Updating Rhode Island's Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP)

An RSPCB Peer Exchange

Introduction and Background

In January 2012, Rhode Island kicked off its Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) update with a leadership committee meeting where key safety stakeholders presented an overview of Rhode Island's accomplishments since initial SHSP approval in 2007. Meeting participants also discussed the SHSP update process and approaches for tracking the Plan's progress. Additionally, the leadership committee adopted the "Toward Zero Deaths" (TZD) initiative. In February 2012, Rhode Island's SHSP steering committee met to discuss next steps on the SHSP update. Committee members described data deficiencies in Rhode Island and the need to track fatalities and serious injury crashes with greater accuracy. The steering committee also agreed with the decision to adopt the TZD initiative. The next step in the SHSP update process was hosting a peer exchange.

This report summarizes the peer exchange sponsored by the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) that focused on Rhode Island's SHSP update.

Rhode Island's goals for the peer exchange included learning from other States' experiences and incorporating success factors into its SHSP update. RIDOT applied to the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Roadway Safety Professional Capacity Building (RSPCB) Peer-to-Peer (P2P) Program seeking technical assistance to learn from others' experiences on the following topics:

- Improving crash forms to better capture data on speeding, distracted driving, and toxicology;
- Integrating databases to determine crash rates and contributing factors, as well as statistical outcomes of injury crashes;
- Aligning Highway Safety Plan (HSP) and SHSP goals, particularly those related to TZD; and
- Measuring the effectiveness of the SHSP, maintaining stakeholder involvement, and incorporating the SHSP into all agency plans.

The event focused on sharing information and best practices for addressing the issues outlined above. In selecting peers, RIDOT sought States with strong data collection and analysis capabilities, experience with aligning safety plans' goals and tracking SHSP effectiveness, as well as success in sustaining and

ABOUT THE PEER EXCHANGE

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

Date

March18 –19, 2012

Location

Warwick, Rhode Island

Host

Rhode Island Department of Transportation

Key Participants

Rhode Island Attorney General

Rhode Island Department of Administration, Statewide Planning Program

Rhode Island Department of Health

Rhode Island Department of Motor Vehicles

Rhode Island Office of Highway Safety

Rhode Island Police Chiefs Association

Rhode Island State Police

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Region 1

Georgia Department of Transportation

Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety

Maine Department of Transportation

FHWA Rhode Island Division Office

FHWA Office of Safety

U.S. DOT Volpe Center

FHWA's Office of Safety sponsors P2P events. Learn more.

implementing the SHSP. Peers at the event included the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), Georgia's Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS), and the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT).

Following the peer presentations, Rhode Island's safety stakeholders analyzed the State's current SHSP, highlighting its strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement. Working in small groups they developed goals, strategies, and objectives for the emphasis areas. Stakeholders then reconvened as a large group to gain consensus on the goals, strategies, and objectives.

Preparing for Rhode Island's Peer Event

Rhode Island's peer event was a joint effort of RIDOT and the FHWA Rhode Island Division Office, as well as the FHWA Office of Safety. Key staff from these offices formed the planning team who spent two months preparing for the peer exchange. Their planning and preparation process included the following steps:

- *Engaging State safety staff as champions* – Key individuals from RIDOT initiated the peer exchange. Engaging individuals in the peer exchange who manage various aspects of the SHSP process was important to ensure momentum for the update process and to secure champions for implementing actions following the event. The involvement of RIDOT safety staff before and after the event will be essential to ensure implementation of proposed actions.
- *Selecting and inviting peers* – Event organizers chose peer agencies (GDOT, GOHS, and MaineDOT) that demonstrated success in data collection and management, performance tracking, and stakeholder engagement. Selecting peers that effectively addressed the host agency's program needs was critical to successfully meeting Rhode Island's goals for the peer exchange.
- *Recruiting participants* – Members of Rhode Island's SHSP steering committee were encouraged to attend the event, including representatives from the four "E's" – engineeering, education, enforcement, and emergency medical services (EMS). Since Rhode Island is a small State it can be difficult to find champions and subject matter experts across all emphasis areas. For this reason, RIDOT wanted to engage the large group responsible for the SHSP update.
- *Communicating with peers before the event to provide direction on desired feedback* – Prior to the peer exchange, the RIDOT safety staff developed a list of questions for peers to address in their presentations. These questions focused on safety data issues, flex funding uses, alignment of the SHSP and HSP, enagaging the leadership committee and the steering committee, and experiences with TZD initiatives. Pre-event preparation allowed both peers and attendees to better understand Rhode Island's goals for the peer exchange.
- *Hosting the peer event* – The peer event planning team created an agenda for the peer exchange that addressed Rhode Island's needs. The planning team also designed discussion worksheets for the workshop that captured feedback on next steps for the SHSP update.

Proceedings

The purpose of the peer exchange was to continue Rhode Island's SHSP update and sustain momentum for the safety stakeholders. Workshop participants included 40 professionals representing 27 organizations and the four "E's" (see Appendix A for the complete participant list).

Welcome and Opening Remarks

The peer exchange opened with welcoming remarks from RIDOT's leadership and the FHWA Rhode Island Division Office Administrator (see Appendix B for the agenda).

RIDOT's director welcomed participants to Rhode Island's SHSP Peer Exchange. He emphasized the importance of improving safety and noted RIDOT's commitment to FHWA's TZD campaign. He explained that TZD is a national strategy that focuses on developing strong leadership and champions in organizations that can directly impact highway safety through engineering, enforcement, education, EMS, policy, public health, communications, among other efforts. The director stressed that the peer exchange is an opportunity for Rhode Island to learn from other areas in the country facing similar problems in their safety programs and updating their SHSP. He encouraged a collaborative environment and discussion with stakeholders and visiting peers to strengthen Rhode Island's SHSP. At his request, all participants then introduced themselves to the group.

The FHWA Rhode Island Division Office Administrator also welcomed participants and reiterated that safety is the number one priority for FHWA. He thanked the partners and peer States for attending and for their enthusiasm for Rhode Island's safety program. He urged participants to learn from each other with respect to available resources and tools for building stakeholder relationships, overcoming data issues, and updating the SHSP.

Staff from the FHWA Rhode Island Division Office and RIDOT then presented an overview of the workshop and background information about highway safety in Rhode Island. Next, peer agencies discussed their experience and perspective on creating and implementing a successful SHSP. Following the peer presentations on day one, breakout groups assessed strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement in Rhode Island's current SHSP. Rhode Island's SHSP Coordinator then presented information on data for Rhode Island's emphasis areas including occupant protection/seatbelts, younger drivers, distracted driving, Intersections and run-off road (lane departure), impaired drivers, and speeding. Using these data, participants spent the rest of day one and the following morning on goals and strategies for implementing the updated plan and on objectives to track performance.

Overview of the Highway Safety Improvement Program

The Safety and Operations Engineer from the FHWA Rhode Island Division Office presented an overview of FHWA's safety program. She emphasized that the SHSP is the guiding document for achieving strategic reductions in fatal and serious injury crashes.

The SHSP Program Manager from the FHWA Office of Safety provided more detail on FHWA's safety program. The primary FHWA safety program is the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP). The purpose of HSIP is to reduce the number of fatal and severe injury crashes on all public roads by correcting or improving hazardous roadway conditions or addressing a highway safety problem. HSIP includes a requirement for States to develop an SHSP, which serves as an umbrella document that addresses all highway safety priorities. She also stressed that many States, like Rhode Island, are undergoing a process to update their SHSP. She asked participants to think about how peer States' experiences could apply to Rhode Island and enhance their SHSP efforts.

Rhode Island's SHSP

RIDOT's Managing Engineer in Traffic Design and Research presented an overview of Rhode Island's concerns and issues in updating its SHSP. The Rhode Island SHSP steering and leadership committees focus on identifying opportunities for significant reductions in fatal and injury crashes. Rhode Island is aware of its challenges with respect to data collection and data management challenges. A lack of data integration and data sharing makes it difficult to process data for trend analysis. More readily accessible data would allow for tracking of performance measures and gauging the effectiveness of countermeasures.

Peer Presentations

Prior to the event, representatives from Rhode Island's SHSP steering committee compiled a list of questions related to issues that Rhode Island hoped to address in its SHSP update. The three participating peer agencies developed their presentations in response to those questions. While GDOT and GOHS worked together to develop a joint presentation, they presented separately to offer their respective agency's perspectives on Georgia's SHSP. An overview of all peer presentations follows.

GDOT

GDOT's Safety Program Manager in the Office of Traffic Operations presented an overview of Georgia's road system mileage and crash figures. A unique challenge for Georgia is that its 159 counties require coordination between many local agencies for crash data reporting. Similar to Rhode Island, about 40 percent of Georgia's fatalities occur off-system, i.e., on local or other non-State maintained roads. Georgia's fatality rate has been steadily declining and is currently around 1.0 fatality per 100 million vehicle-miles, which is on par with current national trends.

GDOT is responsible for Georgia's SHSP and HSIP. Georgia's first SHSP attempt in 2004 was unsuccessful and, as a result, GDOT created an engineering action plan for safety in 2005. Later, a safety operations manager position was created to support development of the SHSP, which was successfully unveiled in 2006.

At GDOT, crash reporting, Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) data, and roadway inventory data are the responsibility of the Traffic Operations Office in the Division of Operations and Permits. All Georgia law enforcement agencies must submit original crash reports to GDOT within 45 days of the crash. The Department of Motor Vehicle Services transferred responsibility for crash reporting to GDOT in 2005.

Recommendations from the discussion on Georgia's SHSP successes follow.

- Coordinate closely with partner agencies and provide consistent reports on progress. To assist with managing crash data while working with many partners, Georgia has developed some easily accessible data queries to provide a quick look at current crashes for the year as well as a dashboard to monitor safety goals. GDOT's policy is to show three years of crash data rather than raw numbers to more effectively portray data trends due to the variable nature of crashes. In addition, GDOT issues a daily fatality report that helps compare current data to previous year information.

- Improve crash data management for accurate analysis results. Georgia created an integrated database with multiple layers of available data to describe the crash and its location. Using attributes such as roadway characteristics data, statewide traffic crash data (both local roads and State routes), traffic counts, commercial vehicle data, FARS data, and geo-location of crashes, Georgia is able to perform analysis that is more robust. A geographic information system (GIS) assigns a latitude and longitude to each crash.

- Address data reporting and quality issues to better track fatal and injury crashes. GDOT relayed its frustrations as well as some strategies to mitigate the issues related to crash data quality. Georgia shares Rhode Island's concern that injury assessments at the crash scene are subjective and are a best estimate by law enforcement. Georgia is investigating the possibility of connecting EMS data (e.g., National EMS Information System (NEMSIS) data) with hospital data (e.g., Crash Outcome Data Evaluation System (CODES)) to improve the quality of fatal, serious, and minor injury databases. GDOT has experienced some challenges with its crash form in potentially over-representing speed as a result of having two speed-related codes: "exceeding speed limit" and "too fast for conditions." Further training on the difference between these codes and attention to detail during data integration may mitigate this issue.

  Like Rhode Island, Georgia law enforcement does not have the capacity to collect toxicology information for every fatal and non-fatal crash and currently tests around 40 percent of drivers involved in fatal crashes. Further training and discussion of this data quality issue are required to develop a strategy. GDOT would also like to improve the accuracy and timeliness of collecting crash data. To meet this goal, Georgia is promoting an electronic submission partnership with law enforcement, with a target of 75 percent of reports received electronically by the end of 2012.

- Outsource crash data management systems. GDOT has turned a $2 million annual expenditure for managing and hosting crash data into a source of income, of approximately $1 million per year. To do so, GDOT selected a suitable contract vendor, Open Portal Solutions, after issuing a request for proposal. The vendor receives limited exclusive rights to the data in exchange for their crash data management services. The vendor brings proven experience from other States for managing crash data, aggressively markets statewide electronic crash reporting, and provides the data via a query portal called Georgia Electronic Accident Reporting System (GEARS). GEARS has a number of simple trends and graphics for queries as well as a spatial component to show crash types across Georgia's roadways. GDOT partners can also access GEARS to perform queries.

- Leverage partnerships with universities. GDOT encourages working with universities; it has partnered with the University of Alabama Center for Advanced Public Safety (CAPS) to perform statistical analysis of its crash data. The University's Critical

Analysis Reporting Environment (CARE) system uses advanced analytical and statistical techniques to allow users to easily and quickly generate descriptive statistics and geospatial displays of data. In addition, GDOT works with CAPS to provide crash data and a comprehensive analysis tool to local governments and other safety professionals outside GDOT.

- Use safety funds effectively and efficiently. Georgia has a significant budget for safety expenditures, approximately $4.00/per capita. Georgia's goal is to invest this funding in strategies and activities that have the highest impact on crash types and lead to reduced fatalities.

GOHS

The GOHS Operations Manager for SHSP explained that GOHS works closely with GDOT, but is its own agency; GOHS is responsible for Georgia's HSP. He provided an overview of the safety policies and regulatory environment of Georgia and discussed stakeholder and SHSP team involvement. He stressed that the SHSP is referred to as the "Governor's SHSP," which is an important distinction to keep State leaders closely engaged. Like Rhode Island, Georgia has adopted a TZD mission. In Georgia, the highest percentages of fatalities involve no restraint, as well as alcohol, speed, and collisions with pedestrians. GOHS and GDOT work together closely to ensure that the SHSP functions as an umbrella document for highway safety in Georgia. Additional success factors for Georgia's SHSP include:

- Implementing and enforcing legislative strategies. Georgia instituted an effective graduated licensing program to address the fact that vehicle crashes are the number one cause of death for people between 1 and 17 years old. A permit for driving instruction can be issued at age 15 and a graduated driver's license at 16 if the operator has attended driver's education. The age for licensure is 17 in all other cases. Georgia also has a motorcycle helmet law and a primary seat belt law. An exemption for seat belts in pick-up trucks was repealed in 2010, which resulted in increased seat belt use from about 89 percent in previous years to 93 percent in 2011.

- Ensuring efficient use of SHSP partners' time. When organizing its SHSP, Georgia's leadership committee met quarterly for two hours during which both SHSP and Traffic Records Coordinating Committee (TRCC) business was conducted. Originally, the SHSP committee had the same membership as TRCC. TRCC is now integrated into the SHSP as the traffic records emphasis area in the SHSP and the 22-member SHSP leadership committee meets quarterly for one hour. In these meetings, the task teams responsible for each emphasis area provide updates and vote on action items.

- Inviting partners to the table to find potential synergies in their respective safety missions. Georgia used the FHWA publication *Strategic Highway Safety Plans: A Champion's Guide to Saving Lives* as a reference for stakeholders to consult for the SHSP. Georgia understands that it is critical to have Federal, State, and local participation to coordinate efforts in establishing statewide goals, objectives, and key emphasis areas in the SHSP process.

- Aligning all safety plans and being cognizant of performance measure requirements under consideration at the national level. The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users requires States to develop and implement a statewide, comprehensive highway safety plan. Georgia's SHSP includes the "4 safety Es," is data-driven, and aligns all safety plans such as the HSP, Commercial Vehicle Safety Plan, engineering Safety Action Plan, Trauma and EMS strategic plan, public health, metropolitan planning organizations' safety plans, railroad safety plans, and others. Georgia's HSP is the education component and the SHSP aligns with the performance measures of the HSP. Georgia has also adopted the National Cooperative Safety Research Program's *Report 501- Integrated Safety Management Process* as its checklist due to SHSP's data-driven nature.

MaineDOT

MaineDOT's Safety Office Manager began with a presentation of Maine's safety laws and statistics. Maine does not have a mandatory motorcycle helmet law; its previous helmet law was repealed. The State has a distracted driving law that prohibits texting and cellphone

use for drivers who are 18 years old and under. There is a primary seatbelt law in Maine with fines based on the number of offenses. Seat belt use is currently at 83 percent; in the mid-2000s, Maine had the third lowest seatbelt rate in the country at 59 percent as a consequence of the State's previous secondary (versus primary) seatbelt law. Maine is now on par or slightly below the national average fatality rate per 100 million vehicle-miles. About three-quarters (70 percent) of fatalities in Maine result from lane departure crashes. However, Maine is a relatively small State, which leads to variability in crash data. Keys to Maine's SHSP success include:

- Invest in a well-staffed Crash Records Unit. MaineDOT has six technicians who are responsible for managing, tracking, and analyzing crash data. Their responsibilities include:
  - Performing crash data queries for various studies using systems such as Transportation Information for Decision Enhancement, a robust GIS-linked data warehouse;
  - Performing quality control analysis of crash data using the State's Crash Analysis System and Maine Crash Reporting and Analysis for Safer Highways;
  - Providing crash error reports back to State police or vendors;
  - Managing the High Crash Location (HCL) process and producing HCL data packages, including collision diagrams; assembling crash data information for HCL packets, and distributing to both internal and external users; and
  - Maintaining the speed zone asset for State and local roadways in a geospatial database, called MainE's TRAnsportation Network Solution.

  These staff are critical to creating a responsive, data-driven SHSP.

- Integrate strategic areas to highlight the interdisciplinary nature of collision reduction efforts. In 2005, Maine became the first State to have an approved SHSP. After the first SHSP was complete, it quickly became outdated. Over time, Maine added more emphasis areas to combine safety initiatives under the SHSP to collaborate, coordinate, communicate, and integrate ongoing activities with champions who had the expertise to grow and sustain the emphasis area.

- Use data relationships to bring focus and attention to the SHSP. Maine has developed a simple query format to perform crash data analysis on attributes contained in the crash forms. One example was a query performed for crashes involving small children during school hours, which found that children on school buses are less likely to be injured than while riding in their parents' car to school. MaineDOT has also developed some standard reports on topics such as motorcycle crashes and high-crash locations to communicate the latest crash trends. MaineDOT is also in the process of developing drug recognition data and crashes involving operation after suspension with partners as an outreach effort.

- Build consistent, robust databases for accurate data analysis. Maine is developing data quality and new data field initiatives. In 2011, MaineDOT worked closely with State and local police as well as information technology professionals to migrate old data to a newer Model Minimum Uniform Crash Criteria-compliant crash reporting methodology. Maine decided to make sure the data transition took place over the course of a single calendar year to minimize any potential risks deriving from data integration issues. Maine is encouraging electronic records of citations to track drivers who have been given warnings as well as electronic EMS records.

- Encourage regular communication with partners to find synergies for safety missions and data management. Maine's SHSP team meets every four months to discuss progress and to facilitate one-on-one partnering to work through specific areas. As an example, approximately every month, MaineDOT distributes relevant links to strategic areas or quick notes on the emphasis areas to its safety stakeholders. In addition, transportation safety advocates and professionals across Maine formed the Maine Transportation Safety Coalition (MTSC) to improve the safety of Maine roadways. Stakeholders find MTSC's website a useful resource for safety, crash data, and SHSP information as well as being a good way to maintain an informal dialogue.

- Frame the SHSP as a State plan rather than a specific agency's plan. Maine is in the process of integrating the HSIP, HSP, and SHSP to the extent possible. MaineDOT works closely with the Maine Bureau of Highway Safety (BHS) to jointly

identify strategic focus areas and focus area champions. MaineDOT and BHS also discuss any major actions regarding the SHSP. A separate data document developed by the MTSC provides more detail on select crash types and other contributing factors of interest. The SHSP undergoes an annual status check and short progress report, but the entire SHSP is not updated every year.

Question and Answer and Discussion Session for Peer States

Following the peer presentations, attendees discussed a number of concerns regarding their States' safety programs, including:

- Significant underreporting continues to be an issue for speeding-related, alcohol-related, and serious injury crashes. Both Maine and Georgia have speeding and "unsafe for conditions" as reporting categories; both States do not have blood-alcohol content testing for all fatal crashes. Georgia is anticipating further analysis of fatal and incapacitating injuries such as a benefit/cost analysis that includes the medical cost of the injury. Questions left unanswered for all participants included:
  - How can law enforcement indicate that a driver is speeding without being held liable for not issuing a citation for speeding?
  - How can States overcome underreporting issues related to single-vehicle injury crashes?

- Enforceability of a distracted driving law as well as the definition of distraction for legal purposes is a challenge. Distracted driving is frequently discussed in the media; it is a high-profile topic. Participants agree that it is difficult to develop a data-driven approach when little data exist on distraction or on proven countermeasures. The group discussed investigating alternative performance measures such as public awareness in order to track progress.

- Racial profiling in implementation of a primary seat belt law remains a concern in Rhode Island. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration performed a study that found that there was no differential treatment after adopting a primary law.

- Tracking crash reports throughout the victim lifecycle is a goal. There are significant concerns about collecting and maintaining personally identifiable information through hospital records. Georgia noted that it has a patient care report where EMS and hospital data are mapped to the crash report. Yale New Haven Hospital's study to monitor motor vehicle registry data of elderly drivers involved in a crash was also discussed.

- Improving coordination and collaboration for an integrated safety program with HSIP, HSP, and SHSP documents is important. GDOT and GOHS invite each other to safety events along with law enforcement and other partners to achieve mutually beneficial safety goals. MaineDOT and partner agencies regularly share data to find unique solutions to safety issues. For example, Maine has provided law enforcement agencies with notices of speeding on certain routes at certain times of night.

Breakout Group Discussions

During the afternoon, breakout groups discussed the strengths and weaknesses of Rhode Island's current SHSP as well as opportunities for improvement, elements to include in the new SHSP, and the necessary resources and champions for future success. The breakout groups were designed to allow diverse stakeholders to work together and build relationships in a collaborative setting. Later in the afternoon and in the morning of the second day, groups broke into emphasis area teams to discuss goals, strategies, and action items. Summaries of findings and recommendations from the breakout groups appear below, by topic.

Strengths of Rhode Island's SHSP

The groups noted that Rhode Island's small size is helpful in bringing stakeholders together and encouraging innovations. Other strengths included the following:

- Support for plan. Rhode Island has benefited from strong support from upper-level management and a strong sense of stakeholder commitment to and involvement safety in programs despite the fact that no State funding is tied to the SHSP.

- Strong enforcement program and buy-in from law enforcement. Law enforcement officers have the potential to make a difference across all emphasis areas; their engagement and support are important factors in achieving SHSP goals.
- Communication campaigns. Rhode Island has a robust public service program with announcements focused on seat belts and alcohol, as well as multi-lingual campaigns.

Weaknesses of Rhode Island's SHSP

The groups identified a few weaknesses of Rhode Island's current SHSP, including the following:

- Communication with the public. To date, there has been a lack of reporting and communication of the SHSP to the public and stakeholders; there is no public website to facilitate this dialogue.
- Limited resources. Rhode Island's small size limits the number of champions and experts who can be distributed across emphasis areas. Rhode Island also has challenges with data collection, management, and analysis; these constrain the State's ability to analyze and track outcomes of countermeasures or strategies.
- Coordination. A lack of coordination exists with local agencies, including municipalities, planners, public works staff, and universities. Rhode Island also has limited partnering with private organizations, including insurance companies and universities; currently, there is no Department of Health (DOH) involvement and no dedicated funding for traffic safety initiatives within the DOH.

Opportunities for Improvement

Based on peer discussions and lessons learned from peer presentations, the groups outlined several opportunities for improving the SHSP in its next iteration:

- Consider using HSIP funds to provide grants to enhance or support non-infrastructure safety strategies in the SHSP.
- Standardize data in terms of using GIS to more accurately and consistently identify location data for citations, injury crashes, and distracted drivers. Adopt new procedures for data collections.
- Improve coordination/communications with local municipalities and Local Technical Assistance Programs to support SHSP initiatives.
- Enhance enforcement effectiveness and reporting by combining enforcement campaigns (e.g., seatbelt and alcohol enforcement) due to the prohibition of alcohol checkpoints; increase Driving Under the Influence-certified and drug recognition officers; change State law to allow for mandatory blood testing; strengthen injury and distracted driving data through law enforcement collaboration and training; use Data Driven Approaches to Crime and Traffic Safety.
- Increase communication efforts to the public including improving education/information dissemination to younger drivers through the motor vehicle registry; drivers' education courses; school outreach events; and school resource officers or nurses; simplify the SHSP to engage a greater public audience; increase outreach to minority populations; frame the message in a new way to highlight the fact that young males represent a large percentage of fatalities.
- Address legislative issues by repealing the sunset provision of the primary seat belt law to reduce fatalities; strengthen legal repercussions of alcohol-related offenses including consideration of an ignition interlock law.
- Increase use of low-cost countermeasures and promote systemic improvement strategies to address critical safety areas.
- Improve collection of EMS data by using citation and electronic EMS reporting; implement a memorandum of understanding with the Health Department on FARS data elements.

Emphasis Area Discussions

To prepare for the emphasis area discussions, RIDOT's SHSP Coordinator distributed data handouts for all emphasis areas to participants. Each sheet provided emphasis area data categorized to display trends on demographics, location, time, and contributing factors to crashes. Rhode Island's consultant for the SHSP then presented a brief overview of the strategies and goals from the last SHSP update and demonstrated the tracking dashboard developed for the benefit of the emphasis area champions. The consultant noted that all objectives from the last SHSP were met except one, a seat belt usage target of 85 percent by 2010, which was missed by

a small margin. She advised the group that emphasis area champions are responsible for updating and maintaining the tool and noted that if champions are not determined for each task, the task will not be kept in the SHSP.

The groups worked on goals and strategies for each emphasis area by reviewing this information from the current SHSP. The groups' results are outlined in Appendix C. Common themes for the revised strategies include the following:

- Increase education and public awareness campaigns;
- Improve data collection and sharing within and between agencies;
- Use data to strategically deploy law enforcement campaigns;
- Deploy a variety of low-cost engineering countermeasures; and
- Support legislative initiatives that address behavioral safety issues.

Next, the groups addressed identifying measurable objectives to track the effectiveness of strategies. Draft objectives appear below:

Emphasis Area	Draft Objectives
Younger Drivers	• Reduce fatal crashes in 18-24 age category by 3.2% annually between 2012 and 2016 • Reduce crashes in 18-24 age category by 3.2% annually between 2012 and 2016
Occupant Protection/Seatbelt	• Increase seatbelt usage from 85% to 95% with a goal of 90% by 2016 • Reduce fatalities focusing on teen and younger drivers as they over-represent fatal crashes by 10% by 2016 • 3.2% annual reduction of fatal and serious injury crashes
Distracted Driving	• Establish task force; determine list of measurable objectives by 2016
Intersections and Run-off Road (Lane Departure)	• Reduce fatal and serious injury crashes by 5% annually • Use *Highway Safety Manual* (HSM) as data-driven process for high-crash locations by the end of 2016
Speeding	• Reduce speed and aggressive driving fatal crashes by 3.2% annually between 2012 and 2016 • Reduce speed and aggressive driving serious injury crashes by 3.2% annually between 2012 and 2016
Impaired	• Reduce annual reduction of fatal and serious injury crashes by 3.2% by 2016, complementing the TZD initiative

Next Steps

Rhode Island's peer exchange concluded with participants summarizing next steps for the SHSP update including:

- Finalize goals, strategies, objectives, and action items;
- Identify emphasis area champions and provide them with tracking tool training;
- Determine frequency for coordination/meetings and develop implementation schedules;
- Define roles and responsibilities of champions and team members;
- Develop co-lead role in case of turnover; and
- Determine meeting elements, i.e., education opportunities to hear from experts, ideas for keeping action and interest high.

Key Findings and Lessons Learned

Rhode Island's peer exchange successfully engaged the State's primary highway safety stakeholders in continuing to update the SHSP. Participants provided critical feedback on Rhode Island's existing SHSP, developed goals, strategies, and objectives for seven emphasis areas for the SHSP update, and identified next steps and a preliminary timeline for finalizing the updated SHSP. Stakeholders also learned about successful practices in other States and how to incorporate these practices into planning for Rhode Island's SHSP update. Finally, participants emphasized the value of learning about interagency coordination, data collection to track

fatalities and serious injury crashes, data analysis to support strategies and track performance, and communicating with partners and the public.

Noteworthy practices learned from the event that Rhode Island's stakeholders will focus on included the following:

- Align State safety plans across the four "E's" to engage partners and ensure consistency in tracking performance;
- Identify clearly the SHSP as a State plan to give ownership to all stakeholders;
- Communicate frequently with stakeholders on a regular basis to keep them engaged; and
- Invest in data collection and analysis systems to accurately identify emphasis areas and track performance.

Feedback and Suggestions

Participants and key staff involved in planning the event appreciated the opportunity to learn from peer States and facilitators. The group was enthusiastic about the opportunity to network with their peers and engaged in creating a document that will make a difference in achieving the TZD goal. Participants indicated that the peer presentations provided good information and guidance for Rhode Island's SHSP update. In particular, participants commented that they benefited from learning how other States are addressing similar data issues and challenges and recognized that improvements are possible with close coordination of partner agencies and improved communication. Peer presentations were also helpful to understand how to keep partners involved in the process and build on the resources and skills that each agency offers. One participant noted that the event "generated great ideas" and the "experience served to regenerate energy and passion" for the update process. RIDOT's Managing Engineer in Traffic Design and Research noted: "The peer exchange was a very valuable learning experience for all of us and we are all grateful for the opportunity to have participated. I would highly recommend to any other state embarking on an SHSP update to take advantage of this peer exchange program."

Appendix A: Event Presenters, Planners, and Registrants

Peer Presenters	
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Appendix B: Agenda

RHODE ISLAND STRATEGIC HIGHWAY SAFETY PLAN UPDATE
PEER EXCHANGE/WORKSHOP AGENDA

March 20 - 21, 2012

TUESDAY, MARCH 20, 2012 – PEER EXCHANGE

7:30 am	Registration/Coffee
8:00 am	Welcoming Remarks – Michael Lewis, Rhode Island Secretary of Transportation and Peter Osborn, FHWA Rhode Island Division Administrator
8:15 am	Overview of FHWA's Safety Program - Jacinda Russell - FHWA RI Division Office
8:25 am	SHSP Status Update - Jennifer Warren - FHWA, Office of Safety
8:35 am	Overview of RI's SHSP/Workshop Overview and Expected Outcomes - Bob Rocchio - RI DOT
8:50 am	Peer Presentation: - Norm Cressman - Safety Program Manager, Office of Traffic Operations, Georgia DOT - Randy Clayton - Operations Manager, Governor's Office of Highway Safety
9:35 am	**Break**
9:50 am	Peer Presentation: - Duane Brunell, P.E. - Safety Performance Analysis Manager, Maine DOT
10:35 am	Peers/Rhode Island Discussion
11:30 am	**Lunch**
12:30 pm	SHSP Update - Breakout Groups • Current SHSP Strengths • Current SHSP Weaknesses • SHSP Opportunities for Improvements
1:30 pm	Report Out
2:00 pm	**Break**
2:10 pm	Emphasis Area Data Presentation - Steve Pristawa, RI DOT
2:30 pm	Break Out Groups - Emphasis Area Action Plans • Goals and Strategies
3:30 pm	Report Out
4:00 pm	Wrap-Up and Adjourn

PEER EXCHANGE/WORKSHOP AGENDA (continued)

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21, 2012

8:00 am	Welcome and Logistics
8:15 am	Recap from Day 1 - Jennifer Warren, FHWA Office of Safety
8:30 am	Break Out Groups - Emphasis Area Action Plans (continued) • Goals and Strategies (finalize)
9:30 am	Report Out and Discussion
10:00 am	**Break**
10:15 am	Break Out Groups – Emphasis Area Action Plans for Implementation (lead agencies, performance measures, and targets)
11:15 am	Report Out and Discussion
12:00 pm	**Lunch**

SHSP STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

1:00 pm	SHSP: Next Steps: From Planning to Implementation
3:30 pm	Wrap Up and Adjourn

Appendix C: Emphasis Area – Goals and Strategies

Occupant Protection/Seatbelt	
Goals	• To achieve the highest safety belt use in New England • To reduce fatalities associated with no seatbelt • To reduce fatality rate below the national average fatality rate
Strategies	• Increase education and awareness efforts • Increase targeted enforcement or enhanced enforcement • Collection of seat belt citations, also in electronic format • Day and night enforcement • Repeal primary seatbelt sunset legislation • Work with partners on racial profiling issue • Revitalize Brain Injury Association partnership • Develop partnerships with faith-based groups and other local groups to educate the public • Emphasize seat belt use in drivers education curriculum • Use media or social media to spread message
Younger Drivers	
Goals	No changes to current goal, however some discussion of redefining the age range, currently 18-24
Strategies	Comfortable with current strategies overall with the following exceptions: • Modified existing strategy #2 to increase public outreach and education on the basics of roadway safety aimed at 18-24 age group • Use technology to monitor younger drivers, potentially through a discount insurance program, which would monitor speed, location, etc. • Strengthen statewide Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) network and add a SADD coordinator
Distracted Driving	
Goals	• Establish a baseline of understanding of distracted driving in Rhode Island
Strategies	• Form a taskforce to examine the issue • Examine issue, i.e., definitions, data, countermeasures, etc. • Review enforcement research from NHTSA • Review changes in the law, i.e., hands-free • Work with traffic safety coalition to develop data measures • Define distracted driving for Rhode Island
Intersections and Run-off Road (Lane Departure)	
Goals	• Reduce intersection and run-off the road fatalities and injuries.
Strategies	• Direct proven countermeasures at locations exhibiting the most severe safety needs using the Highway Safety Manual (HSM) • Continue to enhance States' data collection capabilities to further evolve the state of the practice for data-driven highway safety planning • Use safety performance function (SPF) to determine locations • Consider the implementation of proven crash countermeasures including but not limited to: roundabouts, safety edge, rumble strips, median barriers, road safety audits, access management • Evaluate implemented countermeasures

	• Increase enforcement at locations with most severe safety needs, e.g., red-light running cameras, automated speed enforcement in work zones and school zones, targeted police enforcement and campaigns • Conduct public education campaign and coordination with local agencies to increase intersection and run-off-the-road safety • Include information on pedestrians and bicycle safety • Involve local communities in decision making process • Improve safety for vulnerable users (bike/ped/moped/motorcycle) • Target high pedestrian activity locations • Consider complete streets approach in design, as appropriate • Continue outreach to local jurisdictions to improve safety • Reach out to local jurisdictions to form a cooperative effort on intersections and run-off-the-road safety • Designate safety corridors
Speeding	
Goals	No changes to current goal.
Strategies	• Modify strategy - rather than increase enforcement, say "enhance" enforcement of speeding and aggressive driving laws • Keep other existing strategies
Impaired	
Goals	• Eliminate alcohol-related fatalities and serious injuries
Strategies	• Identify reasons for the lack of access to and the credibility of impaired driving serious injury data, and develop solutions to overcome challenges • Broaden public awareness of the dangers of drinking and driving • Work with Traffic Safety Coalition to strengthen laws on impaired driving • Improve impaired driving enforcement • Initiate EMS electronic reporting • Track the number of impaired driving impaired driving citations given by law enforcement during high visibility enforcement initiatives and throughout each year • Track the results from before and after surveys on public attitudes toward impaired driving (Office on Highway Safety survey and Youth Risk Behavioral Survey)