
Toward Zero Deaths

A NATIONAL STRATEGY ON HIGHWAY SAFETY

With over 35,000 fatalities occurring on the Nation's highways each year, roadway safety remains one of the most challenging issues facing America. Although many highway safety stakeholder organizations have stepped forward to address these needs, there is no singular strategy that unites these common efforts. The dialogue on the need to create a national strategic highway safety plan was explored at a workshop in Savannah, Georgia, on September 2–3, 2009. There was strong agreement among the participants that even one death is unacceptable and therefore, we must aspire to move toward zero deaths. Although many details need to be addressed, with this input from over 70 workshop participants and further discussions with the Steering Committee following the workshop, the name of this effort became *Toward Zero Deaths: A National Strategy on Highway Safety*.

What Is the Purpose of This Strategy?

Toward Zero Deaths: A National Strategy on Highway Safety will be a data-driven effort focusing on identifying and creating opportunities for changing American culture as it relates to highway safety. The effort will also focus on developing strong leadership and champions in the organizations that can directly impact highway safety through engineering, enforcement, education, emergency medical service (EMS), policy, public health, communications, and other efforts. The national strategy will be utilized as a guide and framework by safety stakeholder organizations to enhance current national, state and local safety planning and implementation efforts. The intent is to develop a mechanism for bringing together a wider range of highway safety stakeholders to work toward institutional and cultural changes.

One of the most significant needs is to change Americans' attitudes toward highway safety. There are already programs and technologies that can result in substantial reductions in fatalities; however, those benefits will not be realized as long as the public and elected officials are not willing to pass laws or take the actions needed to implement them.

This is why the national strategy will have *two tiers: Cultural Change* and *Building the Foundation of Safety*. We need to bring about cultural changes and strengthen leadership while improving the effectiveness of current activities.

What Are the Next Steps?

The goal is to develop an outline for the national strategy by the Spring 2010 and finalize the strategy in the following year. To reach those goals, the next immediate step is to identify and understand challenges and opportunities in reducing highway fatalities. Much work has been done to identify safety strategies and quantify their effectiveness, but additional research is needed to determine the impact of these strategies when fully implemented. The impact must include projections of lives saved as well as the health care costs of highway injuries and deaths, best practices, effective means of creating a cultural change, and other issues.

How Can You Be Involved?

Even more important than the national strategy itself is the process through which it will be developed. It must be both comprehensive and cross-cutting; it will need to have input and involvement from a broad base of stakeholders. Members of over 30 organizations have already expressed an interest in participating in the **Stakeholder Group** being facilitated by FHWA and AASHTO to provide additional input and feedback throughout the process. If you are interested in joining, please contact Kelly Hardy at khardy@aaashto.org or 202-624-5868.