



Regional Safety Action Plan Focus Group Meetings

May 25, 2018 - Discussion Notes

FOCUS GROUP TWO – SARATOGA LIBRARY

CDTC Representatives:

- Sandy Misiewicz
- Jacob Beeman

Consultants:

- Wendy Holsberger, VHB
- Alanna Moran, VHB
- Margaret Irwin, River Street Planning & Development

Participants:

- Kelley Baker, AAA Northway
- John DePaola, Harley Owners Group
- Todd Fabozzi, CDRPC
- Woody Sloat, Town of Malta Highway Safety Committee
- Natalie Schubel, Schenectady County Public Health
- Tom Werner, CDTC Policy Board

Sandy presented a brief introduction of CDTC and the Regional Safety Plan project. VHB presented a brief power point presentation outlining some of the state and local crash trends and areas of focus for the Regional Safety Plan. The meeting was then opened up for general discussion on the participants' knowledge, understanding, questions, and experiences with safety.

The meeting notes have been divided by topic. Some comments are repeated because they fit under more than one topic.

Distracted drivers – Cell phone use

- Distracted driver data is not complete. Police officers can subpoena cell phone data in serious crashes, but otherwise don't. Gathering cell phone data at crashes is a "larger than regional issue."
- Kelley Baker - AAA – distraction comes in many forms for drivers and is the cause of many crashes.

Data needs (more specificity)

- Distracted driver data is not complete. Police officers can subpoena cell phone data in serious crashes, but otherwise don't. Gathering cell phone data at crashes is a "larger than regional issue."

Vulnerable road users (cyclists, pedestrians, motorcyclists)

Pedestrians

- Pedestrian distraction is a big issue and can result in people walking into traffic.
- People who don't walk or bicycle regularly are not as aware of pedestrians when they are drivers.
- Pedestrian safety for kids – teach them that you can't expect automobile drivers to pay attention.
- Safest thing is to stop movement in all directions to make pedestrians completely safe.

Cyclists

- People who don't walk or bicycle regularly are not as aware of bicyclists when they are drivers.



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- Parents don't take helmet safety for teenagers seriously.
- Challenge is that making streets pedestrian-oriented by adding sidewalks reduces the roadway width and puts cyclist in traffic. Communities are making choices as sidewalks make the road narrower for the cyclist. There are tradeoffs in the design of complete streets.

Bus riders

- Many people pass stopped school busses.

Motorcycle safety

- John DePaola – *Harley Owners Group* - John is a motorcycle rider and is actively involved in many motorcycle training/safety events.
- Motorcycle use increases in better weather and many people are using motorcycles more as a primary form of transportation; the more miles on the road, the more exposure to crash threats.
- Drivers "just don't see motorcycles" because there is not enough awareness. Anecdotally, John has been cut off more frequently this year. People are cutting over, not checking mirrors, etc.
- Burden is on motorcyclist to be very careful. It would be great if other people could be on a bike to see the vulnerability.

Street and road design/Complete Streets

- Questions about how we are designing streets. CDTC can influence this. Promote complete streets. Are you maintaining shoulders for cyclists?
- Land use has to be considered in roadway design
- Challenge is that making streets pedestrian-oriented by adding sidewalks puts cyclist in traffic. Communities are making choices as sidewalks make the road narrower for the cyclist. There are tradeoffs in the design of complete streets.
- Safest thing is to stop movement in all directions to make pedestrians completely safe.
- Same roadway changes character throughout different parts of the community.
- Consider the future context of the roadway and put the pedestrian first.
- Need to stack snow somewhere to keep pedestrian paths open. In Albany the policy is 24 hours post storm to get snow off of the sidewalk.
- Roadway design - traffic calming, roundabouts, complete streets
- Approval for a student housing facility required training/education (as part of the SEQR development review process) for residents
- Roundabouts are designed to eliminate severe t-bone crashes, but may increase fender benders.
- Roundabouts don't always have flashing beacons for pedestrian crossings.
- Pedestrians are afraid of roundabouts.
- There are communities implementing hawk signals. DOT Region one is conservative and prefers a typical 3-color signal where warranted.
- Discussion of the proposed roundabout at 146/146A which is an access point to a major multi-use path so the roundabout will have a mix of travel modes.

Safety campaigns/education and outreach

- How long does it take to change the culture? Took a long time to get high compliance for seat belt use, but now NYS has very high compliance.



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- DOT – When federal aid funds were included there are opportunities to educate. Cornell local roads has municipal education and training programs. Towns send highway staff to Cornell conferences. DOT has had local government support unit in the past – but no longer an active group.
- Education of children and older adults is important. Elementary school children and parents both need to be engaged.
- What should diversion programs include? Discussion regarding appropriate punishment and follow through on tickets that are given as well as educational programs to change behavior.
- Challenge is that the data says one thing but the public feels otherwise. Sometimes improvements don't get initiated until something bad happens. Hopefully this plan can identify strategies that can be deployed through maintenance and education.
- Ideas to engage people? Safety is a topic that can touch any of us at any time. There are human beings behind these numbers. Neighborhood associations, homeowners associations, schools (consider using Phys Ed component as entry point into the schools), libraries, cycling clubs, NYS Share the Road, NYS Bike Coalition.
- Invitations to the summit should include notices to superintendent, traffic committees, town board members and council members, parks and rec departments, highways superintendents, etc.
- Motorcycle Safety Foundation located on Route 50 in Scotia does traffic safety trainings. Also, the American Motorcycle Association is a national policy group.

Advanced/emerging technology

- Car technology – road avoidance warnings... is it making us pay less attention?
- When technology works it's great.
- Cars that can park and stop take "skills out of consideration". Driver skills are needed and we lose something if technology takes over.
- Is the auto industry talking to enforcement about the impacts of their technologies?
- Automated vehicles in NYS "going to take a conservative approach."
- Who is in control of the vehicle? Who is liable? How do officers know what was actually "driving."

Rural Crashes

- Sandy – data shows that there are many rural crashes...more to come.