

# Improving Traffic Safety Culture in Iowa – Phase II



Center for Transportation  
Research and Education

**Final Report**  
**July 2013**

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IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY  
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# **IMPROVING TRAFFIC SAFETY CULTURE IN IOWA – PHASE II**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	vii
INTRODUCTION .....	1
Background.....	1
Research Objectives and Tasks.....	1
2011 IOWA PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY .....	4
Survey Scope and Emphasis Areas.....	4
Survey Results .....	4
Comparison with Phase I Results .....	5
SUMMARY AND COMPARISON OF SURVEYS.....	16
National Trends.....	16
Iowa Trends .....	16
RECOMMENDATIONS .....	18
High Potential .....	18
Medium Potential.....	19
Low Potential .....	19

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1. Excessive speeding as a threat to traffic safety .....11  
Figure 2. Frequency of driving while impaired .....12  
Figure 3. Support for reinstatement of helmet law .....13  
Figure 4. Distracted driving as a threat to traffic safety .....15  
Figure 5. Degree of distraction for different actions while driving (Q24 a-g) .....15

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1. Public opinions with respect to the 11 high-level goals identified in Phase I .....5



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- Laura Johnson – Iowa-Illinois Safety Council (IISC)
- Jerry Roche – Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Iowa Division
- Mary Schaer – Iowa DOT Motor Vehicle Division, Office of Driver Services
- Joanne Tinker – Iowa DPS GTSB



## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Background**

In 2010, the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) asked researchers at Iowa State University's Institute for Transportation (InTrans) to study the traffic safety culture in Iowa through the eyes of a diverse range of experts. At that time, it was noted that while Iowa and other states had worked tirelessly to produce a culture of safety through their comprehensive highway safety plan (CHSP) and other efforts, vehicle crashes remained among the leading causes of death in the US. In Iowa alone, an average of 445 deaths and thousands of injuries occur on public roads each year.

The study completed in April 2011 included diverse perspectives from the disciplines of public health, education, law enforcement, public policy, social psychology, safety advocacy, and engineering. In addition to summarizing the "best practices" and effective laws in improving traffic safety culture, the study also recommended 11 high-level goals, each with specific actions to support its success.

The goals were as follows (in random order):

1. Improve emergency medical services (EMS) response
2. Toughen law enforcement and prosecution
3. Increase safety belt use
4. Reduce speeding-related crashes
5. Reduce alcohol-related crashes
6. Improve commercial vehicle safety
7. Improve motorcycle safety
8. Improve young driver education
9. Improve older driver safety
10. Strengthen teenage licensing process
11. Reduce distracted driving

The recommendations were offered in line with the top five Iowa CHSP safety policy strategies, young drivers, occupant protection, motorcycle safety, traffic safety enforcement, and traffic safety improvement program, as well as the eight safety program strategies outlined in the Iowa CHSP (2006).

### **Research Objectives and Tasks**

As a follow-up to the April 2011 study, a second phase was undertaken that brought together Iowa's three large public universities (Iowa State University, University of Northern Iowa, and University of Iowa) to focus on producing actions that would ultimately improve the traffic safety culture across Iowa.

The focus of the second phase was on synthesizing the expert opinions solicited in Phase I with prevailing public views and/or opinions. The public perspective was to be gathered via a follow-up survey on Iowa's 2000 public opinion survey, which was administered by the University of Northern Iowa's Center for Social and Behavioral Research.

More recent data on the opinions of Iowans and of people nationally contrasted with past data would help better define the public's position on top safety culture issues. This, in turn, gave researchers a better basis for developing actionable, fundable, and ultimately successful strategies that will make a tangible difference in improving traffic safety in Iowa.

The Phase II research project included the following tasks.

*Task 1: Establish a technical advisory committee (TAC) for the project*

Technical advisory committee (TAC) members were identified in consultation with representatives from the Iowa DOT Office of Traffic and Safety during the first phase. The members identified included representatives from the Iowa DOT, the Iowa Governor's Traffic Safety Bureau (GTSB), the Department of Public Health (DPH), the Iowa-Illinois Safety Council (IISC), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) – Iowa Division.

*Task 2: Define the scope and identify emphasis areas for the follow-up survey on Iowa's 2000 public opinion survey*

The research team reviewed the safety culture issues identified through the focus group meeting and the interviews (Phase I) and identified special emphasis areas for the follow-up survey on Iowa's 2000 public opinion survey. The research team's suggestions were incorporated into the survey questionnaire designed by the University of Northern Iowa's Center for Social and Behavioral Research.

*Task 3: Summarize public opinion data in the US and Iowa*

The research team summarized public opinion data, such as the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety (AAAFTS) reports and surveys in other states (North Dakota, Tennessee, and Texas). In addition, the research team summarized the results of a follow-up survey on Iowa's 2000 public opinion survey, which was administered by the University of Northern Iowa's Center for Social and Behavioral Research.

*Task 4: Recommend actions to improve the traffic safety culture across the state of Iowa*

The research team synthesized the results of public opinion surveys (Phase II) and expert interviews (Phase I), as well as "best safety practices" in Iowa, and made recommendations to the Iowa DOT on actions that will improve the traffic safety culture across the state.

*Task 5: Summarize differences between 2000 and 2011 public opinion surveys*

The research team identified key survey elements that were common between the 2000 and 2011 public opinion surveys and summarized changes in public opinion between the two surveys. The comparison and contrasting of changes in public attitudes were summarized and incorporated into a report (being prepared) by the Public Policy Center at the University of Iowa.

## **2011 IOWA PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY**

### **Survey Scope and Emphasis Areas**

The research team from InTrans worked closely with researchers from the University of Northern Iowa's Center for Social and Behavioral Research to identify key areas of emphasis for the 2011 public opinion survey. This included a comprehensive review of the safety culture issues identified through the Phase I focus group meeting and the interviews. Representatives from the Iowa DOT who served on the TAC also provided input on specific survey questions, to provide a reasonable survey focus, length, and temporal relevance.

### **Survey Results**

The follow-up public opinion survey was conducted by the University of Northern Iowa between October 5 and December 11, 2011. As noted, the study was designed in consultation with the Office of Traffic Safety at the Iowa DOT and with InTrans to ensure that the questionnaire was focused on gathering information on the most-relevant traffic safety goals and priority areas, public attitudes, traffic-related experiences, and driving behaviors.

The survey covered a wide range of traffic safety topics, including driver education, traffic enforcement, road design and engineering, distracted driving and other driving behaviors, and attitudes about traffic safety policies, procedures, and enforcement techniques. Examples of questions included in the survey are as follows:

- Have you made a specific effort to improve or maintain your driving skills in the last 5 years, such as reading about safe driving, looking at the official Iowa driver's manual, or taking a refresher class?
- Would you take such a driving class, either online or in person, if you received an insurance discount or other incentive for doing so?
- Thinking of response times and quality of care, how satisfied are you with the emergency medical services in your area?
- Iowa requires teens to have an instruction permit for six months before they are allowed to drive without an adult in the car. Some states require teens to have an instruction permit for 12 months. Do you think Iowa should increase the permit length to 12 months?
- Some states limit the number of young passengers that newly licensed teens can have. Do you think Iowa should limit newly licensed teen drivers to no more than one teen passenger?
- Is it legal or illegal to read, write, or send a text message while driving in Iowa?
- In your opinion, would drivers be more careful if they knew that speed and red light cameras were in place?
- Has your license ever been suspended or revoked?

Considering the survey design, a dual sample methodology was used to include landline and cell phone numbers. The inclusion of cell phone numbers increased the study’s coverage by allowing people living in cell-phone-only households to participate in the survey.

In all, 8,165 numbers (4,316 landlines and 3,849 cells) were attempted and yielded 1,088 completed interviews (684 landlines and 404 cells). The response rate was 37 percent for the total sample (36 percent landline sample and 41 percent cell phone sample), and the cooperation rate was 69 percent for the total sample (67 percent landline sample and 72 percent cell phone sample).

Details of the responses to all survey questions can be found in the final report produced by the University of Northern Iowa’s Center for Social and Behavioral Research in June 2012.

### Comparison with Phase I Results

The results of the 2011 survey were compared with the 11 high-level goals identified during Phase I. The results are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Public opinions with respect to the 11 high-level goals identified in Phase I**

<i>Improve EMS Response</i>	
Q11: Thinking of response times and quality of care, how satisfied are you with the emergency medical services in your area?	1. Very satisfied: 57.8% 2. Somewhat satisfied: 32.4% 3. Not very satisfied: 3.3%
Q10: How well do you think the state of Iowa has done in... h: improving emergency medical services?	1. Excellent: 20.5% 2. Good: 54.1% 3. Fair: 14.9% 4. Poor: 2.1%
<i>Toughen Law Enforcement and Prosecution</i>	
Q9a: Which of the following do you think would be most effective in making driving in Iowa safer?	1. Enforcement: 38.9% 2. Education: 30.4% 3. Engineering: 28.2%
Q9b: Which of the following do you think would be least effective in making driving in Iowa safer?	1. Engineering: 34.5% 2. Enforcement: 33.1% 3. Education: 25.3%
Q12: Do you support or oppose? a. having high-visibility law enforcement operations b. Increasing the dollar amount of fines for speeding c. Requiring OWI repeat offenders to use ignition interlock devices for extended periods of time	a. Support: 85.2%, Oppose: 12.1% b. Support: 37.8%, Oppose: 59.9% c. Support: 89.2% Oppose: 9.2%
<i>Increase Safety Belt Use</i>	
Q10: How well do you think the state of Iowa has done in... b: Increasing safety belt use	1. Excellent: 30.6% 2. Good: 51.7% 3. Fair: 13.7% 4. Poor: 1.8%

Q18: How serious a threat to traffic safety you think it is: j: People not wearing seat belts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Very serious threat to traffic safety: 47.2%</li> <li>2. Somewhat serious: 32.8%</li> <li>3. Slightly serious: 12.4%</li> <li>4. Not at all serious: 7.6%</li> </ol>
Q19: How acceptable to you personally think it is for a driver to: f: Drive without wearing their seat belt	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Always acceptable: 5.1%</li> <li>2. Sometimes acceptable: 17.6%</li> <li>3. Seldom acceptable: 10.8%</li> <li>4. Never acceptable: 66.6%</li> </ol>
Q21: In the past 30 days, as the driver of a vehicle, have you ... a. Allowed passengers to ride in the back seat of your car without wearing their seat belts? b. Allowed passengers to ride in the front seat of your car without wearing their seat belts? c. Driven without wearing your seat belt? d. Asked passengers to wear a seat belt?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Yes: 32.2%, No: 67.8%</li> <li>b. Yes: 7.1%, No: 92.9%</li> <li>c. Yes: 16.3%, No: 83.7%</li> <li>d. Yes: 68.0%, No: 32.0%</li> </ol>
Q30: Please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following. f. the chance of being caught is small for not wearing a seat belt	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strongly agree: 4.6%</li> <li>2. Agree: 39.1%</li> <li>3. Disagree: 46.8%</li> <li>4. Strongly disagree: 9.5%</li> </ol>
<b>Reduce Speeding-Related Crashes</b>	
Q10: How well do you think the state of Iowa has done in ... e: enforcing the speed limit	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Excellent: 13.0%</li> <li>2. Good: 52.9%</li> <li>3. Fair: 27.6%</li> <li>4. Poor: 6.2%</li> </ol>
Q16: The use of automated enforcement techniques is increasing in Iowa, do you support or oppose using cameras to automatically ticket speeding drivers on... a. Major highway b. City streets c. Ticket drivers who drive through red light	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Support: 55.0%, Oppose: 45.0%</li> <li>b. Support: 56.4%, Oppose: 43.6%</li> <li>c. Support: 70.8%, Oppose: 29.2%</li> </ol>
Q17. In your opinion, would drivers be more careful if they knew that speed/red light cameras were in place?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes: 83.9%</li> <li>2. No: 16.1%</li> </ol>
Q18. How serious a threat to traffic safety you think it is: c. Excessive speeding	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Very serious threat to traffic safety: 66.2%</li> <li>2. Somewhat serious: 28.3%</li> <li>3. Slightly serious: 4.2%</li> <li>4. Not at all serious: 1.2%</li> </ol>
Q19. How acceptable to you personally think it is for a driver to...? c. Drive 10 mph over the speed limit on a city street g. Drive 10 mph over the speed limit on a freeway l Drive 10 mph over the speed limit on a rural gravel road	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. Always: 0.9%, Sometimes: 12.1%, Seldom: 10.7%, Never: 76.4%</li> <li>g. Always: 9.2%, Sometimes: 44.0%, Seldom: 13.1%, Never acceptable: 33.7%</li> <li>i. Always: 3.3%, Sometimes: 21.7%, Seldom: 13.1%, Never: 61.9%</li> </ol>
Q20. Please tell me how often you have seen other drivers in your area do the following... c. Speed through a yellow traffic light d. Drive 10 miles per hour over the speed limit on a major highway e. Drive 10 miles per hour over the speed limit on a city street n. Drive 10 mph over the speed limit on a rural gravel road	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. Every day: 35.7%, A few times a week: 27.0%, A few times a month: 17.7%, Once a month or less: 13.5%, Never: 6.2%</li> <li>d. Every day: 49.0%, A few times a week: 25.0%, A few times a month: 14.9%, Once a month or less: 9.9%, Never: 1.4%</li> <li>e. Every day: 28.6%, A few times a week: 25.8%, A few times a month: 15.7%, Once a month or less: 22.1%, Never: 7.8%</li> <li>n. Every day: 11.3%, A few times a week: 12.9%, A few times a month: 16.4%, Once a</li> </ol>



	month or less: 30.4%, Never: 29.0%
<p>Q21. In the past 30 days, as a driver of a vehicle, have you ... Speeding?</p> <p>e. Been asked by a passenger to slow down or drive more carefully while driving</p> <p>f. Driven 10 mph over the speed limit on a highway or interstate</p> <p>g. Driven 10 mph over the speed limit on a city street</p> <p>h. Felt pressure from other drivers to drive faster</p> <p>i. Driven 10 mph over the speed limit on a rural gravel road</p>	<p>e. Yes: 16.7%, No: 83.3%</p> <p>f. Yes: 48.4%, No: 51.6%</p> <p>g. Yes: 12.1%, No: 87.9%</p> <p>h. Yes: 48.3%, No: 51.7%</p> <p>i. Yes: 14.3%, No: 85.7%</p>
<p>Q22. If you have driven 10 mph or more over the speed limit in the past 5 years, was it usually because you...</p> <p>1. enjoyed the thrill of driving fast,</p> <p>2. were running late</p> <p>3. were not paying attention to your speed</p> <p>4. were keeping up with the flow of traffic</p> <p>5. Something else</p>	<p>1. 1.1%</p> <p>2. 19.5%</p> <p>3. 17.7%</p> <p>4. 53.1%</p> <p>5. 8.5%</p>
<p>Q23. What do you think the speed limit is on rural gravel roads?</p>	<p>1. 55mph: 27.0%</p> <p>2. 45mph: 27.5%</p> <p>3. 50mph: 11.3%</p> <p>4. 35mph: 11.3%</p>
<p>Q30: Please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each of the following statements.</p> <p>a. There isn't much chance of an accident if I am careful when speeding.</p> <p>h. The chance of being caught is small for speeding</p>	<p>a. Strongly agree: 3.0%, Agree: 30.1%, Disagree: 46.8%, Strongly disagree: 20.0%</p> <p>h. Strongly agree: 2.5%, Agree: 35.3%, Disagree: 52.2%, Strongly disagree: 10.0%</p>
<b><i>Reduce Alcohol-Related Crashes</i></b>	
<p>Q10: How well do you think the state of Iowa has done in the following areas:</p> <p>a. Reducing alcohol-related accidents</p>	<p>1. Excellent: 10.6%</p> <p>2. Good: 48.5%</p> <p>3. Fair: 27.5%</p> <p>4. Poor: 8.4%</p>
<p>Q18. How serious a threat to traffic safety you think it is?</p> <p>a. People driving after drinking too much alcohol</p>	<p>1. Very serious threat to traffic safety: 91.8%</p> <p>2. Somewhat serious: 6.2%</p> <p>3. Slightly serious: 1.9%</p> <p>4. Not at all serious: 0.2%</p>
<p>Q19. How acceptable to you personally think it is for a driver to...?</p> <p>a. Drive when they think they may have had too much to drink</p>	<p>1. Always acceptable: 0.5%</p> <p>2. Sometimes acceptable: 1.8%</p> <p>3. Seldom acceptable: 3.1%</p> <p>4. Never acceptable: 94.6%</p>
<p>Q20. Please tell me how often you have seen other drivers in your area do the following...</p> <p>k. Drive while seeming to be impaired by drug or alcohol use</p>	<p>1. Every day: 2.5%</p> <p>2. A few times a week: 8.6%</p> <p>3. A few times a month: 15.7%</p> <p>4. Once a month or less: 45.3%</p> <p>5. Never: 27.9%</p>
<p>Q21. In the past 30 days, as the driver of a vehicle, have you ... Drinking?</p> <p>n. Driven when you thought your blood alcohol content was above the legal limit</p> <p>o. Driven when you thought your blood alcohol content was a little below the legal limit</p>	<p>n. Yes: 5.1%, No: 94.9%</p> <p>o. Yes: 15.1%, No: 84.9%</p>

Q30: Please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following. b. There isn't much chance of an accident if I am careful when driving after drinking alcohol g. The chance of being caught is small for driving after drinking alcohol	b. Strongly agree: 0.7%, Agree: 5.8%, Disagree: 39.7%, Strongly disagree: 53.8% g. Strongly agree: 3.1%, Agree: 29.6%, Disagree: 51.3%, Strongly disagree: 16.0%
<b><i>Improve Commercial Vehicle Safety</i></b>	
Q10g.: How well do you think the state of Iowa has done in increasing commercial vehicle safety:	1. Excellent: 9.2% 2. Good: 48.2% 3. Fair: 27.0% 4. Poor: 5.3%
<b><i>Improve Motorcycle Safety</i></b>	
Q10. How well do you think the state of Iowa has done in the following areas: c. Improving motorcycle safety	1. Excellent: 6.4% 2. Good: 32.1% 3. Fair: 30.1% 4. Poor: 15.2%
Q12. Do you support or oppose... d. Required motorcycle riders to complete more extensive training e. Reinstating a law that requires a helmet f. Having a graduated licensing system for motorcyclists that is based on engine size	d. Support: 56.3%, Oppose: 36.3% e. Support: 68.0%, Oppose: 29.0% f. Support: 50.8%, Oppose: 34.6%
Q28. When you ride a motorcycle, do you usually wear a helmet?	1. Yes: 55.2% 2. No: 44.8%
<b><i>Improve Young Driver Education</i></b>	
Q10. How well do you think the state of Iowa has done in the following areas: i. Improving the safety of young drivers	1. Excellent: 6.8% 2. Good: 39.3% 3. Fair: 36.8% 4. Poor: 10.4%
Q18. How serious a threat to traffic safety you think it is? h. Young drivers	1. Very serious threat to traffic safety: 20.4% 2. Somewhat serious: 56.3% 3. Slightly serious: 19.2% 4. Not at all serious: 4.0%
<b><i>Improve Older Driver Safety</i></b>	
Q10. How well do you think the state of Iowa has done in the following areas: j. Improving the safety of older drivers	1. Excellent: 3.7% 2. Good: 27.5% 3. Fair: 37.4% 4. Poor: 20.1%
Q18. How serious a threat to traffic safety you think it is? g. Elderly drivers	1. Very serious threat to traffic safety: 21.9% 2. Somewhat serious: 55.0% 3. Slightly serious: 15.4% 4. Not at all serious: 7.6%
<b><i>Strengthen Teenage Licensing Process</i></b>	
Q13a. In Iowa, teens can get an instruction permit at age 14. In some states, the age for a first license is older. Do you think 14 is ok, or what other age do you think it should be?	13: 0.5% 14: 58.4% 15: 9.5% 16: 25.7% 17: 1.0% 18: 4.9%
Q13b. Do you think Iowa should increase the permit length to 12 months? (teen)	Yes: 62.4% No: 37.6%

Q13c. Do you think Iowa should limit newly licensed teen drivers to no more than one teen passenger?	Yes: 72.4% No: 27.6%
Q13d Do you think Iowa should limit driving after 10 pm for newly licensed teen drivers?	Yes: 55.4% No: 44.6%
<b><i>Reduce Distracted Driving</i></b>	
Q10. How well do you think the state of Iowa has done in the following areas: f. Reducing distracted driving	1. Excellent: 6.1% 2. Good: 28.0% 3. Fair: 42.4% 4. Poor: 20.2%
Q14. Is it legal or illegal for driver under 18 to use a cell phone for any purpose while driving in Iowa?	1. Legal: 13.3% 2. Illegal: 86.7%
Q15. For adults, is it legal or illegal to read, write, or send a text message while driving in Iowa?	1. Legal: 11.2% 2. Illegal: 88.8%
Q18. How serious a threat to traffic safety you think it is? e. Distracted Driving i. Drivers using cell phones	e. Very serious threat to traffic safety: 71.8%, Somewhat serious: 24%, Slightly serious: 3.1%, Not at all serious: 1.1% i. Very serious threat to traffic safety: 57.6%, Somewhat serious: 32.0%, Slightly serious: 8.3%, Not at all serious: 2.1%
Q19. How acceptable to you personally think it is for a driver to...? d. Send text messages or emails while driving h. Talk on a hand-held cell phone while driving i. Talk on a hand-free cell phone while driving	d. Always acceptable: 1.4%, Sometimes acceptable: 4.6%, Seldom acceptable: 5.7%, Never acceptable: 88.4% h. Always acceptable: 3.2%, Sometimes acceptable: 35.8%, Seldom acceptable: 15.4%, Never acceptable: 45.6% i. Always acceptable: 19.9%, Sometimes acceptable: 52.2%, Seldom acceptable: 10.5%, Never acceptable: 17.5%
Q20. Please tell me how often you have seen other drivers in your area do the following... a. Talk on a cell phone while driving i. Read or send a text message or email while driving	a. Every day: 71.7%, A few times a week: 18.4%, A few times a month: 4.4%, Once a month or less: 3.3%, Never: 2.2% i. Every day: 35.0%, A few times a week: 29.5%, A few times a month: 13.4%, Once a month or less: 9.8%, Never: 12.2%
Q21. In the past 30 days, as the driver of a vehicle, have you...Cell phone use ? p. Talked on any kind of cell phone while driving q. Read or sent a text message or email while driving	p. Yes: 66.8%, No: 33.2% q. Yes: 19.1%, No: 80.9%
Q24. Please tell me whether you find it very distracting, somewhat distracting, or not at all distracting to... a. To have the radio on or music playing b. To have passengers in your car having conversations or interacting c. To have children sitting in the backseat d. To drive through an area with a lot of commercial signage such as billboards e. To use a GPS device while driving f. To make or receive cell phone calls g. To receive text messages or emails	a. Very distracting: 1.2%, Somewhat distracting: 20.1%, Not at all distracting: 78.7% b. Very distracting: 2.1%, Somewhat distracting: 42.7%, Not at all distracting: 55.2% c. Very distracting: 7.9%, Somewhat distracting: 48.6%, Not at all distracting: 43.4% d. Very distracting: 12.7%, Somewhat distracting: 44.1%, Not at all distracting: 43.3% e. Very distracting: 10.8%, Somewhat distracting: 49.9%, Not at all distracting: 39.3% f. Very distracting: 35.5%, Somewhat distracting: 52.7%, Not at all distracting: 11.8% g. Very distracting: 84.3%, Somewhat distracting: 11.9%, Not at all distracting: 3.7%

Q25. In the past 30 days, have you been required or expected to talk on your cell phone while driving because of work?	Yes: 22.5% No: 77.5%
Q26. In the past 30 years, have you been required or expected to send or receive a text message or e-mail on your cell phone while driving because of work?	Yes: 5.0% No: 95.0%
Q30. Please tell me whether you strongly agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each of the following statements. d. Driving while talking on a cell phone increase the chance you might have an accident e. Driving while eating or drinking increases the chance you might have an accident j. The chance of being caught is small for sending or receiving a text message while driving	d. Strongly agree: 18.8%, Agree: 71.6%, Disagree: 8.5%, Strongly disagree: 1.1% e. Strongly agree: 10.9%, Agree: 77.5%, Disagree: 11.4%, Strongly disagree: 0.2% j. Strongly agree: 10.4%, Agree: 63.6%, Disagree: 22.8%, Strongly disagree: 3.2%
Q36. During the past 2 years, how many accidents have you been in while you were driving?	0: 86.4% 1: 10.6% 2: 2.4% 3: 0.3% 4: 0.0% 5: 0.2%
Q37. In how many of these accidents did distracted driving play a role?	0: 71.5% 1: 19.9% 2: 5.3% 3: 2.0% 5: 1.4%

In addition to the tabular summary, key highlights for each of the eleven goals from Phase I were summarized as they related to specific survey questions.

### *Goal #1 – Improve EMS Response*

The survey contained two questions related to EMS. Results show that approximately 90 percent of Iowans felt very or somewhat satisfied with the response times and quality of care for emergency medical services in their area. Only about 3 percent of people felt not very satisfied. In terms of the performance of the state of Iowa in improving emergency medical service, about 75 percent of people gave the opinion of excellent or good. This considerably high public satisfaction with existing levels of service suggests a lack of concern or potential support for actions that would improve response statewide.

### *Goal #2 – Toughen Law Enforcement and Prosecution*

A large number of survey responders (about 39 percent) chose enforcement as the most effective tool to make driving safer in Iowa. About 30 percent chose education, while about 28 percent chose engineering. Conversely, in terms of the least effective way to make driving in Iowa safer, engineering was selected by about 35 percent, followed by enforcement with 33 percent and education with about 25 percent. Enforcement is also more heavily supported as age increases. Of the enforcement options surveyed, responders more heavily supported targeted enforcement, such as high-visibility enforcement operations (about 85 percent) and focusing on repeat offenders (nearly 90 percent), rather than on increasing fines (about 38 percent).

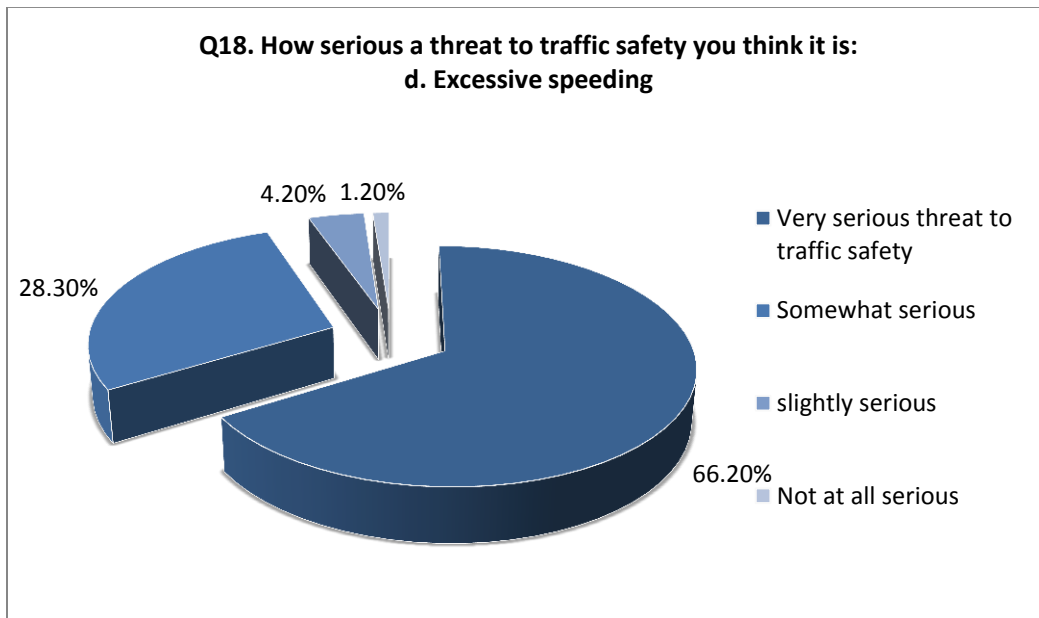
*Goal #3 – Increase Safety Belt Use*

Safety belts are considered an effective tool to reduce the crash severity. More than 82 percent of those surveyed thought Iowa has done an excellent or good job in increasing safety belt use across the state. There also seems to be a broad acceptance that safety belts are important tools in preventing injuries and death. According to the survey, 80 percent of Iowans considered driving without wearing seat belts as a very serious or somewhat serious threat to traffic safety. The survey responses seem to suggest high saturation of acceptance and use. Young males may still be the one area of most potential improvement through continued enforcement.

*Goal #4 – Reduce Speeding-Related Crashes*

Speeding was emphasized heavily in the survey. Overall, a third of the respondents thought that Iowa had done a fair or poor job enforcing speed limits. Older respondents had a higher percentage of responses in this category. Concerning the often-controversial subject of automated enforcement, a majority of respondents were supportive of the use of speed cameras on major highways (55 percent) and on local city streets (more than 56 percent). Interestingly, respondents were significantly more supportive (nearly 71 percent) of use of cameras to enforce red light running.

As shown in Figure 1, more than 66 percent of Iowans surveyed thought excessive speeding was a very serious threat to traffic safety, while another 28 percent felt it was somewhat serious. This suggests considerable public support for significant actions that would address speeding statewide, especially on local-level roads.

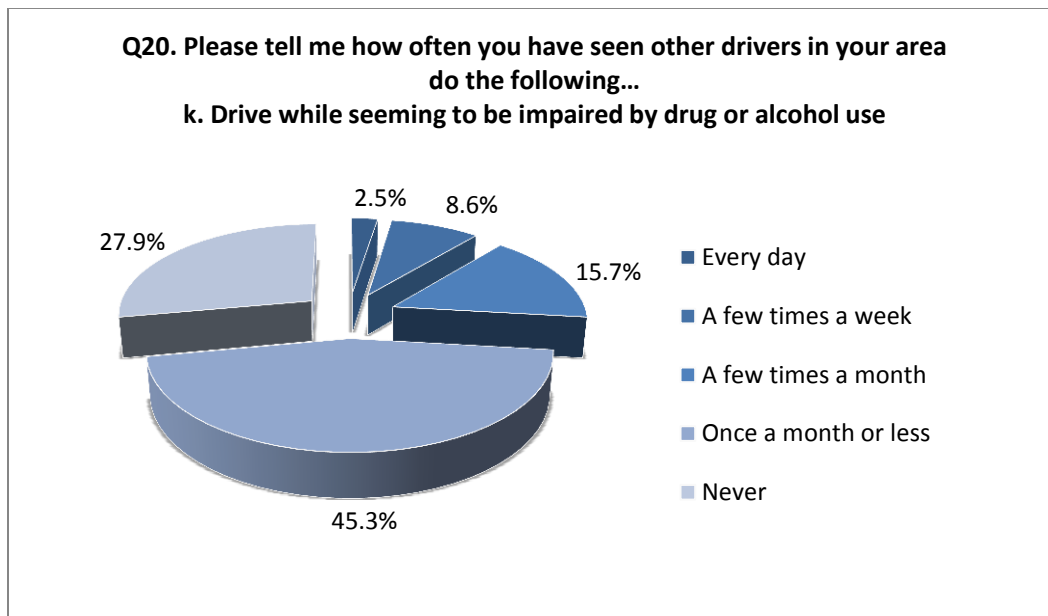


**Figure 1. Excessive speeding as a threat to traffic safety**

*Goal #5 – Reduce Alcohol-Related Crashes*

Concerning the five questions related to alcohol consumption and driving, most respondents (nearly 92 percent) recognized it as a very serious threat to traffic safety, with about 95 percent feeling that it was never acceptable to drive after drinking too much.

Nonetheless, as shown in Figure 2, a significant number of respondents (nearly 27 percent) see drivers continue to drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol more than once a month. The survey also suggests that people are aware of the risks of this activity, with almost all respondents understanding the increased risk of a crash and most understanding the risk of being caught by law enforcement. This suggests considerable public support for significant actions that would address this serious issue.



**Figure 2. Frequency of driving while impaired**

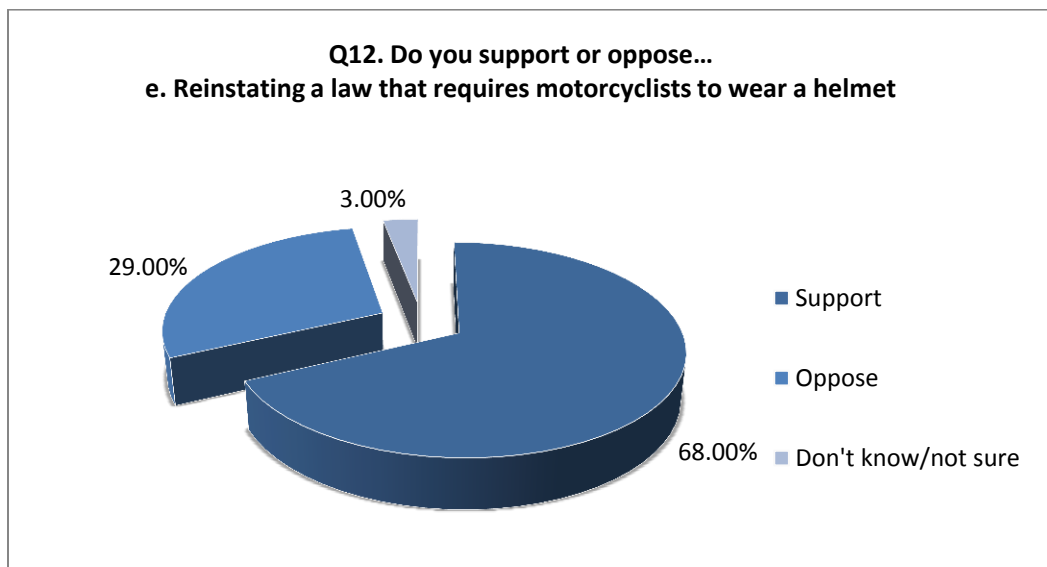
*Goal #6 – Improve Commercial Vehicle Safety*

Only one commercial vehicle-related question was included in the survey. About 57 percent of respondents felt Iowa has done a good or excellent job in increasing commercial vehicle safety. Only about 5 percent of respondents felt Iowa had done a poor job. This suggests a lack of concern or lack of potential widespread support for actions that would improve commercial vehicle safety, but does not indicate considerable resistance to efforts to improve safety from within the commercial vehicle industry. Unlike EMS, for example, this could move along with less public involvement.

### Goal #7 – Improve Motorcycle Safety

Results of the three questions related to motorcycle safety showed that a majority of Iowans are supportive of doing more to address this issue. Overall, this is one area where respondents did not rate Iowa’s efforts as high as in other areas with just over 38 percent feeling Iowa has done an excellent or good job in improving motorcycle safety. This percentage was higher among motorcyclists, though.

When asked about support of efforts to do so, a majority of respondents supported more extensive training (more than 56 percent), reinstating the helmet law (68 percent as shown in Figure 3), and a graduated licensing system based on engine size (about 51 percent). Nonetheless, motorcyclists themselves are much more strongly opposed to any such measures. This suggests that efforts to increase motorcycle safety will likely have a strong push back from motorcyclists themselves, but would have broader support from Iowans overall.



**Figure 3. Support for reinstatement of helmet law**

### Goal #8 – Improve Young Driver Education

Two questions in the survey were related specifically to young driver education. Opinions were relatively broad concerning Iowa’s efforts to improve the safety of young drivers. Approximately 7 percent of the respondents said excellent, about 39 percent said good, nearly 37 percent said fair, and about 10 percent said poor. Respondents more clearly felt that young drivers were a serious safety concern, with nearly 77 percent noting the issue as either very serious or somewhat serious. This suggests relatively strong potential for public support of actions that would improve young driver education in Iowa.

### *Goal #9 – Improve Older Driver Safety*

Two questions similar to those asked about young drivers were asked concerning older drivers. Responses were slightly more negative than for younger drivers, and with twice as many respondents rating Iowa's safety efforts for improving safety of older drivers as poor (20 percent). Respondents also clearly felt that older drivers were a serious safety concern, with nearly 77 percent noting the issue as either very serious or somewhat serious. This also suggests relatively strong potential for public support of actions that would improve driving safety for older Iowans.

### *Goal #10 – Strengthen Teenage Licensing Process*

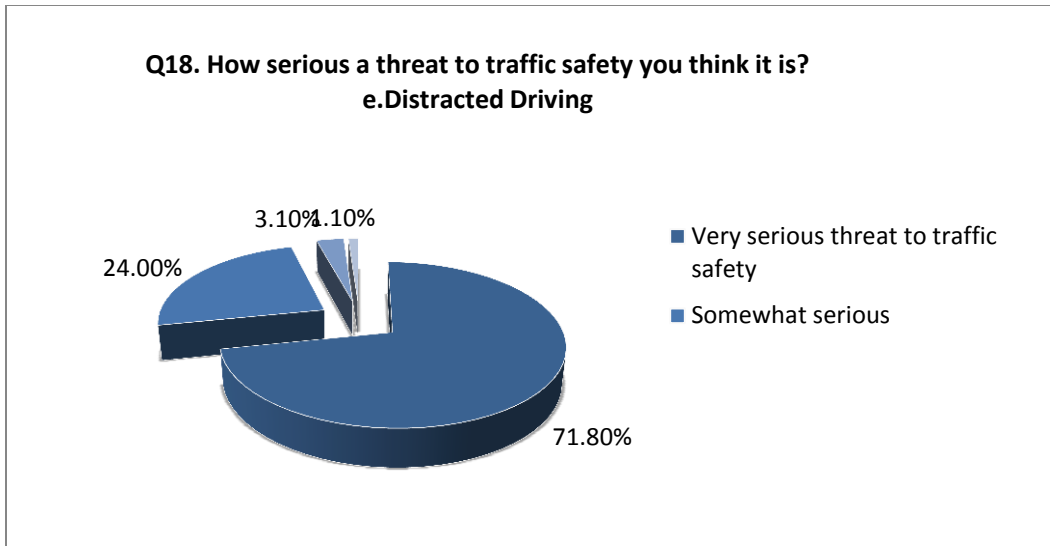
Four questions related to licensing of teen drivers were included in the survey. More than 58 percent of the respondents felt that the current instruction permit age of 14 years old was acceptable, with about 41 percent suggesting a higher age. When asked about specific restrictions to place on an instruction permit, a majority of respondents supported an increased permit length (more than 62 percent), limiting number of teen passengers (about 72 percent), and limiting hours of nighttime operation (more than 55 percent). This suggests that efforts to change the teen licensing process have relatively strong support.

### *Goal #11 – Reduce Distracted Driving*

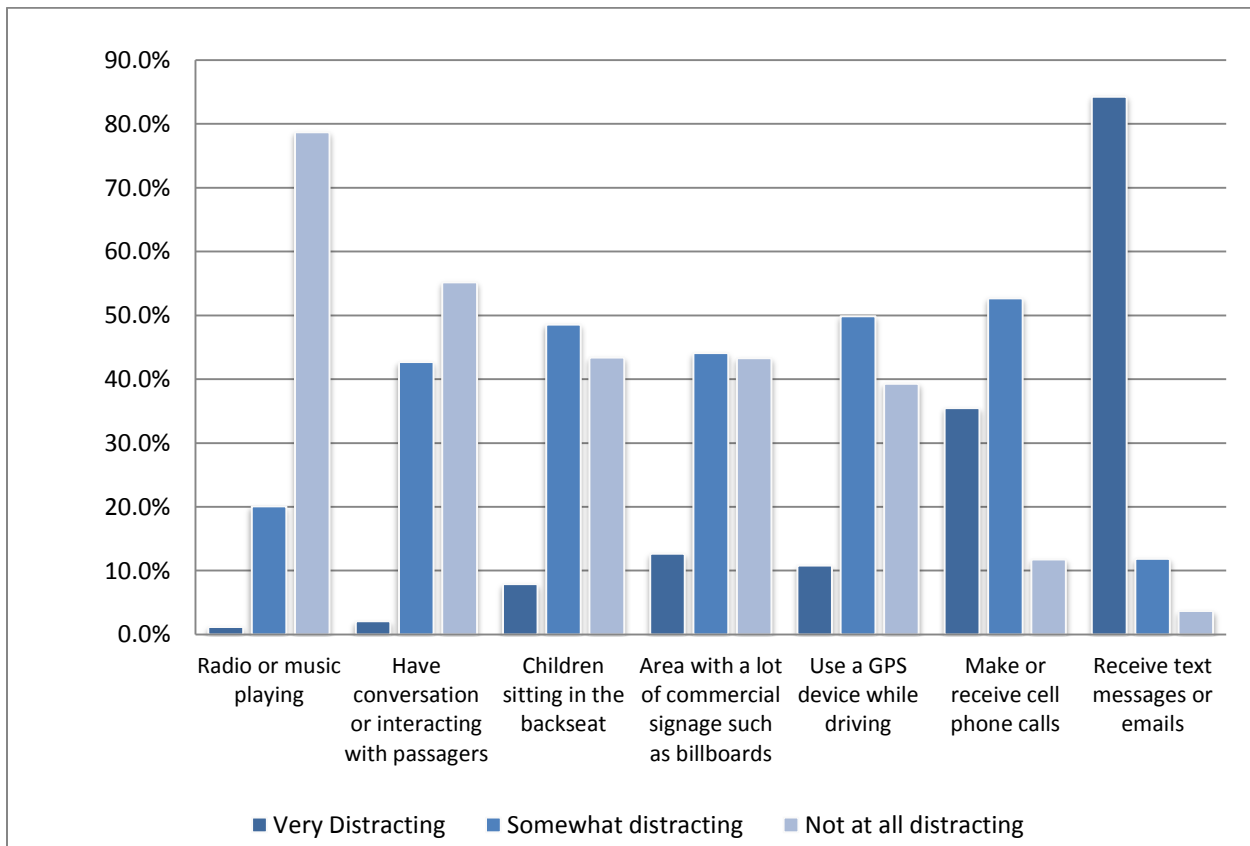
Distracted driving is currently a very important topic nationally. Consequently, it was also well represented in the survey with 13 questions related to the topic. About 34 percent of Iowans responding to the survey felt that Iowa had done either a good or excellent job in reducing distracted driving, while more than 62 percent rated the effort as either fair (about 42 percent) or poor (about 20 percent). The survey also indicated there was still a small portion of the population that was unaware of more recent changes in Iowa's law concerning use of cell phones and texting. As shown in Figure 4, a solid majority of respondents (about 72 percent) considered distracted driving as a very serious threat to traffic safety, with another 24 percent considering it somewhat serious.

Respondent feelings toward cell phone usage specifically were slightly less dramatic, but nearly 90 percent felt it was a very or somewhat serious threat to traffic safety in Iowa. Numbers were similar for acceptance of texting, but cell phone usage was much more accepted. According to the survey, both phone use and texting remain very common across the state, although both activities are considered much more distracting than other common distractions behind the wheel (Figure 5).





**Figure 4. Distracted driving as a threat to traffic safety**



**Figure 5. Degree of distraction for different actions while driving (Q24 a-g)**

## SUMMARY AND COMPARISON OF SURVEYS

In addition to guiding and analyzing the 2011 survey, the research team summarized other public opinion data. This was helpful in better understanding both regional/geographic differences and temporal changes, especially in the attitudes and beliefs of Iowans over time. Public opinion data that were reviewed included the following:

- AAA Traffic Safety Culture Index
- North Dakota Statewide Traffic Safety Survey, 2012
- Tennessee Traffic Survey, 2011
- Texas Traffic Survey, 2010
- Iowa Public Opinion Survey of Highway Safety Improvement Goals and Strategies, 2000

### National Trends

First of all, concerning national-level data, the AAA Safety Culture Index and past surveys have shown a few interesting trends. Respondents' personal experiences with both serious crashes and driving under the influence of alcohol seem to be getting less frequent over time. Personal attitudes against driving under the influence of alcohol are also getting stronger.

Rates of cell phone use and texting remain high, but public awareness of the safety risk seems to be growing. The AAAFTS reports that nearly 80 percent of the population sees aggressive driving as a serious problem. Attitudes about speeding, red light running, and motorcycle helmets are similar to those in the 2011 Iowa survey. Safety belt use is one area where Iowans are still ahead of the rest of the nation.

### Iowa Trends

The research team also identified key elements common to both the 2011 Iowa public opinion survey and the 2000 survey and, then, compared and summarized the changes in public attitudes over time. Key conclusions from the comparison were as follows:

- Public support and concern for improvements in **emergency medical services** seems to be going down slightly.
- Concern and public awareness over the importance of using **safety belts** continues to be high, although there seems to be little desire for increasing widespread enforcement efforts.
- Support for addressing **speeding** and other aggressive driving behaviors has been consistent, especially on local, lower speed, streets. Red light running seems to have become more of a concern than speeding in recent years.
- Public concern over **alcohol-related crashes** and the desire for stronger enforcement has steady and slightly increasing support.

- Public support for improving **commercial vehicle safety** has remained relatively strong, although it does not generate strong opinions.
- **Motorcycle safety** remains a more controversial issue than in many states, with public support for increased training and mandatory helmet use decreasing in recent years.
- Support for improvements in **young driver education** has remained steady over the past decade.
- **Older driver safety** continues to be a safety concern, with support for innovative ways to improve driver safety in later years.
- Public support for improving (more strictly) graduated **teen drivers licensing** has remained steady over the past decade. Support for a graduated licensing system has risen only slightly.
- **Distracted driving** has become an increasing concern for Iowans over the past decade, with overwhelming public support for stronger enforcement, especially for texting and driving.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The research team synthesized the results of public opinion surveys and data with the results of the Phase I study to make recommendations to the Iowa DOT on actions that will improve the traffic safety culture across the state. Recommendations were organized according to the goals established in Phase I and, then, grouped by potential based on trends in public opinion to reflect support and opportunity, as well as effectiveness. The recommendations are as follows (in random order).

### High Potential

1. Continue to aggressively pursue stronger legislation and enforcement to address the growing problem of **distracted driving**.
2. Increase education and marketing efforts to **reduce distracted driving**.
3. Pursue increase in funding for more enforcement and law officers to **reduce speeding-related crashes** and other aggressive driving behaviors, especially on local streets.
4. Pursue increase in automated enforcement to **reduce speeding-related crashes** and other aggressive driving behaviors, such as red-light running.
5. Consider increasing fines and strengthen prosecution of fines for **speeding**.
6. Continue to improve enforcement to **reduce alcohol-related crashes** through increased use of data.
7. Continue to aggressively pursue stronger laws and tougher consequences to address **alcohol-related crashes**.
8. Improve and increase parental involvement in driving to strengthen the teenage licensing process and **improve young driver education**.
9. Pursue development of a consistent, standard curriculum across Iowa with multiple disciplines to **improve young driver education**.
10. **Improve young driver education** by pursuing an increase in hours required for both classroom and driving.
11. **Increase safety belt use** by increasing funding for enforcement and use of data.
12. **Increase safety belt use** by increasing enforcement of commercial vehicle operations.
13. Support increased rider training to **improve motorcycle safety**.
14. Increase education efforts on impaired riding to **improve motorcycle safety**.
15. **Improve motorcycle safety** by increasing education to encourage helmet/gear usage.
16. Pursue mandating EMS in all counties in Iowa to **improve EMS response**.
17. **Improve EMS response** by seeking an increase in compensated EMS providers.
18. **Improve older driver safety** by instituting driving tests for persons starting at 70 years old.
19. **Improve older driver safety** by encouraging physicians to report when drivers are losing

competence.

### **Medium Potential**

1. Pursue increase in funding for more enforcement to **reduce alcohol-related crashes**.
2. Increase media and marketing efforts to **reduce alcohol-related crashes**.
3. Continue to aggressively pursue stronger laws to improve the graduated **teenage licensing process**.
4. **Improve young driver education** by investigating increased insurance industry involvement.
5. **Improve older driver safety** by mandating continuing education for older drivers and/or insurance incentives.
6. **Toughen law enforcement and prosecution** by pursuing an increase in funding for Department of Criminal Investigation (DCI) testing.
7. **Toughen law enforcement and prosecution** by pursuing a change in traffic violations from criminal to administrative violations.
8. Pursue increase in fines to **increase safety belt use**.
9. **Increase safety belt use** by increasing the seriousness of the penalty.
10. Pursue graduated driver licensing to improve **commercial vehicle safety**.
11. Pursue increase in funding of enforcement and training to improve **commercial vehicle safety**.
12. **Improve EMS response** by aggressively increasing the public information on needs of and for emergency medical service, especially in rural areas.

### **Low Potential**

1. Work toward a better understanding of the dangers of specific distractions and address, along with automakers, those that can be improved through better cockpit engineering to reduce **distracted driving**.
2. Increase education and marketing efforts to change teen attitudes toward driving, **strengthen the teenage licensing process**, and **improve young driver education**.
3. **Toughen law enforcement and prosecution** by pursuing changes to allow video testimony from DCI laboratories.
4. **Improve motorcycle safety** by pursuing a lower blood alcohol content (BAC) limit for motorcyclists.