PB98-105844

SAFETY BELT AND MOTORCYCLE HELMET USE IN VIRGINIA: THE 1997 UPDATE

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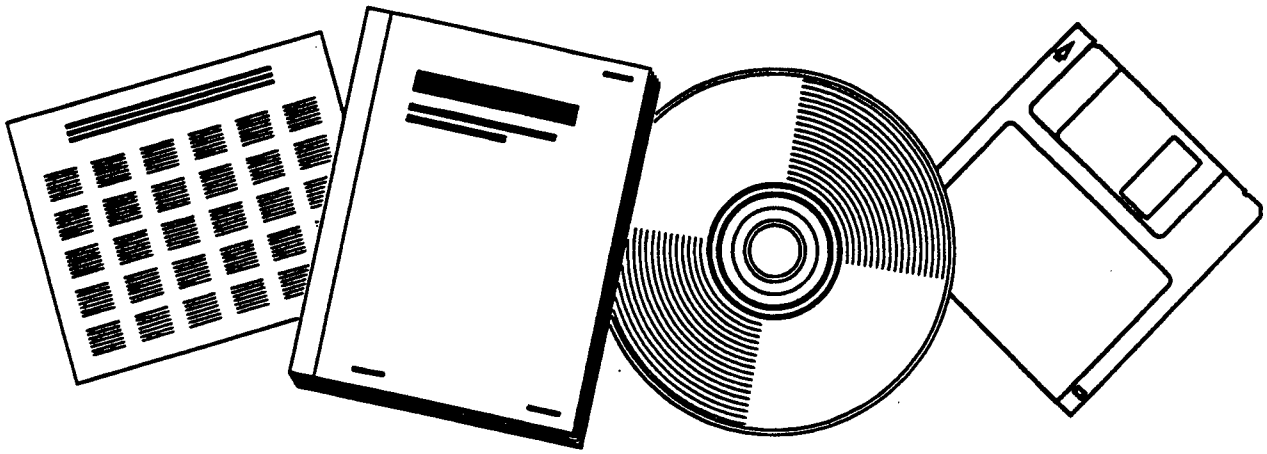

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
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TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE REPORT

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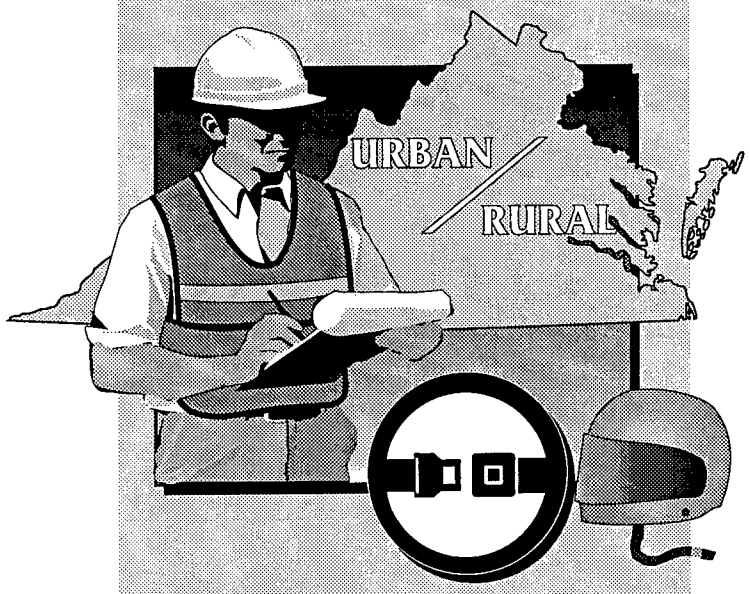

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Abstract

This series of surveys to determine the safety belt and motorcycle helmet use rates in Virginia was initiated to qualify the Commonwealth for incentive funds in accordance with the requirements of Section 153 of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991. To receive the funds, states had to meet specified standards with regard to the existence of pertinent statutes as well as safety belt and motorcycle helmet use rates. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration specified the survey criteria to be used in determining a state's use rate. Over the 3 years the program was in operation (1991-93), Virginia qualified for approximately $1.6 million in funds.

Even though the funding program ended, the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles requested that data collection continue and that the same methods, procedures, and sites be used as were used for the Section 153 program.

This report describes the methodology used for site selection and data collection and adds the results of the 1997 survey to those for the previous years (1992-96). The results show that Virginia's 1997 safety belt use rate was 67.1% and its motorcycle helmet use rate was 98.7%. The helmet use rate had been 100% in all 5 previous years of the study. For the first 5 years the survey was conducted (1992-96), the safety belt use rates were 71.6%, 73.2%, 71.8%, 70.2%, and 69.6%, respectively.

The results for 1997 confirm a downward trend in the use of life-saving and injury-prevention devices (helmets and belts) required by law in Virginia. The drop in safety belt use, from 69.6% in 1996 to 67.1% in 1997, was statistically significant ($p < .05$). Since 1993, when safety belt use peaked at 73.2%, the rate has declined more than 6 percentage points (8.3%).

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REPORT

SAFETY BELT AND MOTORCYCLE HELMET USE IN VIRGINIA: THE 1997 UPDATE

Charles B. Stoke
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(The opinions, findings, and conclusions expressed in this report are those of the author and not necessarily those of the sponsoring agencies.)

Virginia Transportation Research Council
(A Cooperative Organization Sponsored Jointly by the Virginia Department of Transportation and the University of Virginia)

Charlottesville, Virginia

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VTRC 98-TAR1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Safety belt use data were first collected in Virginia in 1974. Early data (1974-77 and 1983-86) were from only the four metropolitan areas (Northern Virginia, Tidewater, Richmond, and Roanoke) of the state. Between 1987 and 1992, data were also collected in nine communities with a population under 15,000. In 1991 and 1992, data were collected in four communities with a population between 50,000 and 100,000. It was only with the initiation of this project that the state had a statewide survey.

This series of surveys to determine the safety belt and motorcycle helmet use rates in Virginia was initiated to qualify the Commonwealth for incentive funds in accordance with the requirements of Section 153 of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991. To receive the funds, states had to meet specified standards with regard to the existence of pertinent statutes as well as safety belt and motorcycle helmet use rates. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration specified the survey criteria to be used in determining a state's use rate. Over the 3 years the program was in operation (1991-93), Virginia qualified for approximately $1.6 million in funds.

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The results for 1997 (see Figure ES-1) confirm a downward trend in the use of life-saving and injury-prevention devices (helmets and belts) required by law in Virginia. The drop in safety belt use, from 69.6% in 1996 to 67.1% in 1997, was statistically significant ($p < .05$). Since 1993, when safety belt use peaked at 73.2%, use has declined more than 6 percentage points (8.3%).

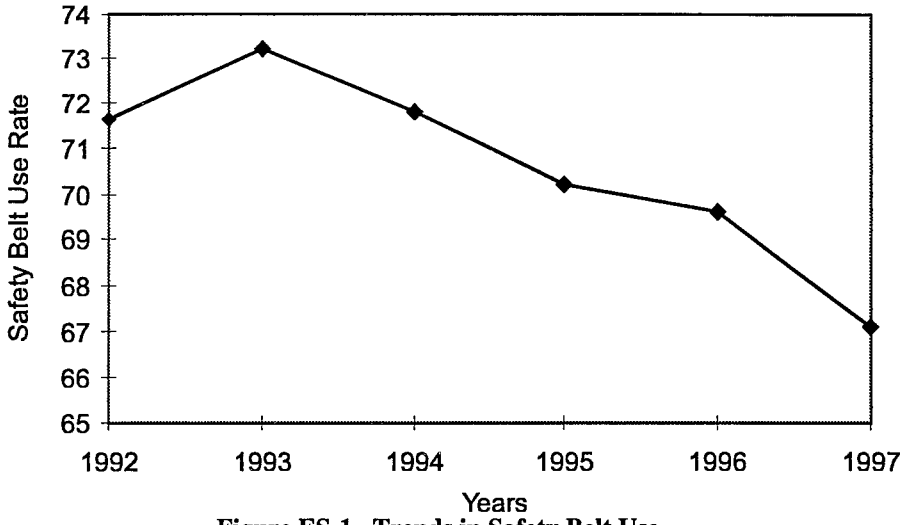

Figure ES-1. Trends in Safety Belt Use

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) added a new section (§ 153) to Title 23 of the U.S. Code. This section authorized the Secretary of Transportation to establish a grant program to support states in adopting and implementing laws governing the use of safety belts and motorcycle helmets. To qualify for first-year funds, a state was required to have laws requiring the use of a helmet by all motorcycle riders and the use of a belt or child safety seat by all front-seat occupants in passenger vehicles. To qualify for second- and third-year funding, a state was required to have mandatory use laws *and* demonstrate a specified level of compliance. In FY 93, states were required to demonstrate statewide belt usage of at least 55% and helmet usage of at least 70%. For FY 94, the required usage levels increased to 70% for belts and 85% for helmets. Virginia qualified for funding all 3 years of the program. The total amount received approached $1.6 million.

On June 29, 1992, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) published the final guidelines for conducting surveys of belt and helmet use in the states.[1] The guidelines required that the selection of survey samples be based on a single "probability based" survey design and that only direct observational data be used to demonstrate compliance. The sample design had to include predetermined protocols for (1) determining sample size; (2) selecting sites; (3) selecting alternate sites when necessary; (4) determining which route, lane, and direction of traffic flow were to be observed; (5) collecting the observational data; and (6) beginning and concluding an observation period. The guidelines further stated that the relative error of the estimate could be no more than ±5% and that all drivers, outboard front-seat passengers, and motorcycle drivers and passengers had to be eligible for observation. The guidelines also required that at least 85% of the state's population be eligible for inclusion and that only the smallest counties, based on population, could be eliminated from the sampling frame. Finally, all daylight hours and all days of the week had to be eligible for inclusion in the sample, and the scheduling of the time and day for each sample site had to be done randomly.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this project was to conduct a survey of safety belt and motorcycle helmet use in accordance with NHTSA's guidelines. Even though the § 153 funding program ended,

safety belt and motorcycle helmet data have continued to be collected at the request of Virginia's Department of Motor Vehicle's Transportation Safety Services. The methods and procedures that qualified the state for incentive funds were used in all the surveys. In this way, longitudinal data can be compared between years and over a period of years. When methods of data collection change, the making of comparisons is compromised to the extent that differences in collection procedures affect the results.

METHODS

This survey required five tasks: (1) defining the population from which the sample was drawn, (2) determining the number of survey sites, (3) developing the sampling plan, (4) developing procedures and collecting data, and (5) determining how estimates would be weighted to approximate statewide figures.

Population

According to federal guidelines, localities with the smallest populations and making up less than 15% of the state's total population could be removed from the study population. In Virginia, determining which localities made up 15% of the population was difficult. In most states, a city is a part of its surrounding county. In Virginia, although towns are considered to be a part of their surrounding county, the 41 independent cities are not. To accommodate this arrangement of political jurisdictions, both counties and independent cities were considered in establishing the sampling population.

Table 1 shows the 136 counties and independent cities in Virginia ordered by population. According to 1990 census figures, Virginia's total population is about 6.2 million. However, most of the population is located in the four population centers: Northern Virginia, Tidewater, Richmond, and Roanoke. Thus, there is a great disparity between the population of the rural counties and cities and the more urban ones. For instance, the least populated county, Highland County, has fewer than 2,700 residents, and the least populated city, Norton, has fewer than 4,300. Twenty-seven of the 136 political jurisdictions have a population less than 10,000, and another 40 have a population between 10,000 and 20,000. Nearly 50% (49.3%) of the jurisdictions have fewer than 20,000 residents and account for 12.2% of the state's total population. On the other hand, 13 jurisdictions have a population of more than 100,000 and account for more than 48% of the total population of the state. Because of this disparity in population, the 74 least populated jurisdictions make up just under 15% of the state's population; thus, they were excluded from sampling. Figure 1 is a map that shows the jurisdictions that were excluded (the shaded portion). All other locations in the state were equally eligible for inclusion in the sample.

Table 1
POPULATION BY POLITICAL JURISDICTION

Jurisdiction	Jurisdiction Population	Cumulative Population	Cumulative Percent
Highland County	2,635	2,635	0.04
Norton	4,247	6,882	0.11
Craig County	4,372	11,254	0.18
Clifton Forge	4,679	15,933	0.26
Bath County	4,799	20,732	0.34
Emporia	5,306	26,038	0.42
Bedford	6,073	32,111	0.52
Surrey County	6,145	38,256	0.62
Charles City County	6,282	44,538	0.72
King and Queen County	6,289	50,827	0.82
Buena Vista	6,406	57,233	0.92
Bland County	6,514	63,747	1.03
Rappahannock County	6,622	70,369	1.14
Galax	6,670	77,039	1.25
Manassas Park	6,734	83,773	1.35
Lexington	6,959	90,732	1.47
Covington	6,991	97,723	1.58
South Boston	6,997	104,720	1.69
Richmond County	7,273	111,993	1.81
Cumberland County	7,825	119,818	1.94
Franklin	7,864	127,682	2.06
Mathews County	8,348	136,030	2.20
Middlesex County	8,653	144,683	2.34
Essex County	8,689	153,372	2.48
Amelia County	8,787	162,159	2.62
Greensville County	8,853	171,012	2.76
Falls Church	9,578	180,590	2.92
Sussex County	10,248	190,838	3.08
Greene County	10,297	201,135	3.25
New Kent County	10,445	211,580	3.42
Northumberland County	10,524	222,104	3.59
Lancaster County	10,896	233,000	3.77
King William County	10,913	243,913	3.94
Poquoson	11,005	254,918	4.12
Lunenburg County	11,419	266,337	4.30
Williamsburg	11,530	277,867	4.49
Charlotte County	11,688	289,555	4.68
Madison County	11,949	301,504	4.87
Floyd County	12,005	313,509	5.07
Clarke County	12,101	325,610	5.26
Appomattox County	12,298	337,908	5.46
Fluvanna County	12,429	350,337	5.66
Nelson County	12,778	363,115	5.87
Buckingham County	12,873	375,988	6.08
Northampton County	13,061	389,049	6.29
Alleghany County	13,176	402,225	6.50
King George County	13,527	415,752	6.72
Goochland County	14,163	429,915	6.95
Nottoway County	14,993	444,908	7.19
Powhatan County	15,328	460,236	7.44
Westmoreland County	15,480	475,716	7.69
Radford	15,940	491,656	7.95
Brunswick County	15,987	507,643	8.20
Colonial Heights	16,064	523,707	8.46
Martinsville	16,162	539,869	8.73
Grayson County	16,278	556,147	8.99
Giles County	16,366	572,513	9.25
Prince Edward County	17,320	589,833	9.53
Patrick County	17,473	607,306	9.82
Southampton County	17,550	624,856	10.10
Dickenson County	17,620	642,476	10.38
Rockbridge County	18,350	660,826	10.68
Bristol	18,426	679,252	10.98
Waynesboro	18,549	697,801	11.28
Fredericksburg	19,027	716,828	11.59
Caroline County	19,217	736,045	11.90
Fairfax	19,622	755,667	12.21
Louisa County	20,325	775,992	12.54
Dinwiddie County	20,960	796,952	12.88
Orange County	21,421	818,373	13.23
Page County	21,690	840,063	13.58
Winchester	21,947	862,010	13.93
Hopewell	23,101	885,111	14.31
Scott County	23,204	908,315	14.68
Salem	23,756	932,071	15.06
Staunton	24,461	956,532	15.46
Lee County	24,496	981,028	15.86
Botetourt County	24,992	1,006,020	16.26
Isle of Wight County	25,053	1,031,073	16.66
Wythe County	25,466	1,056,539	17.08
Warren County	26,142	1,082,681	17.50
Carroll County	26,594	1,109,275	17.93
Prince George County	27,394	1,136,669	18.37
Culpeper County	27,791	1,164,460	18.82
Manassas	27,957	1,192,417	19.27
Amherst County	28,578	1,220,995	19.73
Russell County	28,667	1,249,662	20.20
Halifax County	29,033	1,278,695	20.67
Mecklenburg County	29,241	1,307,936	21.14
Glouchester County	30,131	1,338,067	21.63
Harrisonburg	30,707	1,368,774	22.12
Buchanan County	31,333	1,400,107	22.63
Shenandoah County	31,636	1,431,743	23.14
Accomack County	31,703	1,463,446	23.65
Smyth County	32,370	1,495,816	24.18
Pulaski County	34,496	1,530,312	24.73
James City County	34,859	1,565,171	25.30
Petersburg	38,386	1,603,557	25.92
Franklin County	39,549	1,643,106	26.56
Wise County	39,573	1,682,679	27.20
Charlottesville	40,341	1,723,020	27.85
York County	42,422	1,765,442	28.53
Bedford County	45,656	1,811,098	29.27
Frederick County	45,723	1,856,821	30.01
Washington County	45,887	1,902,708	30.75
Tazewell County	45,960	1,948,668	31.49
Campbell County	47,572	1,996,240	32.26
Fauquier County	48,741	2,044,981	33.05
Suffolk	52,141	2,097,122	33.89
Danville	53,056	2,150,178	34.75
Augusta County	54,677	2,204,855	35.63
Pittsylvania County	55,655	2,260,510	36.53
Henry County	56,942	2,317,452	37.45
Spotsylvania County	57,403	2,374,855	38.38
Rockingham County	57,482	2,432,337	39.31
Stafford County	61,236	2,493,573	40.30
Hanover County	63,306	2,556,879	41.32
Lynchburg	66,049	2,622,928	42.39
Albemarle County	68,040	2,690,968	43.49
Montgomery County	73,913	2,764,881	44.69
Roanoke County	79,332	2,844,213	45.97
Loudoun County	86,129	2,930,342	47.36
Roanoke	96,397	3,026,739	48.92
Portsmouth	103,907	3,130,646	50.60
Alexandria	111,183	3,241,829	52.39
Hampton	133,793	3,375,622	54.56
Chesapeake	151,976	3,527,598	57.01
Newport News	170,045	3,697,643	59.76
Arlington County	170,936	3,868,579	62.52
Richmond	203,056	4,071,635	65.81
Chesterfield County	209,274	4,280,909	69.19
Prince William County	215,686	4,496,595	72.67
Henrico County	217,881	4,714,476	76.20
Norfolk	261,229	4,975,705	80.42
Virginia Beach	393,069	5,368,774	86.77
Fairfax County	818,584	6,187,358	100.00
Total Population	6,187,358		

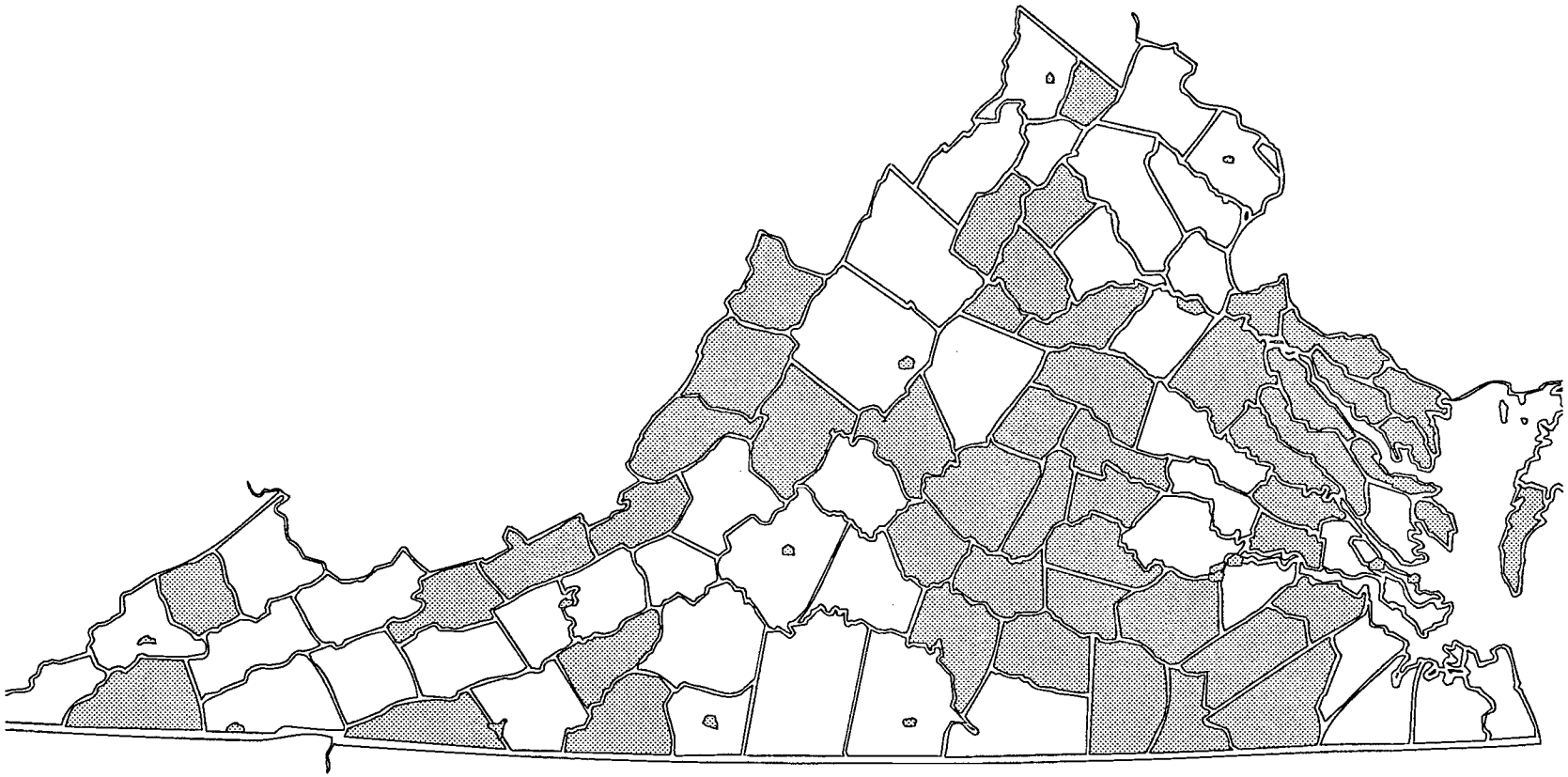

Figure 1. Areas excluded from sampling procedures (shaded).

Number of Survey Sites

The next step in the project was to determine the number of statewide sites necessary to fulfill NHTSA's requirements of a relative error of ±5% and 95% confidence. When computations were carried out to determine the number of sites necessary to meet these requirements, it was found that 78 sites would be adequate. After reviewing the project work plan, NHTSA wrote (September 4, 1992) that they would require Virginia to use 120 sites. The same 84 urban sites have been used every year the survey has been conducted. Over the 6 years, it was necessary to move 2 of the 36 rural sites. One was moved to a safer location just down the road from the original site, and the other was moved to an alternate site within the same grid box (see sampling plan). In addition, data were collected on the same day of the week and the same hour of the day at each site during the 6 years.

Sampling Plan

To select the sample of sites, a grid with 0.64-cm by 0.64-cm (1/4-in by 1/4-in) sections was placed over a standard map of Virginia issued by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and drawn to a scale of 2.54 cm = 20.92 km (1 in = 13 mi). Figure 2 is a sample section of the map. Each grid box contained approximately 27.19 km^2 (10.5 square miles). This procedure produced a system of 144 sections across the horizontal axis and 63 sections across the vertical axis. However, because Virginia is not perfectly rectangular and because political jurisdictions representing the smallest 15% of the population were excluded from the sample, some boxes fell outside the geography or were wholly within excluded areas. To keep these boxes from affecting the random nature of the sample, they were not defined as part of the study population. Each valid grid box containing at least one intersection in an included part of Virginia was numbered. Random numbers were generated to select 120 of the 2,572 valid grid boxes, without replacement, from which specific intersections were selected.

To respond to a concern expressed by NHTSA that a pure statewide random sample of 120 sites would overrepresent the nonurban areas of Virginia, the originally proposed procedures were changed. The selection of sites was based on the proportion of the population in the urban and rural areas of the state. Excluding the lowest 15% of the population, the urban areas have about 68% of the remaining population, and the rural areas have about 32%. Of the 120 total sites, 84 were randomly selected from the four metropolitan areas and 36 were randomly selected from the remainder of the state.

By the use of detailed maps of urban areas available in book form from ADC map publishers[2-6] and county maps prepared by VDOT, each intersection in a selected grid box was numbered, and a random number was generated to select the specific intersection to be sampled. Two alternate sites were also selected randomly from the box. For each primary and alternate site, random numbers were used to select which route and direction of travel and whether traffic

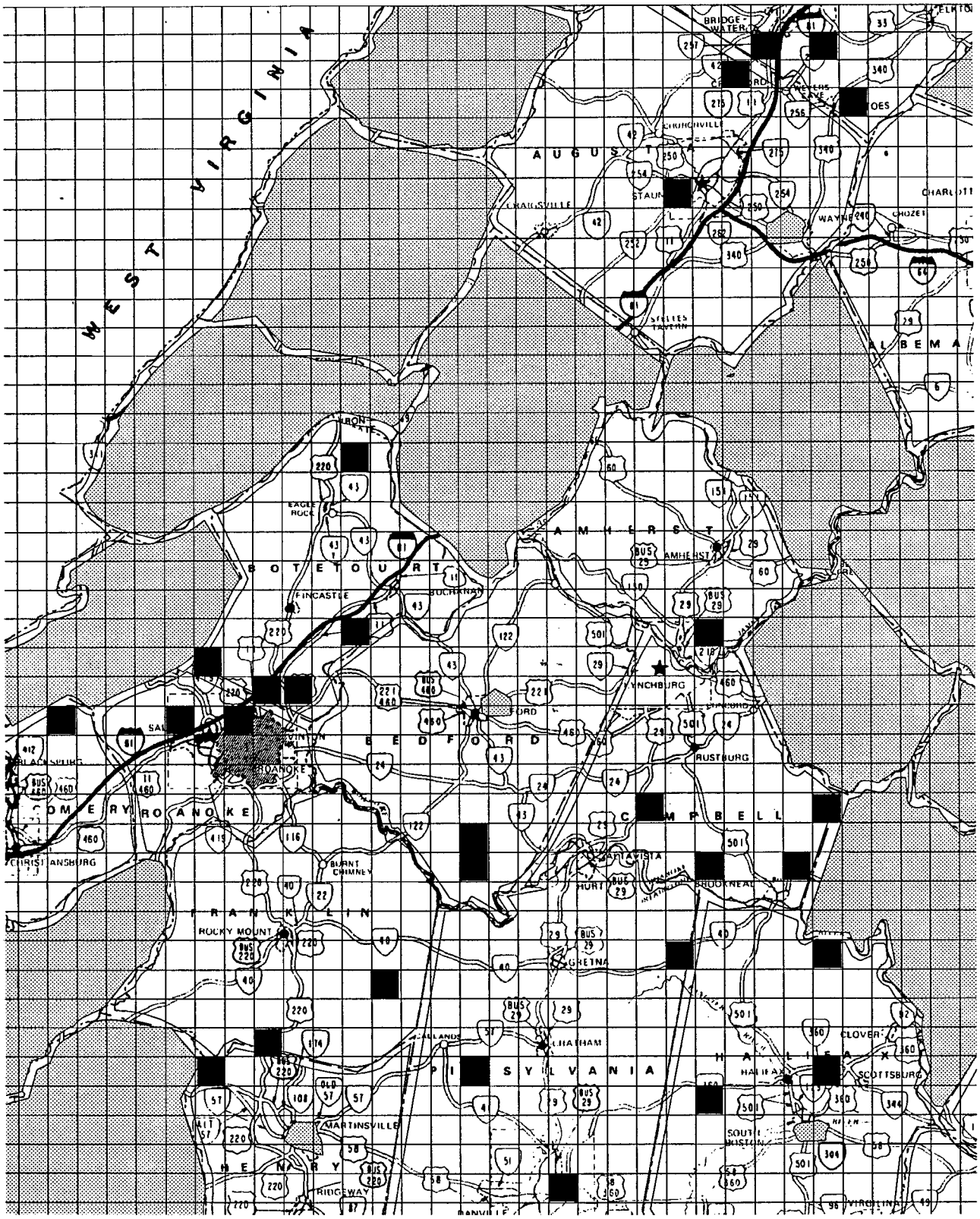

Figure 2. Sample section of state map showing grid boxes.

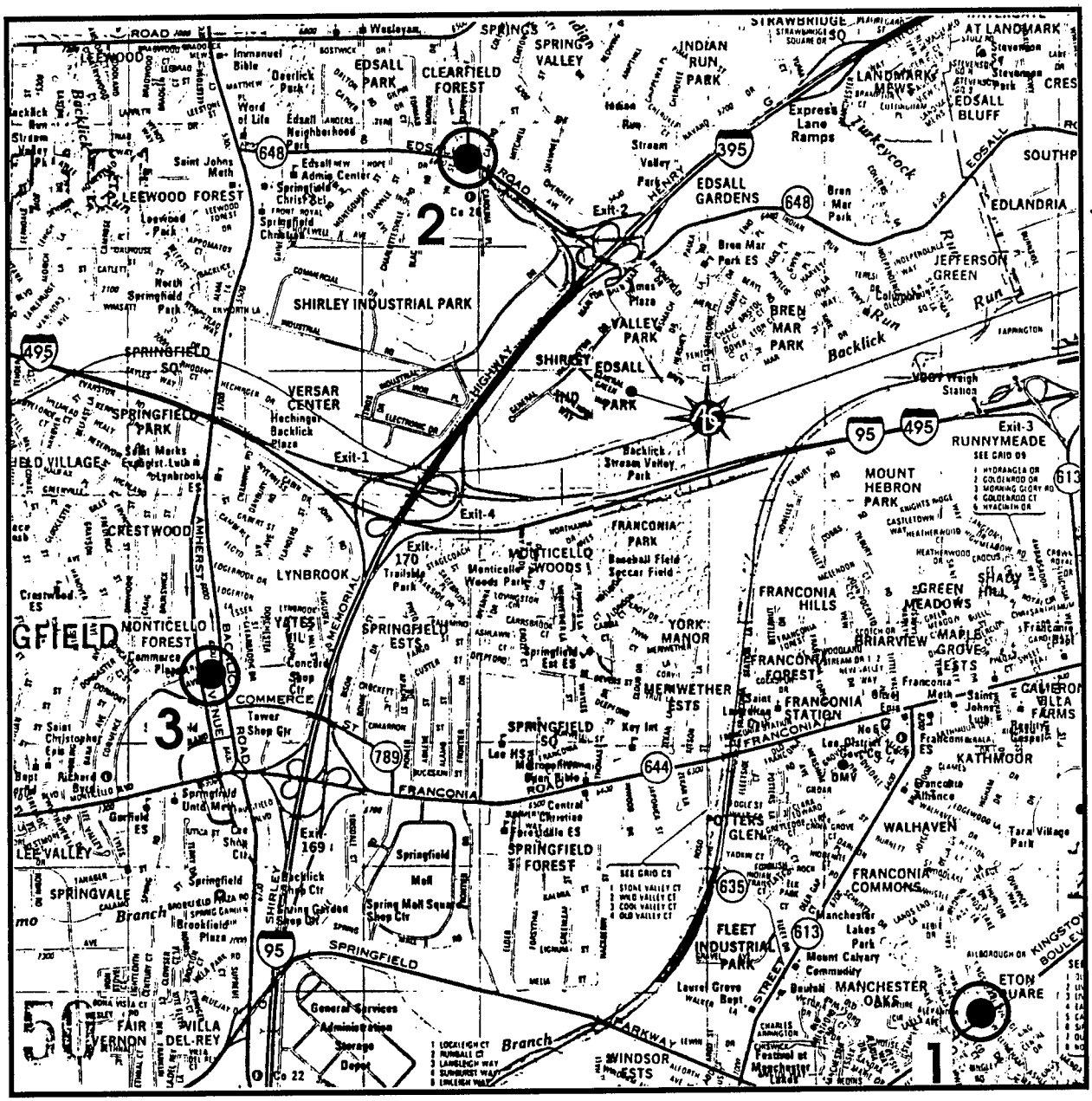

Figure 3. Detail of urban grid showing intersection choices.

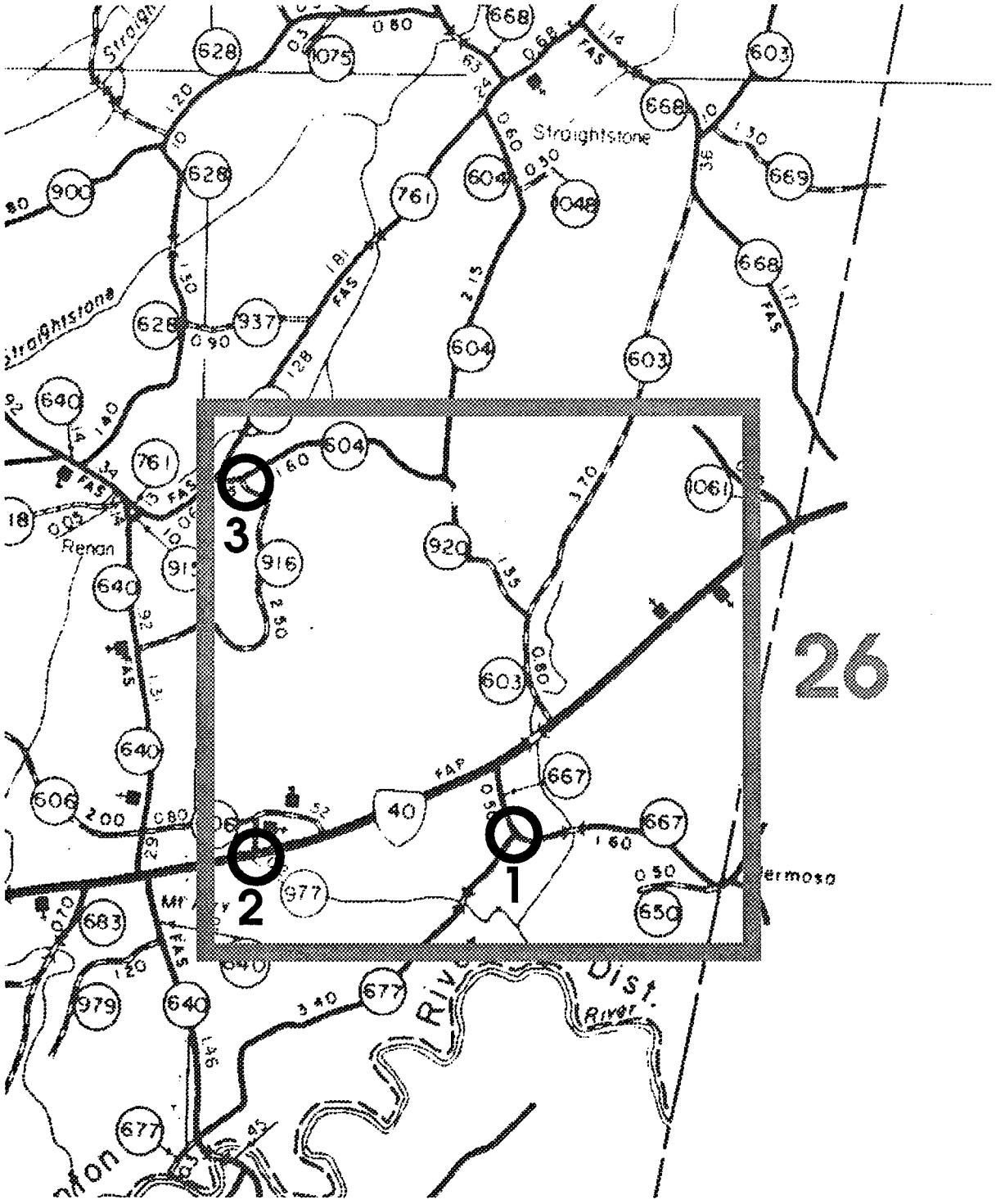

Figure 4. Detail of rural grid showing intersection choices.

entering or exiting the selected intersection would be observed. Figures 3 and 4 are examples of urban and rural grid boxes and potential sites.

Members of the study team visited and evaluated each site to determine whether data could be safely and adequately collected. The safety of the observer was the primary criterion for evaluating each site, followed by the ability to observe traffic. If an intersection was found to be inadequate, attempts were made to find an adequate observation point downstream if traffic exiting the intersection was to be observed and upstream if entering traffic was to be observed. In either case, if an adequate site could not be found before the next intersection was reached, an alternate site was investigated. Choosing a point before the next intersection ensured that the same traffic characteristics would be present at the upstream or downstream sites as would have been present at the original intersection. Very few original sites were discarded in favor of alternates. Those that were discarded had no safe area for the observer to stand or park or required the observer to be below the level of the roadway, making observation impossible.

After selection, the sites were sorted geographically into seven groups. The days of the week were randomly assigned, without replacement, to each geographic group. Data were collected for 1 hr at each site all 6 years. For each day, the sites in a geographic group were assigned a random hour to begin, without replacement, from 7 A.M. to 6 P.M. When inclement weather precluded the collection of data at a site, data were collected at that site at a later date but at the originally specified time and on the same day of the week.

Data Collection Procedures

All passenger cars in the curb lane were observed for shoulder belt use by the specified passengers. The designation "passenger car" included mini-vans, compact sport utility vehicles, and small pickup trucks. All observations began precisely on the hour and ended on the hour. If a momentary interruption occurred, the observer was instructed to resume observing vehicles, but to ensure that the beginning observation was not a nonrandom selection by the observer, data collection resumed with the fifth vehicle to pass the site after the observer was ready.

Observations were recorded using eight counters mounted on a hand-held board. A "yes" or "no" count was made for shoulder belt use for drivers and outboard front-seat passengers for each passenger car in the curb travel lane and for motorcycle driver and passenger helmet use in any lane at the intersection. The data collectors were required to complete a training program on the use of the counter board and how the data were to be collected and recorded. The data collectors were checked for inter-rater reliability in training sessions before they began the survey. Since observation points were preselected at each site, the data collectors were instructed to use intersection diagrams and photographs to locate the point at which observations were to be made (see Figures 5 and 6).

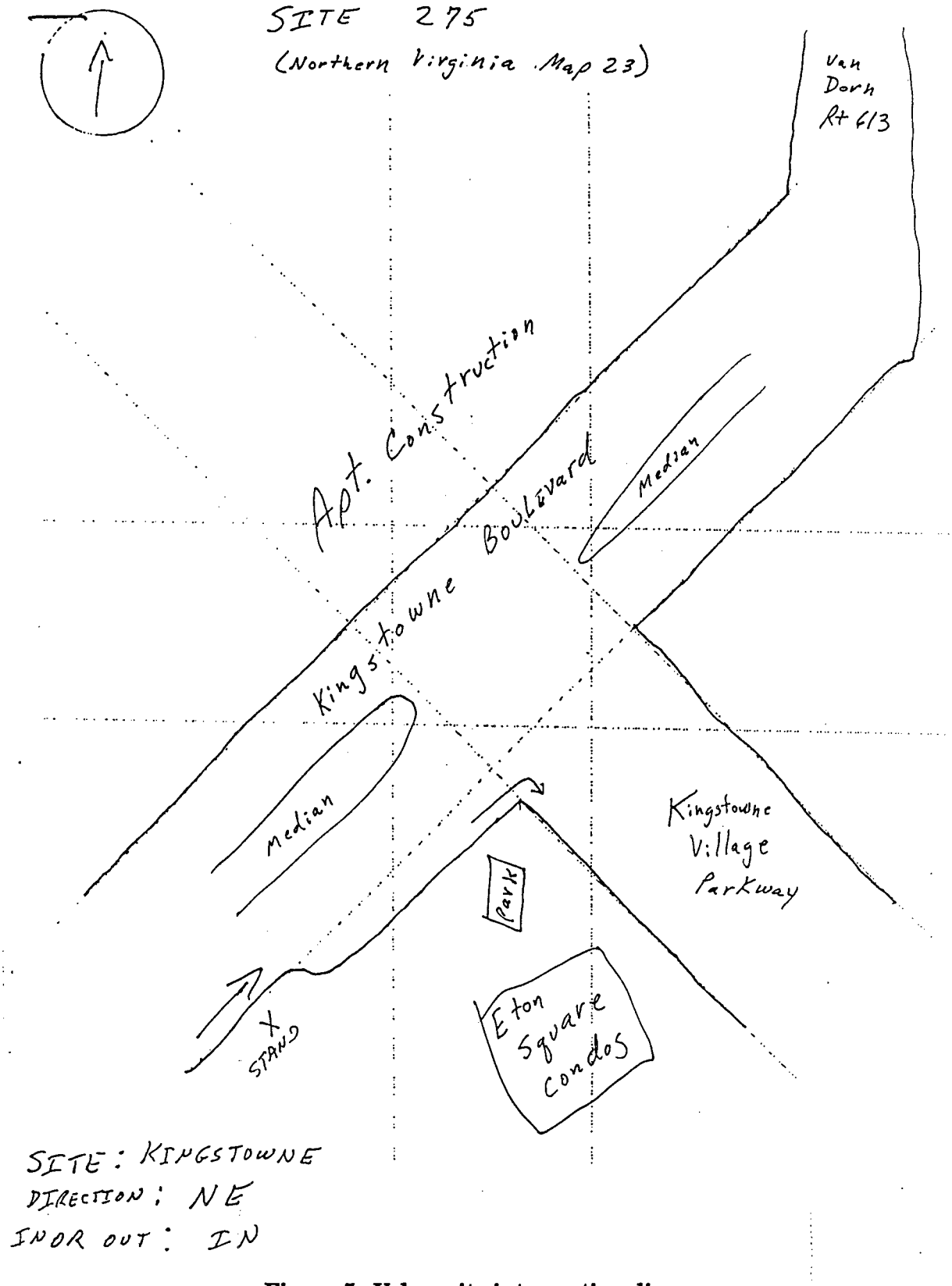

Figure 5. Urban site intersection diagram.

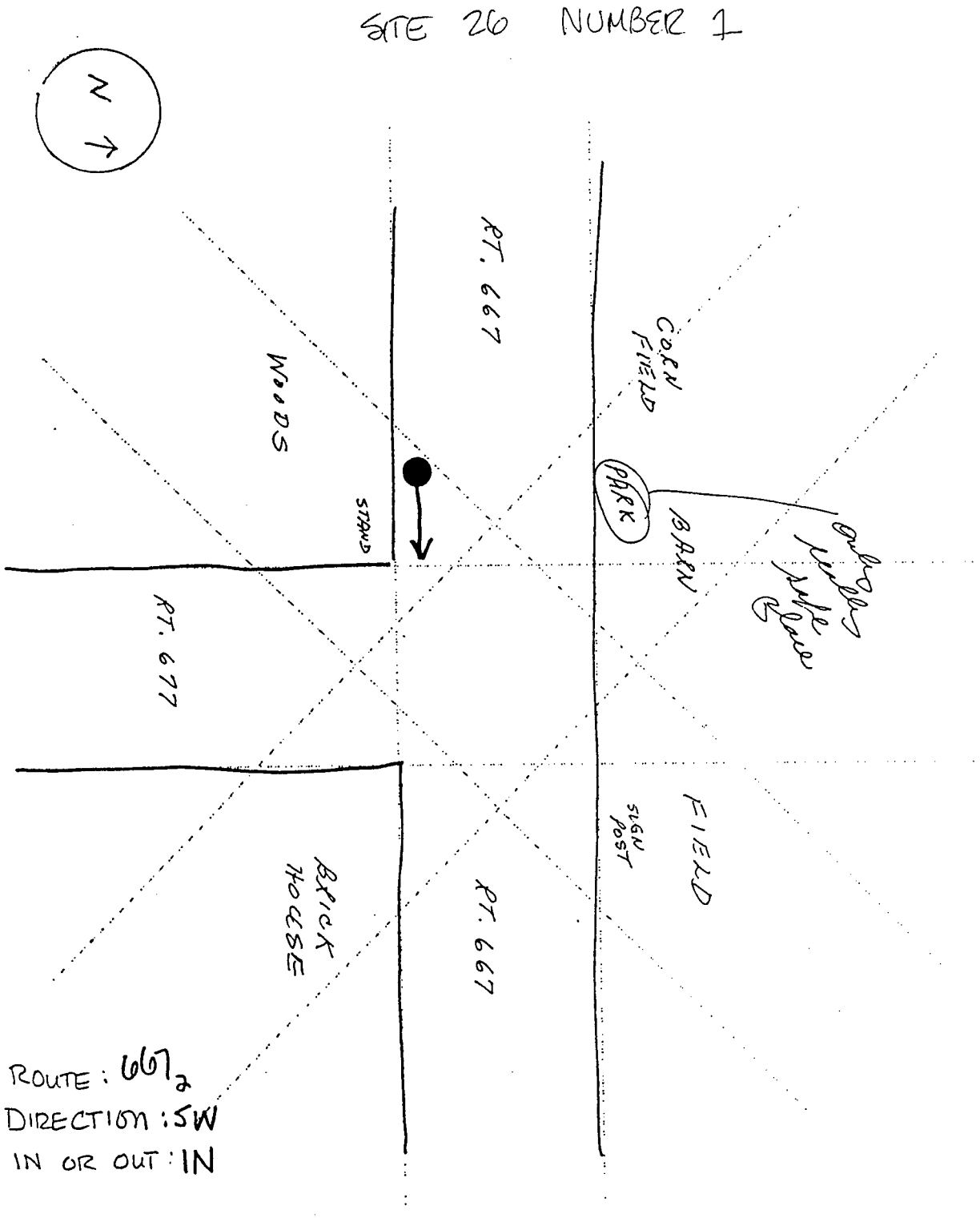

Figure 6. Rural site intersection diagram.

In 1992, 1993, and 1994, college students were hired for data collection as summer employees of the Virginia Transportation Research Council (VTRC). In 1995, a contract was executed with the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia. In 1996 and 1997, survey personnel were employed by the Department of Civil Engineering at the University of Virginia, and the cost of their services (hourly rate, motel, and food expenses) were paid by VTRC. For all 6 years, regardless of the payroll the observers were on, the principal researcher at VTRC was responsible for scheduling, training, and supervising these employees.

Calculation of Use and Error Rates

Because safety belt use was observed only in the curb lane, the NHTSA guidelines required that the observations on multilane highways be weighted by the number of lanes of travel. However, no such weighting was necessary for motorcycles, which were observed in all lanes of travel. For passenger cars at each site, the number of driver and passenger observations was multiplied by the number of lanes in the observed direction of travel. Thus, at a site with two lanes in the travel direction, the number of observations was doubled to estimate the total number of drivers and passengers who crossed the site.

As previously discussed, the selection of sites was stratified to represent urban and rural areas in proportion to their populations. Thus, more than two thirds of the sites were in urban areas.

The use rate, P_B, is the estimated proportion of drivers and passengers using safety belts and is calculated by the formula:

$$P_B = \frac{\sum_{t=1}^{2} \frac{N_t}{n_t} \sum_{i=1}^{n_t} N_{ti} B_{ti}}{\sum_{t=1}^{2} \frac{N_t}{n_t} \sum_{i=1}^{n_t} N_{ti} O_{ti}}$$

where t = stratum (1 = urban, 2 = rural)
ti = each site within a stratum
N_t = total number of grid boxes within stratum t
n_t = number of grid boxes selected from each stratum t
N_{ti} = total number of intersections within each sampled grid box
B_{ti} = number of belted occupants observed at site ti (weighted by lanes)
O_{ti} = total number of occupants observed at site ti (weighted by lanes).

The variance of the estimated belt use, $V(P_B)$, was approximated by the formula:

$$V(P_B) = \frac{1}{\bar{O}^2}[V(B) + P_B^2 V(O) - 2P_B COV(B, O)]$$

where $\bar{O}$ is the weighted average number of occupants observed per site and is computed by the formula:

$$\bar{O} = \frac{1}{2}\sum_{t=1}^{2} \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n_t} N_{ti} O_{ti}}{n_t}$$

and where $V(B)$ is the variance of the number of belted occupants and is computed by the formula:

$$V(B) = \frac{1}{(N_1 + N_2)^2} \sum_{t=1}^{2} \frac{N_t^2}{n_t(n_t - 1)} \sum_{i=1}^{n_t} (N_{ti} B_{ti} - \bar{B}_t)^2$$

$$\text{where } \bar{B}_t = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n_t} N_{ti} B_{ti}}{n_t}$$

and where $V(O)$ is the variance of the number of observed occupants and is computed by the formula:

$$V(O) = \frac{1}{(N_1 + N_2)^2} \sum_{t=1}^{2} \frac{N_t^2}{n_t(n_t - 1)} \sum_{i=1}^{n_t} (N_{ti} O_{ti} - \bar{O}_t)^2$$

$$\text{where } \bar{O}_t = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n_t} N_{ti} O_{ti}}{n_t}$$

and where $COV(B, O)$ is the covariance of the number of belted and observed occupants and is computed by the formula:

$$COV(B,O) = \frac{1}{(N_1+N_2)^2} \sum_{t=1}^{2} \frac{N_t^2}{n_t(n_t-1)} \sum_{i=1}^{n_t} (N_{ti}B_{ti}-\bar{B}_t)\,(N_{ti}O_{ti}-\bar{O}_t)$$

The standard error of the estimate was calculated by the formula:

$$SE = \frac{\sqrt{V(P_B)}}{n-1}$$

where SE = standard error of the estimate
n = total number of sites sampled.

The relative error of the estimate was calculated by the formula:

$$RE = \frac{SE}{P_B}$$

where RE = relative error of the estimate.

RESULTS

The survey team observed 13,768 drivers and 4,183 right-front passengers for the use of a shoulder belt. Because the survey data were collected from moving traffic, the use of the lap portion of a belt system could not be observed. In computing a statewide use rate, the observations were weighted by the number of traffic lanes in the direction of traffic flow at the site where the data were collected (see Tables A-1 and A-2 for the complete data).

As can be seen from the data in Table 2, there were 35,508 weighted observations of occupants in passenger cars. Of these, there were 18,544 drivers and 5,013 right-front passengers (weighted) who were observed to be using a shoulder belt. Passenger car occupants had a weighted safety belt use rate of 67.1%. The relative error of the estimate was 0.17%.

There were 134 motorcycle riders observed (122 drivers and 12 passengers), and the rate of helmet use was 98.7%. The relative error of the estimate was 0.0002.

There were 46 sites categorized as large volume sites. A large volume site is defined as one with 100 or more observed occupants. In addition to the 1997 statewide use rate being

Table 2. Summary of 1997 Survey Results

	Weighted Observations	Drivers Protected	Passengers Protected	Use Rate	Variance	Standard Error	Relative Error
Passenger Cars	35,508	18,544	5,013	67.1% ($p = .671$)	0.0188	0.001153	0.001718
Motor-cycles	134	121	11	98.7% ($p = .987$)	0.00037	0.000162	0.000164

statistically lower than the 1996 use rate, at 24 (52.2%) of the large volume sites, the 1997 rate was the lowest for the 6 years the data have been collected. At an additional 8 (17.4%) sites, the 1997 rate was the second lowest. In nearly 70% of the large volume sites, 1997 rates were among the lowest observed throughout the 1992-97 period.

The results from the fall 1992 survey are shown in Table 3, and those from the summers of 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996 are shown in Tables 4, 5, 6, and 7. In each of the first 5 years (1992-96), 100% of the motorcycle drivers and passengers observed were using a helmet. The current year (1997) was the first time a motorcycle rider and passenger was observed not using a helmet. For the passenger car drivers and right-front passengers observed, use rates were 71.6%, 73.2%, 71.8%, 70.2%, and 69.6% over these 5 years.

Table 3. Summary of 1992 Survey Results

	Weighted Observations	Drivers Protected	Passengers Protected	Use Rate	Variance	Standard Error	Relative Error
Passenger Cars	26,320	14,701	4,233	71.6% ($p = .716$)	0.011124	0.000886	0.001238
Motor-cycles	53	47	6	100% ($p = 1$)	0	0	0

Table 4. Summary of 1993 Survey Results

	Weighted Observations	Drivers Protected	Passengers Protected	Use Rate	Variance	Standard Error	Relative Error
Passenger Cars	24,299	13,045	4,396	73.2% ($p = .732$)	0.008885	0.000792	0.001083
Motor-cycles	236	208	28	100% ($p = 1$)	0	0	0

Table 5. Summary of 1994 Survey Results

	Weighted Observations	Drivers Protected	Passengers Protected	Use Rate	Variance	Standard Error	Relative Error
Passenger Cars	25,291	14,146	4,271	71.8% (p = .718)	0.00743	0.000724	0.001009
Motor-cycles	105	90	15	100% (p = 1)	0	0	0

Table 6. Summary of 1995 Survey Results

	Weighted Observations	Drivers Protected	Passengers Protected	Use Rate	Variance	Standard Error	Relative Error
Passenger Cars	29,584	15,632	4,521	70.2% (p = .702)	0.01523	0.001037	0.001477
Motor-cycles	247	208	39	100% (p = 1)	0	0	0

Table 7. Summary of 1996 Survey Results

	Weighted Observations	Drivers Protected	Passengers Protected	Use Rate	Variance	Standard Error	Relative Error
Passenger Cars	26,975	14,278	4,577	69.6% (p = .696)	0.01627	0.001072	0.001539
Motor-cycles	99	85	14	100% (p = 1)	0	0	0

For the 6 years, most year-to-year differences in use rates fell within the computed variance. In 1997, not only was there another drop in the yearly rate, the fourth year in a row that a lower rate was observed, but the 1997 rate was statistically lower than that for 1996.

CONCLUSIONS

- Safety belt use rates of drivers and right-front passengers of automobiles travelling on both urban and rural roadways of Virginia are declining.
- For the first time in 5 years, there is evidence that motorcycle helmet usage is declining.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Conduct a statewide campaign to inform Virginia motorists of the declining usage rates of safety belts and motorcycle helmets, educate them about the life-saving and injury-reduction benefits of these devices, and inform them of the economic consequences to Virginia of even modest changes in these use rates.* The campaign should be a product of the combined resources of state and local governments, citizens groups, health care professionals, and private sector entities affected by highway injuries and casualties.

- *Consider instituting aggressive enforcement programs, combined with clear and repetitive public information efforts, to improve safety belt usage rates.*

- *Consider legislation to require all rear-seat passengers to buckle up.* Improvements in the design of rear-seat occupant restraints have largely surmounted the problems of a few years ago, when public resistance to such a statute would have been probable.

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APPENDIX

1997 Raw Data by Site

Table A-1. 1997 Urban Raw Data by Site[a]

SITEID	LANES	N_{ti}	B_{ti}	O_{ti}	MC B_{ti}	MC O_{ti}
2	1	10	12	13	0	0
7	1	408	86	127	0	0
8	1	7	2	2	0	0
11	1	82	3	6	2	2
15	3	6	272	397	2	2
17	3	115	246	390	0	0
19	1	10	83	149	0	0
20	1	7	18	32	0	0
21	1	148	74	95	0	0
28	1	3	7	14	0	0
30	2	3	106	182	2	2
32	1	244	73	108	1	1
40	3	254	365	512	8	8
41	1	211	229	321	3	3
42	1	36	18	25	0	0
46	1	5	18	39	0	0
49	1	6	0	0	0	0
54	2	504	577	695	0	0
58	1	15	65	104	0	0
67	1	5	5	11	0	0
68	1	24	0	0	0	0
69	3	721	449	620	0	0
81	1	6	25	42	0	0
86	2	7	110	189	2	2
90	1	17	76	124	0	0
92	3	142	215	309	1	1
105	1	24	33	47	0	0
118	1	7	29	47	0	0
119	3	32	544	708	2	2
120	1	546	49	74	0	0
121	1	7	212	301	3	3
136	1	23	63	86	1	1
140	3	3	545	722	13	13
154	1	8	44	61	5	5
169	2	4	92	174	0	0
170	1	19	3	5	0	0
173	2	331	279	414	5	5
183	1	8	17	25	0	0
202	1	59	66	107	7	7
206	1	17	7	10	0	0
210	2	73	147	221	0	0
211	1	253	255	393	2	2
213	1	376	207	326	3	3
234	1	197	5	7	0	0
236	1	87	81	126	0	0
250	1	16	3	4	0	0
259	3	532	239	317	1	1
275	2	526	308	391	1	1
280	1	104	13	16	0	0

290	2	3	183	255	1	1
300	1	110	5	7	0	0
306	1	12	0	1	0	0
313	3	186	229	370	1	1
315	1	9	120	186	2	2
317	2	444	33	69	0	0
322	1	1	34	54	0	0
324	2	82	86	121	0	0
330	1	16	20	44	0	0
332	3	8	492	676	20	20
353	1	11	89	112	0	0
359	1	9	45	78	2	2
371	2	64	28	45	0	0
372	3	5	220	346	11	11
374	1	26	29	41	0	0
375	1	12	122	219	2	2
385	3	30	164	336	1	1
388	1	10	7	11	0	0
400	1	385	12	16	0	0
403	2	341	207	335	0	0
406	2	374	352	529	0	0
411	1	19	59	98	3	3
420	1	223	98	132	0	0
425	1	365	32	40	0	0
426	2	626	194	371	0	0
434	1	25	1	3	0	0
450	1	15	120	193	0	0
458	2	180	52	101	0	0
464	1	21	18	39	0	0
471	1	13	2	4	0	0
476	1	13	508	682	8	8
477	1	11	8	30	0	0
483	1	2	98	125	1	1
508	2	628	226	471	0	0
512	1	15	154	186	0	0

[a]Site ID = identifier of site sampled.
Lanes = number of lanes in sampled direction at site.
N_{ti} = number of intersections within sample grid.
B_{ti} = number of belted occupants observed at site.
O_{ti} = number of occupants observed at site.
MC B_{ti} = number of motorcycle occupants with helmets at site.
MC O_{ti} = number of motorcycle occupants observed at site.

Table A-2. 1997 Rural Raw Data by Site[a]

SITEID	LANES	N_{ti}	B_{ti}	O_{ti}	MC B_{ti}	MC O_{ti}
1	1	15	29	49	0	0
4	1	9	8	21	1	1
5	1	9	0	3	0	0
6	1	16	28	58	0	0
9	1	6	6	19	1	1
10	1	5	0	1	0	0
12	2	4	287	481	0	0
13	1	17	20	32	0	0
16	1	4	8	8	0	0
18	1	8	6	12	0	0
22	1	12	3	11	0	0
23	1	7	46	80	0	0
25	1	6	32	55	0	0
26	1	9	0	1	0	0
27	1	13	0	2	0	0
29	1	6	2	16	0	0
31	1	7	6	11	0	0
33	1	15	104	157	6	6
35	1	9	23	50	0	0
36	1	12	24	54	0	0
37	1	1	33	84	3	3
39	1	10	31	74	0	0
44	1	7	8	18	0	2
45	1	7	62	150	2	2
47	3	18	208	360	2	2
48	1	15	1	2	0	0
50	1	8	50	100	1	1
51	1	11	4	4	0	0
52	1	3	4	6	0	0
53	1	2	8	19	0	0
55	1	12	5	29	0	0
56	2	5	26	69	0	0
57	1	13	1	1	0	0
59	1	7	0	0	0	0
62	2	13	175	320	0	0
63	1	15	88	181	0	0

[a]Site ID = identifier of site sampled.
Lanes = number of lanes in sampled direction at site.
N_{ti} = number of intersections within sample grid.
B_{ti} = number of belted occupants observed at site.
O_{ti} = number of occupants observed at site.
MC B_{ti} = number of motorcycle occupants with helmets at site.
MC O_{ti} = number of motorcycle occupants observed at site.

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