

Updating a Strategic Highway Safety Plan: Learning from the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD)

Proceedings from the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Highway Safety Peer-to-Peer Exchange Program

1. About the Peer Exchange

On November 4, 2009, ITD's Office of Highway Operations and Safety partnered with the FHWA Office of Safety to host a one-day peer exchange. This event focused on the update of Idaho's Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP), entitled "Toward Zero Deaths, Every Life Counts"; the State's revised SHSP is targeted for completion in June 2010. The peer exchange provided an opportunity for Idaho safety stakeholders to collaboratively initiate a data-driven, comprehensive plan and establish statewide goals, objectives, strategies, and action plans.

More than 100 professionals representing engineering, education, enforcement, and emergency response (EMS) agencies participated in the event. A full list of the presenters and planners who attended the event is provided in Appendix A.

ITD's goals and objectives in holding the peer exchange included:

- Discussing highway safety issues and current programs in Idaho;
- Learning about peer States' practices;
- Explaining the value and purpose of a SHSP to stakeholders;
- Initiating the process for Idaho's SHSP update;
- Creating ongoing dialogue about highway safety among Idaho's SHSP stakeholders; and
- Establishing and motivating emphasis area teams to reduce traffic fatalities caused by specific highway safety issues.

The peer exchange featured a morning session with ITD presentations on current trends, safety programs, and practices; peer presentations; and an afternoon session with breakout groups charged with developing strategies and action plans related to 11 emphasis areas (see Appendix B for a complete list of emphasis areas).

ABOUT THE PEER EXCHANGE

FHWA's Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) Peer-to-Peer Program (P2P) supports and sponsors peer exchanges and workshops hosted by agencies.

Date

November 4, 2009

Location

Boise, Idaho

Host

Idaho Transportation Department

Participants

Idaho Highway Safety Coalition (IHSC)

Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT)

Washington Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC)

Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)

FHWA Idaho Division Office

FHWA Office of Safety

FHWA Resource Center

U.S. DOT's Volpe Center

FHWA's Office of Safety sponsors HSIP P2P events.

[Learn more.](#)

2. Background on Idaho’s SHSP

In 2006, Idaho drafted a SHSP in response to the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users’ requirement for receiving funding through HSIP. Several years later, new traffic safety data and potential effective strategies revealed that the original plan could be updated in order to better address the State’s safety concerns. State transportation officials agreed that the updated plan needed to be data-driven and include specific strategies to address the most significant safety issues. The updated plan also needed meaningful input and support from a wide range of highway safety partners. As part of the update process, the State decided to take full advantage of all opportunities to learn more about advancements that have been made with the SHSP process.

In 2009, Idaho was selected as a pilot state for FHWA’s SHSP implementation process model (IPM) program.¹ As a pilot, Idaho received specialized technical assistance on using the IPM to advance SHSP implementation. In September 2009, ITD staff also leveraged FHWA Office of Safety funding to attend an HSIP peer exchange in Reno, Nevada.² After the experience, ITD staff had a better understanding of (1) the value of MoDOT’s systemic approach to reducing traffic deaths and (2) the value of hosting a peer exchange to enhance the way safety plans, processes, and programs are managed. In order to ensure that an updated SHSP articulates Idaho’s safety priorities, ITD decided to host its own event for stakeholders from Idaho and peers from Missouri and Washington State.

3. Preparing for Idaho’s SHSP Update and Peer Exchange Event

Key ITD and FHWA staff spent approximately four months preparing for the SHSP update and the kick-off event. Major planning steps included:



PLANNING FOR AN SHSP UPDATE IS A PROCESS THAT TAKES TIME!

¹ FHWA sponsors the IPM Pilot Program in collaboration with the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMSCA).

² The peer workshop was sponsored by the Nevada Department of Transportation, Nevada FHWA Division Office, and the FHWA’s Office of Safety Programs. Peers from Idaho, Missouri, Utah, and Wisconsin participated in the event.

Analyzing crash data to determine trends

Idaho analyzed five years of crash data to identify the areas that contribute to the highest economic costs of crashes. The analysis is based on estimates that a traffic fatality has a comprehensive economic cost of nearly \$6 million and a serious traffic injury has an economic cost of nearly \$300,000. The analysis helped ITD staff identify eleven emphasis areas as priorities for the SHSP update. These areas are: safety restraints, impaired driving, aggressive driving, inattentive driving, youthful drivers, motorcycle safety, vulnerable users (bicycle, pedestrian, older drivers), commercial vehicles, lane departure, intersections, and emergency response.

Establishing a leadership structure to guide the plan's development

ITD established an Oversight Team to approve the SHSP update and oversee the plan's implementation. It is led by ITD's Deputy Director and includes the State Highway Operations and Safety Engineer as well as ITD's Highway Safety Manager, FHWA's Idaho Division Office Safety Program Manager, the Director of the Idaho State Police, representatives from NHTSA's Region 10 Office, the Idaho Association of Counties, and the Idaho Hospital Association. In advance of the peer exchange, an interim committee consisting of the State Highway Operations and Safety Engineer, Highway Safety Manager, and FHWA's Idaho Division Office Safety Program Manager, reviewed the data analyses, agreed on the emphasis areas, created the meeting agenda, and chose the peer states. Over the long-term, the Oversight Team will be responsible for reviewing and approving the final SHSP update as well as future updates and activities.

Creating an agenda and addressing logistics for the peer event

The Office of Safety worked closely with the interim committee to plan the peer exchange. The committee selected Washington and Missouri as the peer presenters based on their similarities to Idaho and their successes in addressing roadway safety. ITD was interested in engaging with stakeholders to help them understand the importance of a SHSP process to attaining Idaho's highway safety goals. The team decided to craft the peer event agenda to include break-out groups for emphasis area teams to develop strategies and action plans (see Appendix C for agenda). Finally, the ITD Highway Safety Manager worked with the FHWA Office of Safety to arrange travel funds for Washington and Missouri peers.

Identifying key stakeholders to lead and participate in working groups

The ITD Highway Safety Manager worked with the FHWA Office of Safety's grants officers to identify candidates for the emphasis area teams. The goal was to create teams that balanced representation from stakeholder organizations, including: law enforcement, insurance companies, hospital administration, traffic engineering departments, public works departments, public health agencies, prosecutors, a coroner, driving instructors, senior citizens, the trucking industry, emergency medical technicians/first responders, commercial vehicle operators, local governments, and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs).

Champions were recruited to lead each emphasis area working group; champions were supported by an assigned facilitator who managed dialogue and communication. Facilitators included ITD staff, grants officers from the Office of Highway Operations and Safety, subject matter experts, and ITD's consultants.

Preparing educational materials for the peer event

In late October, ITD provided participants with detailed information about the peer event, including: the definition of the emphasis area; the safety problem based on how it contributes to overall crashes and economic impact including

related statistics for crashes (2004 – 2008); potential effective countermeasures; and references for additional research. Facilitators received instructions and guidance on managing the groups. (See Appendix D for a copy of the handouts.)

4. Proceedings of the Idaho SHSP Update Peer Exchange



Welcome

Mary Hunter, ITD Highway Safety Manager, welcomed the group and introduced ITD's Acting Director, Scott Stokes, to kick off the peer exchange. Stokes noted that safety is now IDT's number one priority and emphasized Idaho's progress in reducing fatalities and serious injury crashes in the past few years. He noted that Idaho's drivers are making smarter decisions regarding their driving habits, but there is still a need to make more progress and reinforce the importance of safety within Idaho's culture. The SHSP update is an important part of that effort.

Workshop Overview and Expected Outcomes

Hunter described the process that led ITD to decide to initiate its SHSP update with a peer exchange for stakeholders. She explained her experience attending similar events and learning from other States. Furthermore, Hunter discussed the event preparations, including the creation of materials for emphasis area working groups, the selection of working group leaders, and the development of the event's agenda. Finally, she underscored the importance of the theme of the SHSP update, "Toward Zero Deaths, Every Life Counts."

Idaho's Crash Experience and Safety Initiatives

Hunter and Brent Jennings, State Highway Operations and Safety Engineer, presented statistics on Idaho's yearly traffic fatalities and serious injury crashes over the past five years. They explained the economic costs of crashes and how Idaho's citizens pay for these costs. The dataset included a catalog of the factors that contribute to crashes, which influenced the focus of each emphasis area team. The pair then provided stakeholders with a brief overview of current safety programs and initiatives:

- *Idaho Highway Safety Coalition*: Engages local organizations to implement safety programs and projects;
- *Statewide Mobilizations*: Administers paid media, such as television and radio public service announcements, and enforcement activities currently involving 56 agencies;
- *Law Enforcement Liaison* program: Contracted regional law enforcement officers promote the value of traffic safety enforcement at the local level; and
- *Alive at 25* program: Assists teenagers with improving driving decisionmaking.



Hunter and Jennings also discussed the importance of engaging partners and using available strategies to address safety, such as "Proven Roadway Countermeasures" (e.g. rumble strips, safety edge, roundabouts, turn lanes, signal timing, and road safety audits). Based on a review of the current programs and initiatives *and* the analysis of crash

data, the speakers noted that improving safety requires Idaho to focus on five key areas: partnerships, data, culture, commitment, and evaluation. Success may also be achieved through an integrated, collaborative approach that features a combination of driver-behavior programs (NHTSA) and infrastructure improvement programs (FHWA).

A Federal Perspective on the Strategic Highway Safety Program

Tamiko Burnell, from FHWA's Office of Safety, discussed the importance of the SHSP in the HSIP. The program focuses on results and aims to reduce fatalities and serious injury crashes. The SHSP process allows States to develop action plans that address both behaviors and infrastructure. HSIP aims to effectively allocate resources to States so that they can implement the strategies listed in their SHSPs.

All States are required to periodically update their SHSPs and Burnell offered some guidelines for success:

- Plans must be data-driven;
- Plans need to be coordinated with other statewide and regional planning documents (freight, commercial vehicles, MPO plans) to ensure a common goal;
- Plans should integrate engineering, education, enforcement, and emergency response;
- Plans should consider the safety needs of all public roads; and
- Highway safety investment decisions should be guided by the plan and evaluated.

Burnell discussed the SHSP Implementation Process Model, which provides technical assistance to States. She also described the types of activities and programs that are available for States to use 10 percent of flex funds through HSIP. Finally, Burnell provided an overview of Federal-aid funding sources for safety projects and other Federal safety resources; these projects and resources include grants available through NHTSA and FMCSA as well as the use of 10 percent flex funds.

System-Wide Safety Solutions: Missouri's Systematic Approach to Saving Lives

Jon Nelson, P.E., from MoDOT, described the agency's safety program and its current SHSP, "Missouri's Blueprint to Arrive Alive," which uses new strategies to implement long-standing solutions. In the past, MoDOT focused its resources on making improvements at the specific *locations* of severe crashes. MoDOT's current program acknowledges that crashes actually occur at random locations, however, *crash types* are predictable. By identifying crash types and correlating them to the types of roadways where they most frequently occur, the State has been able to implement system-wide improvements that have reduced serious injury crashes and fatalities.

The HSIP has funded several of Missouri's new programs, including:

- *Smooth Roads Initiative*: A \$360 million MoDOT program to improve 2,200 of the most heavily traveled roads by upgrading pavement conditions, pavement markings and signs, installing rumble strips and stripes, and improving delineation by adding guard rails, median guard cables, and Jersey barriers.
- *Better Roads, Brighter Future*: A \$124 million MoDOT program to improve an additional 3,300 miles of major roads to bring them to "good" condition by 2010.

By identifying crash types and correlating them to the types of roadways where they most frequently occur, Missouri has reduced serious injury crashes and fatalities.



MoDOT has institutionalized the new standards from the Smooth Roads Initiative and Brighter Roads, Brighter Future program in its Engineering Policy Guide. Nelson indicated that the programs are working: Missouri experienced a 24 percent decrease in fatalities between 2005 and 2008 despite an overall increase in vehicle miles traveled.

Integrated Approaches: Washington State's Target Zero SHSP and Safety Corridors

Angie Ward of WTSC and Matthew Enders of WSDOT presented an overview of the SHSP process and provided details on the State's Corridor Safety Program. Washington's SHSP, "Target Zero," was the result of collaboration among many organizations. The key features of "Target Zero" were a data-driven process, establishment of priorities and goals, action plans based on proven strategies and best practices, aggressive evaluation of results, and course corrections as warranted.

Although the plan successfully achieved an overall reduction in serious injury crashes and fatalities since 2006, Washington transportation officials felt that more effort was needed to determine where the highest reduction in crashes could be realized. Impaired driving and speeding were identified as the top two causes of crashes. Personnel and grant funding were shifted to these two important "Priority One" areas.

WSDOT and WTSC also improved the State's traffic safety structure by implementing an integrated systems approach. The State works with local agencies to garner their support and cooperation, then helps local agencies prioritize projects to target areas where investment can generate the greatest safety benefits.

*Washington's
Priority One
areas and
Corridor Safety
program help
deliver an
integrated SHSP:
"Target Zero."*

The Corridor Safety Program, an example of a Target Zero Delivery System, addresses safety issues with low-cost, near-term solutions that are identified based on collision history or community concern. A two-year project is established with local leadership working with WSDOT to build an action plan for education, enforcement, and engineering. Each corridor project is "branded" with its own project logo and Web site. Once the plan is developed, a public process is initiated and this includes a kick-off meeting and quarterly coordination meetings. To date, participating local communities have realized \$25 in savings for every \$1 invested in the program – an impressive benefit-cost ratio.

Breakout Sessions: Emphasis Area Working Groups

In the afternoon, each emphasis area committee met for one hour to brainstorm potential strategies to reduce traffic deaths and serious injuries. They had received potential effective countermeasures to consider as a starting point. A member of each team reported to the whole group. Each group then spent the next hour discussing action steps to implement one or more top strategies. A facilitator moderated the dialogue in each group while they used the "SHSP Emphasis Areas and Countermeasures" document for guidance. Teams reported out at the end of the action steps brainstorming. Planning worksheets were supplied to each group to document their work.

5. Next Steps in Idaho's SHSP Update

The SHSP update peer exchange was just one step in Idaho's process to update its plan. Two actions, learning from peers and gathering meaningful input from local stakeholders, are crucial to the SHSP update's success. The following next steps were identified in order to complete the SHSP update by March 2010:

- The working groups expanded upon the strategies and action plans for each emphasis area and provided a full report to ITD by December 10, 2009.
- ITD staff will combine emphasis area group reports into a draft SHSP. The draft was presented to the Oversight Team for approval in February 2010. After obtaining approval, ITD will finalize the plan.
- ITD staff will oversee continued communication and coordination among the committee, working groups, and local agencies as new safety projects and programs are implemented.
- Safety projects will be documented in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and performance strategies will be tracked.

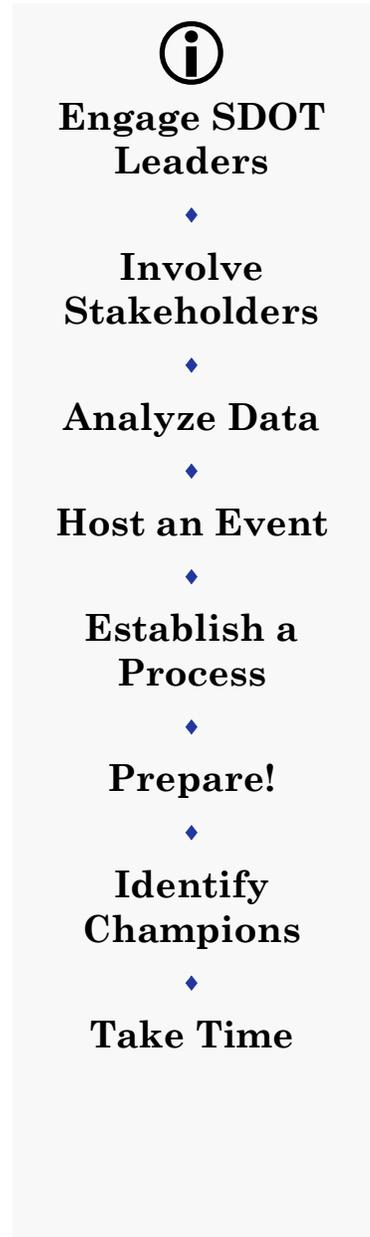
While the strategies outlined in the SHSP will be approved by the Oversight Team, the action steps necessary to implement the strategies may change over time. The working groups are expected to continue to function after the update is complete; their role will be to assist in the implementation of the strategies and action plans, to continuously monitor the plan's performance, and to recommend changes to action plans as needed.

6. Learning from Idaho and its Peers

The purpose of a peer exchange is to allow participants to learn from one another and incorporate advice, suggestions, and best practices into their own activities. Idaho followed an approach used in Nevada and Missouri by combining the learning opportunities of a peer exchange with a brainstorming session and SHSP update kick-off event for stakeholders. These eight "lessons learned" may be helpful to other States as they update their SHSPs.

Engage State DOT leadership in the SHSP update process

Support from State DOT leadership is essential to ensure that the strategies and actions in the SHSP are implemented in the STIP. Leadership involvement also reassures local and regional organizations as well as the State legislature that the process is credible.



In Idaho, the ITD Acting Director supported both the plan update and the decision to initiate the process with a peer event. His support has been critical in communicating the message that safety is a high priority in Idaho. The fact that the reduction of traffic fatalities is the number one performance measure for ITD also helps direct more funding to safety projects.

Stakeholder participation is essential

ITD has been actively partnering with stakeholder groups to communicate the importance of safety and to develop and implement strategies that address safety issues. For example, ITD has created the IHSC, a network of individuals, organizations, and agencies throughout Idaho that will work together to implement the SHSP at the local level. At the same time, ITD has shifted Idaho's culture toward more responsible decision-making when driving and a belief that traffic deaths are not just part of quotidian life in Idaho. IHSC will also educate new partners about the value of the SHSP and will continue to work at the local level to implement the plan's strategies and actions.

Idaho's emphasis area committees include both behavioral and infrastructure specialists to obtain input from partners. These groups help to develop cross-cutting strategies and action plans for the SHSP, and they also disseminate information to other stakeholders about the importance of implementing the SHSP.

Analyses of safety data provide the foundation for prioritizing safety issues and improvement efforts

Idaho's analyses of trends in crash data resulted in a solid understanding of the State's safety problems and made it possible to identify emphasis areas for safety improvements. Analyzing and quantifying the economic cost of crashes helped to demonstrate to stakeholders the financial implications associated with *not* addressing safety.

Similarly, Missouri and Washington State described how their data analyses helped them to understand crash profiles in their respective State and to identify those areas where the investment of resources would generate the highest benefit-cost ratios.

A peer exchange creates an effective environment for "kick starting" a SHSP update



Idaho's experience using a peer exchange for its SHSP update was considered both productive and positive. The event organizer indicated that the format "absolutely made a difference for Idaho." It provided a structured, high-profile opportunity for ITD leadership to work with a diverse group of safety partners, peer states, and FHWA.

Feedback indicated that the message regarding funding projects was most important. Peer states contributed to the event by introducing new concepts and examples of strategies and action plans that have a proven track record for success. FHWA's presence at the event helped the State to emphasize the role of the SHSP in allocating HSIP funds.

The SHSP Update Peer Exchange is a means to an end, not the end itself

The event helped to initiate the SHSP update process. However, a lot of work remains to be done in order to finalize the strategies and action plans. ITD has established a process for the plan update, but it will require considerable time and resources from ITD and partners to ensure the successful completion of a useful plan.

Preparation and planning efforts are reflected in the overall success of the peer event

ITD invested significant time and effort in preparing for the SHSP update peer exchange. Preparations included developing the agenda, addressing logistics and selecting appropriate peer presenters, and working with FHWA to arrange for peer participation. Furthermore, it involved researching the proper emphasis areas for Idaho, assembling the emphasis area committees, and identifying key stakeholders to lead and participate in these working groups. For the working groups to be most productive, ITD selected facilitators to lead them and background materials were prepared and distributed to participants. Although time-consuming, this preparation was essential to the success of the event.

Recruit capable group leaders and facilitators to assist working groups

To ensure the development of appropriate and realistic strategies and action plans, it is important to not only choose the working group participants carefully, but also to provide them with strong leaders and skilled facilitators. Emphasis area group leaders are most effective when they are knowledgeable about the subject matter and can devote time and energy to their role. Group leaders also need to commit to continuing coordination after the event to make sure the work product is delivered in a timely manner. Pre-assigning leaders allows them sufficient time to prepare for the meeting.

Facilitators play an important role in keeping the discussion organized and focused and addressing group dynamics. The role of a facilitator is particularly valuable when the groups are very diverse and the time frame is limited.

A one-day meeting does not provide enough time to complete data analysis, strategic planning, or development of action plans

One afternoon may not be enough to accomplish the tasks assigned to the emphasis area working groups. While it helps to give participants read-ahead materials, participants may not be adequately prepared. Working groups need some time to build trust and engage in meaningful dialogue or brainstorming. Teambuilding is particularly important in situations where the working groups are expected to function as teams *after* the peer event, such as the case in Idaho.

7. Feedback and Suggestions

Participants provided feedback about the peer exchange. This feedback suggests that the groups would have benefited from having additional discussion time. Participants recommended that FHWA extend the peer exchange to 1.5 days, allowing them additional time to absorb the data, finalize strategies, and draft action plans. Additionally, they thought it would be valuable to host discussions with the working groups prior to the peer exchange. FHWA could conduct these discussions via teleconference or Webinar in order to explain the purpose of the update, review the background materials, and allow emphasis area working group members to get acquainted.

Appendix A: SHSP Update Presenters and Planners

Mary Hunter
Highway Safety Manager
Office of Highway Operations and Safety, ITD
PO Box 7129
Boise, ID 83707
Office Phone: (208) 334-8101
Mary.Hunter@itd.idaho.gov

Brent Jennings, P.E.
State Highway Operations and Safety Engineer
Office of Highway Operations and Safety, ITD
P.O. Box 7129
Boise, ID 83707
Office Phone: (208) 334-8557
Brent.Jennings@itd.idaho.gov

Lance Johnson
Traffic/Safety Program Manager
FHWA Idaho Division Office
3050 Lakeharbor Lane, #126
Boise, ID 83703
Office Phone: (208) 334-1843
Lance.Johnson@dot.gov

Tamiko Brim-Burnell
Transportation Specialist, SHSP & TSP Coordination
FHWA Office of Safety
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington DC 20590
Office Phone: (202) 366-1200
Tamiko.Burnell@dot.gov

R. Benjamin Gribbon
Program Manager, Roadway Safety Professional
Capacity Building
FHWA Office of Safety
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington DC 20590
Office Phone: (202) 366-1809
Benjamin.Gribbon@dot.gov

Keith Sinclair
Safety Engineer
10 South Howard Street, Suite 4000
Baltimore, MD 21201
Office Phone: (410) 962-3742
Keith.Sinclair@dot.gov

Jon Nelson, P.E.
Senior Traffic Studies Specialist
Missouri Department of Transportation
105 W. Capitol Avenue
Jefferson City, MO 65102
Office Phone: (573) 751-1157
Jonathan.Nelson@modot.mo.gov

Angie Ward
Washington Traffic Safety Commission
621 8th Avenue SE, Suite 409
Olympia, WA 98501
Office Phone: (360) 725-9888
award@wtsc.wa.gov

Matthew Enders, P.E.
Washington State Department of Transportation
Highways and Local Programs Division
PO Box 47390
310 Maple Park Avenue
Olympia, WA 98504-7390
Office Phone: (360) 705-6907
endersm@wsdot.wa.gov

Appendix B: SHSP Emphasis Areas

1. Aggressive Driving
2. Inattentive or Distracted Driving
3. Safety Restraints
4. Impaired Driving
5. Youthful Drivers
6. Vulnerable Users
7. Commercial Motor Vehicles
8. Motorcyclists
9. Lane Departure
10. Intersection Crashes
11. Crash Response (Emergency Medical Services)

Appendix C: Agenda

IDAHO'S STRATEGIC HIGHWAY SAFETY PLAN WORKSHOP AGENDA

Wednesday, November 4, 2009

Location: Doubletree Riverside

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 7:30 | Continental Breakfast |
| 8:00 | Welcome – Acting Director Scott Stokes, ITD |
| 8:15 | Workshop Overview and Expected Outcomes – Mary Hunter |
| 8:30 | Review of Idaho's Crash Problem and Current Programs – Brent Jennings |
| 9:00 | Strategic Highway Safety Plan Value and Purpose – Tamiko Burnell, FHWA |
| 9:30 | Break |
| 9:45 | Missouri's Systemic Approach to Saving Lives – Jon Nelson, Missouri Department of Transportation |
| 10:30 | Washington's Local Safety Corridors and Local Coalitions
Angie Ward, Washington Traffic Safety Commission
Matthew Enders, Washington Department of Transportation |
| 11:45 | Discussion of Facilitated Work Groups - Tamiko Burnell |
| 12:00 | Lunch |
| 1:00 | Emphasis Area Breakout Groups Session 1 – Selection of Effective Strategies |
| 2:00 | Emphasis Area Breakout Groups Session 1 – Report Out |
| 2:30 | Break |
| 2:45 | Emphasis Area Breakout Groups Session 2 – Selection of Action Steps for Strategies |



- 3:45 Emphasis Area Breakout Groups Session 2 – Report Out
- 4:15 Future Expectations and Next Steps
- 4:30 Adjourn