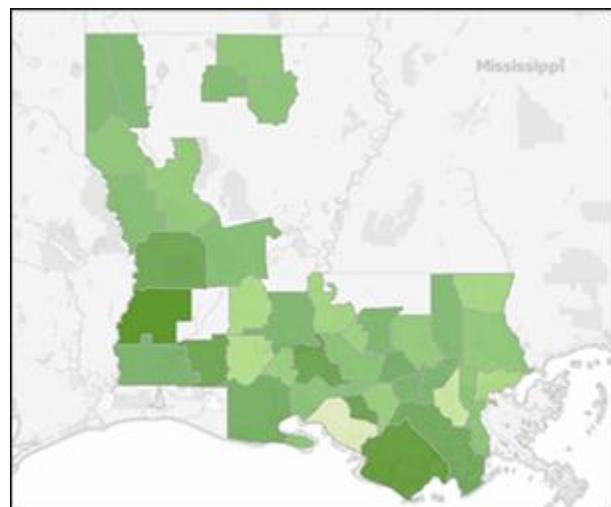
One of the issues discussed at the meeting was notifying local agencies when upcoming improvements are planned in their area. Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) would also benefit even though they usually receive prior notification so the planned projects can be included in their Transportation Improvement Program. One suggestion involved giving the information to the regional coalitions which could notify local jurisdictions and MPOs. The South Central Safe Communities Partnership, for instance, does a formal report on problem areas which is sent to DOTD. The team also received a briefing from DOTD on the state's systemic safety project which uses risk factors to identify areas for improvement. So far the state has identified roadway departures on two lane rural roadways with curves as risk factors.

The team also developed new data definitions for lane departure, roadway departure, and intersections.

Occupant Protection

The Occupant Protection Emphasis Area Team reviewed heat maps that showed use rates by region and parish. The map shows use rates for 2013 with the darker color indicating the parishes where seat belt use rates are higher.

Lake Charles had the highest use rates for two years running having gone from 84 percent usage rate to 91 percent in 2013. One of the reasons is the existing Occupant Protection Task Force. The team will be receiving a briefing on the program at their next meeting.



The LHSC reported the recent Click It or Ticket and Buckle Up in Your Truck campaigns were very successful. While final numbers are not available, there are indications seat

belt use is continuing to increase in Louisiana. The 2013 Louisiana seat belt use rate, for drivers and passengers combined, is 82.5 percent, which represents Louisiana's highest recorded statewide measurement to date, up 3.2 percentage points from 2012 (79.3 percent).

Notice for State Employees

If you are an employee of the State of Louisiana – listen up. While on state business, the state travel regulations clearly state all employees must wear a seat belt. The Department of Transportation regulations also state that as a general rule employees operating vehicles must be familiar with and abide by pertinent traffic laws and directives from DOTD – and that includes wearing seat belts every trip, every time!

Young Drivers

One of the goals of the Young Driver Emphasis Area Team is to expand the Sudden Impact program statewide. Sudden Impact is designed to prevent fatalities and injuries among youth if they drive impaired, distracted, and/or unrestrained. The Louisiana State Police and a Level 1 Trauma Center jointly conduct the program. So far the team is meeting their goal with numerous Sudden Impact events scheduled. The team also heard of another youth program conducted by Lexlee's Kids called Ready Set Drive, which is a school based program. Presentations are given throughout the day in a variety of classes by volunteers, many of whom are law enforcement officers.

The team is also moving ahead on developing a brochure for parents on the Graduated Driver Licensing law. Many parents are unfamiliar with the law and the requirements for parents to provide 50 hours of practice to their novice driver. Research is showing GDL compliance is more of a parent problem rather than an enforcement problem. Other efforts from the team include examining how the Office of Motor Vehicles (OMV) provides oversight of driving schools in the state and identifying volunteers who can assist the Office of Alcohol and Tobacco Control (ATC) in doing compliance checks with alcohol retailers. As part of that effort the team will also be examining policies concerning training for vendors who sell alcohol at the numerous festivals and fairs held throughout the state. One suggestion was to reach out to the Festival of Queens Association, which oversees queen pageants, and urge contestants to make the prevention of underage drinking part of their platforms.

Impaired Driving Emphasis Area Team

The group heard a report on the status of the effort to get local ordinances passed that prohibit under 21 youth from entering bars. State law prohibits anyone under age 21 from consuming alcohol, but does not prohibit them from going into a bar and other establishments that sell alcohol. A number of cities and towns in Louisiana have decided to do something about that situation and have passed local ordinances including Addis, Alexandria, Bastrop, Bossier City, DeRidder, Kentwood, Shreveport, White Caste, and Winnsboro. The ordinance is parish wide in Bossier and Rapides

parishes. In the majority of instances, alcohol fatalities and violent crime decreased after the ordinance was passed.

The team is working on developing a program so ignition interlock vendors can receive information on fails or rolling retests. The state has a good ignition interlock device (IID) law and good administrative regulations, but does not always get the information needed to punish individuals who violate the IID penalty. Another area is the No Refusal program which gives law enforcement officers a tool to cite individuals who refuse to take an alcohol breath test. One of the strategies is to expand this program statewide which the team is doing.

Regional Coalitions In Action

The South Central Safe Communities Partnership, which has been in existence the longest of any of the regional coalitions, has been busy in the past four months as evidenced by the following activities:

- Supported or participated in an Underage Drinking Prevention Month event; Annual Bayou Safety Expo; Buckle Up in Your Truck at the Safety Circus; the Click It or Ticket enforcement campaign; Arrive Alive simulation event; a Bike Safety Rodeo; and the launch of the Bayou Region Teen Safety Photo and Video Contest.
- Followed up on recommendations made during road safety assessments in St. John, St. Charles and Lafourche parishes; conducted a study on how to mitigate problems on curves; and hosted a Project Planning, Feasibility and Application Development Workshop.
- Hosted a Regional Safety Summit on May 13, 2014 where participants had an opportunity to learn about a variety of traffic safety issues.

Acadiana Transportation Safety Coalition continued work on bicycle/pedestrian safety projects and indicated they were in the process of hiring a safety coordinator. The coalition has adopted four emphasis areas and have approved their action plans.

The **North Shore Regional Safety Coalition** reported their Impaired Driving and Occupant Protection Emphasis Area teams met in June; the Young Drivers team in August; and the Infrastructure and Operations team will meet in October. During the recent *Click It or Ticket* campaign, the City of Covington did a seat belt survey at schools and had tee shirts made up which said "I Got Caught Wearing my Seat Belt". The program received good press attention and positive feedback from young people.

New Orleans Regional Traffic Safety Coalition hosted a Safety Summit in July at the Zephyrs stadium where they were able to reach out to the public about the many safety issues facing their region. Bicycle, pedestrian, occupant protection, impaired driving, young drivers, highway-rail safety and motorcycle safety were represented. The coalition has adopted five emphasis areas and have approved their action plans.

Nearly 50 people attended the third meeting of the **Capital Region Transportation Safety Coalition** where participants selected the following as a mission statement: *The Capital Region Transportation Safety Coalition will achieve the mission by improving the roadway environment and creating a safety culture of accountability and responsibility.*



Since that meeting, the five emphasis area teams selected by the coalition (Impaired Driving, Occupant Protection, Young Drivers, Pedestrians/Bicycles, and Infrastructure and Operations) have been meeting individually to identify the specific strategies and action steps that will help them achieve their mission. One goal for the group is to ensure there are representatives from each of the region's parishes at each meeting.

The **Northeast Louisiana Highway Safety Partnership** has also engaged in several activities including a launch of the Sudden Impact youth program with eight out of 12 sheriff's offices and all hospitals participating. The Coalition will partner with the local mall for a Fall Festival in October that has the potential to reach thousands of youth in the area.

Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over

State and local law enforcement agencies from across Louisiana actively participated in the 2014 national drunk driving enforcement crackdown, "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over", which went into effect August 13 to September 1, 2014. One of the deadliest and most often committed - yet preventable - of crimes impaired driving has become a serious safety problem throughout the state. Over 400 agencies of state, local police departments and sheriff's offices participated in the campaign. Any law enforcement agency can receive funding from the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission if there is a serious problem in their area. During the 2013 campaign there were 1,736 arrests which is an increase, 104 checkpoints, and 4,172 hours overtime.



Agencies Win SHSP Funding Grants

As part of the overall SHSP implementation effort, the DOTD has established a program whereby regional traffic safety coalitions and statewide emphasis area teams can fund projects that help implement the various strategies and action steps in the SHSP or any of the regional safety plans. The program, which is administered by the DOTD in coordination with the Highway Safety Commission and the Louisiana State Police, will fund infrastructure improvement applications as part of the overall Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP). Behavioral safety applications will be reviewed and approved by the SHSP Implementation Team. Following are projects that have received funding so far.

The **Louisiana State Police** received funding to purchase new breath testing instruments for the state. The new equipment has several updated technological improvements that will improve the gathering the data and the storing of electronic forms where officers record information on a DWI arrest. Breath testing is the most common method police officers use to confirm whether or not a person is driving under the influence of alcohol and whether the amount of alcohol in the person's system is above the state's legal limit of .08 blood alcohol concentration (BAC). Given the importance of the breath testing method and the need for accurate and timely data on impaired driving, the Impaired Driving Emphasis Area Team recommended approval for the project.

The **South Central Planning and Development Commission** (SCPDC) received funding to purchase a BAT (Breath Alcohol Testing) Mobile Unit. The Louisiana State Police Troop C is the lead law enforcement agency and responsible for supply certified personnel to staff the unit which is used in conjunction with major highway safety campaigns and events as well as saturation patrols and DWI sobriety checkpoints.

The **24th Judicial District Court** in Jefferson Parish received funding to establish a DWI Treatment Court which provides constant supervision to offenders by judges and other court officials. These individuals closely administer and monitor compliance with court ordered sanctions and treatment. DWI/DUI courts often involve frequent interaction with the offender by the DWI court judge, intensive supervision by probation

officers, treatment, random alcohol and other drug testing, community service, lifestyle changes, positive reinforcement, and jail time for non-compliance.

Reaching Zero: Every Life Counts

Over 250 people attended the Louisiana Transportation Safety Summit, “Reaching Zero: Every Life Counts” in March 2014. The gathering opened with remarks from the state’s safety leadership including Sherri LeBas, Secretary of the Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD); Lt. Colonel David Staton, Louisiana State Police (LSP); John LeBlanc, Executive Director, Highway Safety Commission (LHSC); Timothy Fitten, Regional Program Manager, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA); and Todd Jeter, Assistance Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

During the two day event, participants had an opportunity to attend over 30 workshops covering issues such as data, infrastructure and operations, emergency management, impaired driving, occupant protection, young drivers, pedestrian/bicycle safety, distracted driving, legislation, current media campaigns, and highway/rail safety. Traffic safety culture and how individuals are motivated to make change as well as information on Destination Zero Deaths



(DZD) were also featured topics. During the DZD discussion, attendees learned more about the various regional safety coalitions that are developing and implementing plans to improve traffic safety and saw a new DZD Video that asks people the crucial question, “Can we ever achieve zero fatalities.” While most people say no, their answers change when asked what is the goal for themselves and their families. The video can be viewed at <http://www.destinationzerodeaths.com/wp-content/themes/dzd/popupmedia.php?page=5>.

Data discussions involved what data is available from Louisiana State University’s Highway Safety Research Group (HSRG), and the benefits of using web-based solutions for data management and analysis. Individuals choosing infrastructure and operations workshops learned about the development of Louisiana-specific highway safety crash calibration factors so the state can better forecast crash frequency; implementation of the Highway Safety Manual; systematic versus systemic safety improvements; road safety assessments; an analysis of J-Turns; methods that engineering can use to help enforcement and reduce traffic crashes; and an overview of the Federal Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) law.

Emergency management, a topic of considerable interest in Louisiana, was featured at a workshop focusing on Traffic Incident Management Training (TIM) and how Louisiana

is developing its own TIM model. For impaired driving, workshops were given on the capabilities and challenges of the State Police's Crime Lab; differences between alcohol and drugged driving laws; an overview of the DWI Court program; the role of the Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor; how Louisiana is conducting nighttime DWI enforcement; and a technical assessment of the state's impaired driving program.



How a Complete Streets policy was integrated with the Nelson Road Extension and Bridge was one of the workshops for pedestrian/bicycle safety. Other topics included how to develop and implement a bicycle master plan, and an overview of Louisiana's Complete Streets policy and how it can be implemented at the local level. Ideas to improve young driver safety included a presentation on a Teen Safety Driving Photo and Video

Contest, and information on the Sudden Impact and Think First programs.

Highway/rail safety workshops included an overview of efforts by law enforcement to reduce the number of vehicle crashes at Railroad Crossings; information on mock train derailment scenarios which provide opportunities to test emergency response capabilities; an overview of Louisiana's Operation Lifesaver Program; methods to screen for potentially hazardous crossings; a summary of Louisiana railroads, crossings, and crossing crash statistics; how highway/rail safety can work together with access management; and engineering practices that make good railroad crossings.

Other workshops included the results from the state's annual Nighttime Seat Belt Use Survey; results from an LSU simulation-based study on the effects of distracted driving; an update on recent and prospective highway safety legislation; and the marketing and media methods that are used to reach targeted audiences in the state with traffic safety messages.

The next Transportation Safety Summit will be held in the fall of 2015. Go to the Destination Zero Deaths (DZD) web site for more information.

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