



**U.S. Department  
of Transportation**

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# 2023 Progress Report on the National Roadway Safety Strategy

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United States Department of Transportation | February 2023



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of Transportation**

Office of the Secretary  
of Transportation

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## Letter from the Secretary

The most basic truth about transportation too often goes unsaid: arriving safely is what matters most. We know this to be true, yet in our most familiar and common form of transportation - the use of roads by vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists - tens of thousands of lives are lost every year in America.

One year ago, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT, or the Department) released the National Roadway Safety Strategy, a new, comprehensive approach to address the crisis of deaths on our roadways. In recent years, we have seen alarming increases in roadway fatalities, with rates moving in the wrong direction after decades of progress. An estimated 42,915 people died on our roadways in 2021, with millions more seriously and often permanently injured. We have committed to take urgent action to save lives on our roadways, and we have been working across the Department to do just that. This report provides an update after our first year.

Key to our strategy is recognizing that people make mistakes, and, as good stewards of the transportation system, we should put in place safeguards to prevent those mistakes from being lethal. Zero is the only acceptable number of deaths and serious injuries on our roadways, and that is our ultimate goal. At the core of this strategy is the Department-wide adoption of the Safe System Approach, which focuses on five key objectives: safer people, safer roads, safer vehicles, safer speeds, and post-crash care.

In this update, we're not only reporting on the progress we've made as a Department, but also pushing to do more, and more quickly. In the NRSS, we committed to track our progress on 29 specific safety-critical actions. By the end of 2022, we made significant progress on almost all those actions. We launched new programs, including the Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant program and a Complete Streets initiative, produced guidance for the Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment, and issued rulemakings for commercial motor vehicle speed limiters and rear impact guards. In this update, we're also announcing 14 new actions that we will take in the next year. We encourage you to track the Department's work in the virtual dashboard and follow our ongoing progress, especially because the NRSS is a guiding strategy that we will continue to develop.

This report also makes clear that roadway safety is a shared responsibility; this goal is a critical principle of the Safe System Approach. While USDOT has many tools at our disposal, and we are taking dozens of important actions, true success—and advancing toward zero traffic deaths—will require a coordinated effort with stakeholders across State and local government, advocate and research communities, and the private sector. Success will take a sustained and urgent commitment to protect people and prevent harm by working with the people who build and manage our roads, design our vehicles, and use vehicles as part of their businesses. We need an all-of-America response to address this crisis. We ask you to join our Call to Action and share how you are embracing our shared vision to eliminate roadway fatalities and make sure all Americans can reach their destinations safely.

Thank you for your commitment to saving lives on our roadways. We look forward to meeting this challenge together.

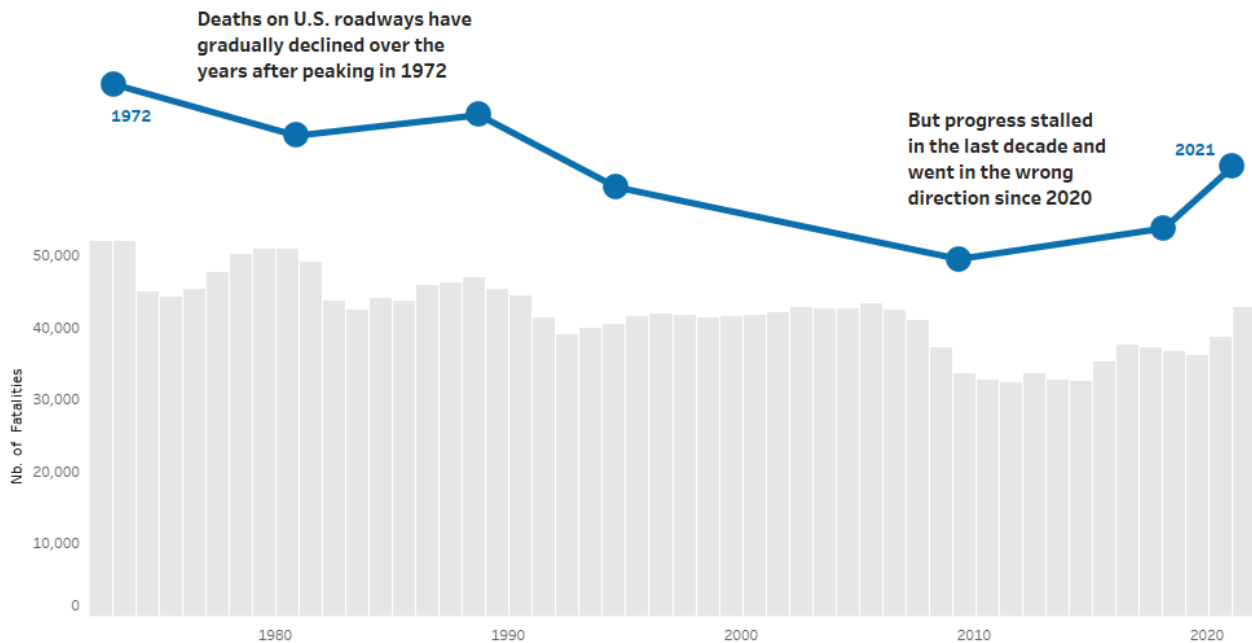


Secretary Pete Buttigieg

# Update on the Roadway Safety Problem

The [National Roadway Safety Strategy](#) (NRSS) was released in January 2022 following an unacceptable increase of 6.8% in motor vehicle and road traffic fatalities in 2020 compared to 2019. Roadway fatalities and the fatality rate declined consistently for 30 years, but progress has stalled over the past decade and went in the wrong direction in 2020 and 2021. An estimated 42,915 lives were lost on U.S. roads in 2021, an increase of over 10% compared to 2020. Early estimates for the first nine months of 2022 indicate deaths will remain near those levels in 2022, while getting worse for incidents involving trucks as well as people walking, biking, or rolling.

## 42,915 people died on America's roads in 2021



Compared to 2020, fatalities increased:

- 10.5% overall. 42,915 lives were lost, *the highest total number recorded since 2007*
- 16% on urban roads
- 14% among drivers ages 65 and older
- 13% among people walking, totaling 7,342 lives lost, *the highest recorded in decades*
- 13% among fatal crashes involving at least one large truck
- 9% among motorcyclists, totaling 6,101 lives lost, *the highest total ever recorded*

Source: Early Estimates of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities and Fatality Rate by Sub-Categories in 2021, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, DOT HS 813 298, May 2022.

The crisis on our roadways serves as a somber reminder of the challenges we face as a nation and what it will take to reach our ultimate goal of zero motor vehicle and road traffic fatalities. Zero is the only acceptable number of deaths on our highways, roads, and streets.

To further our vision of zero deaths and demonstrate progress, the Department set an intermediate, ambitious target in the USDOT Fiscal Year 2022-2026 Strategic Plan to reduce 66% of motor vehicle-related fatalities by 2040.

## What is USDOT Doing about Roadway Fatalities?

When the Department embarked on a comprehensive strategy to address motor vehicle and road traffic fatalities, we realized that confronting this challenge would be neither easy nor quickly resolved. People dying on our highways, streets, and roads is an ingrained and persistent problem, one that many in society have come to accept as part of our everyday lives.

In recognition of the need to substantially change how the nation views and addresses roadway safety, the Department committed to institutionalizing the [Safe System Approach](#) (SSA) as our guiding principle. The SSA relies on multiple, complementary safety interventions for all people who use our roadways to prevent crashes from occurring in the first place and to reduce harm if a crash occurs. The NRSS uses the five elements of the SSA to categorize safety programs and activities focused on advancing safety in our roadway environments, in human behavior, in our vehicles, and through emergency response. These five elements are:

**Safer People:** Encourage safe, responsible behavior by people who use our roads and create conditions that prioritize their ability to reach their destination unharmed.

**Safer Roads:** Design roadway environments to mitigate human mistakes and account for injury tolerances, to encourage safer behaviors, and to facilitate safe travel by the most vulnerable users.

**Safer Vehicles:** Expand the availability of vehicle systems and features that help to prevent crashes and minimize the impact of crashes on both occupants and non-occupants.

**Safer Speeds:** Promote safer speeds in all roadway environments through a combination of thoughtful, context-appropriate roadway design, targeted education and outreach campaigns, and enforcement.

**Post-Crash Care:** Enhance the survivability of crashes through expedient access to emergency medical care while creating a safe working environment for vital first responders and preventing secondary crashes through robust traffic incident management practices.



The actions needed to significantly improve safety and protect people from harm and the cultural shift that treats roadway deaths as unacceptable are multi-year endeavors. Although it

may take years of sustained effort to realize substantial reductions in lives lost due to traffic crashes, the Department, through the NRSS, prioritized key actions over the next few years that target our most significant and urgent problems to improve motor vehicle and road traffic safety.

The NRSS also highlights notable changes to existing practices and approaches. These actions align with the generational investment in America's transportation network made through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), (also known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act or IJA) and the Administration's priorities of increasing equity and tackling the climate crisis, which support and complement the funding, program, and policy provisions described in the NRSS safety actions.

The NRSS is a collaborative effort between the Office of the Secretary of Transportation (OST) and the Operating Administrations (OAs) whose roles and responsibilities encompass roadway safety, including the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA).

The January 2022 release of the NRSS committed the Department to execute specific actions to immediately address the crisis on our roadways. The actions that the Department has undertaken in the last year are laying the groundwork for significant advancements, particularly related to guidance and rulemakings, in alignment with BIL.

Some of the Department's most significant NRSS actions of 2022 include:

- **Launched new strategies and programs**, including adopting zero as our goal and formalizing the Department's use of the Safe System Approach as our guiding principle to address roadway safety; launching the [Safe Streets and Roads for All](#) Grant Program, with 510 communities receiving \$800 million in roadway safety funds; and starting a [Complete Streets](#) Initiative with the issuance of the [Complete Streets Report to Congress: Moving to a Complete Streets Design Model](#).
- **Advanced rulemaking efforts** that included publishing an Advance Notice of Supplemental Proposed Rulemaking that would require the use of speed limiters on commercial motor vehicles, and making significant progress on key rulemakings to advance pedestrian automatic emergency braking (AEB) for passenger cars, commercial motor vehicle AEB, as well as to advance alcohol impaired driving prevention technology. A [final rule on rear-impact guards](#) for commercial motor vehicles was also issued. USDOT is working diligently to finalize amendments to the [Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices](#) by analyzing and resolving over 35,000 public comments.
- **Produced guidance and other Policy Documents** that include the [Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment](#) to guide states on required 2023 safety assessments to facilitate project selection and roadway investment strategies, and proposals for upgrades and a "road map" for the New Car Assessment Program – including developing a proposal to add a Pedestrian Protection Program.

→ **Identified critical safety research priorities** in support of the NRSS as part of the [U.S. DOT Research, Development and Technology Strategic Plan \(FY 2022-2026\)–Building a Better Transportation Future for All](#).<sup>1</sup>

Notable milestones and activities from the past year are highlighted in the following table on the next page. USDOT is updating a quarterly [online dashboard](#) to track progress against NRSS commitments.

## Notable Milestones and Activities in 2022

Safe System Approach Element	Notable Milestones and Activities
<b>Safer People</b>	<p>Began to implement a behavioral safety action plan, issued Community Traffic Safety Grants through the Road to Zero Coalition, expanded the reach of Driving While Impaired Courts that address recidivism through a public health approach, and conducted education and outreach focused on behavioral safety and the SSA.</p> <p>Published the State Driver Licensing Agency Resource Webpage and republished the Developer’s Handbook with updates and technical specifications for the State driver’s Licensing Agencies. The Webpage allows States to track Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) holders who have verified positive test results for controlled substances and/or alcohol or who have refused to submit to testing.</p> <p>Initiated a Request for Comments focused on submitting toxicology data to the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) to address current barriers and identify solutions.</p> <p>Developed and disseminated multiple public safety information and education campaigns to address risky driving behaviors, including impaired driving, not wearing your seat belt, distracted driving, speeding, and safety near school buses.</p> <p>Launched a new \$10 million paid summer media campaign to deter speeding that included a social norming message (Speeding Catches Up With You) and an optional enforcement message (Speeding Slows You Down).</p> <p>Issued notice to implement State Highway Safety Grants that overhauls behavioral safety grants, helping States effectively target the root causes of traffic fatalities and crashes.</p>
<b>Safer Roads</b>	<p>Began a comprehensive Complete Streets Initiative to prioritize the safety of all users in transportation network planning, design, construction, and operations with the issuance of the Complete Streets Report to Congress.</p> <p>Launched the Safe Streets and Roads for All grant program, which will provide \$5 billion over 5 years to communities to plan and implement road safety actions. The first round of awards for this program was announced in February 2023, and provides over \$800 million in grants to over 500 communities.</p> <p>Produced guidance to States on the new Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment required in 2023.</p>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.transportation.gov/rdtstrategicplan>

Safe System Approach Element	Notable Milestones and Activities
<b>Safer Roads cont.</b>	<p>Advanced the Manual of Traffic Control Devices rulemaking effort, analyzing and resolving the more than 35,000 public comments.</p> <p>Promoted the Safe System Approach by delivering technical assistance, documenting noteworthy practices, and developing numerous resources that will enable stakeholders to integrate the SSA into projects and practices, including updated Highway Safety Improvement Program guidance and its associated Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment and Special Rule.</p> <p>Prioritized lighting as part of the new round of innovations under the <a href="#">Every Day Counts</a> initiative to enhance visibility along corridors, intersections, and pedestrian crossings to improve safety for all road users.</p>
<b>Safer Vehicles</b>	<p>Released proposals for upgrades and a “road map” for the New Car Assessment Program, a vehicle safety consumer information program, including a new Pedestrian Protection Program. The upgrade proposes to include blind spot detection and intervention, lane keeping support, significant advances to pedestrian automatic emergency braking technologies, as well as enhance performance tests for existing technologies such as automatic emergency braking.</p> <p>Issued a final rule on rear impact guards for trailers and semitrailers.</p> <p>Collected and made public data about crashes that occur when advanced technologies—specifically, Automated Driving Systems and Level 2 Advanced Driver Assistance Systems—are engaged, through a Standing General Order.</p>
<b>Safer Speeds</b>	<p>Published Advance Supplemental Notice of Proposed Rulemaking concerning speed limiters with a motor carrier-based approach.</p> <p>Launched a public education “Speeding Wrecks Lives” campaign across the country to deter dangerous driving behaviors, aimed at changing general attitudes toward speeding and reminding drivers of the deadly consequences.</p> <p>Implemented the speed management program, which included exploring speed management to improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety in rural, urban, and suburban areas; technical assistance to help inform traffic calming; development of an informational guide on speed safety camera program planning and operations; and a new project to develop informational guidance on setting appropriate speed limits.</p>
<b>Post-Crash Care</b>	<p>Engaged emergency responders and traffic incident management experts through training, education through incident management curriculum development, workshops, and stakeholder outreach.</p> <p>Expanded the use and support of the National Emergency Medical Services Information System (NEMSIS) by accepting data from all 50 States, 2 territories, and the District of Columbia into NHTSA’s National EMS Database, and promoting its information through a National EMS Traffic Crash <a href="#">Dashboard</a>.</p> <p>Prioritized advancing Traffic Incident Management (TIM) training and technologies targeted at improved responder and motorist safety in new round of innovation under the <a href="#">Every Day Counts</a> Initiative.</p>



## New NRSS Actions

The NRSS is the organizing framework meant to catalyze the Department's efforts to make our roadways safer for everyone. We know that more, urgent action is needed. USDOT will continue to build on the strategy and identify new actions, in addition to the [existing 29 actions](#) that were outlined in the launch of the NRSS and are already underway.

This includes the introduction of the following key actions that are being added to the list of NRSS top priorities over the next few years:

### New Crosscutting Actions

1. Further institutionalize the Safe System Approach through internal implementation, comprehensive and consistent messaging, and assisting stakeholders in how to apply a safe system. (FHWA, FMCSA, NHTSA, OST)
2. Consider equitable investment in historically disadvantaged and underserved communities for key discretionary grant programs that, at least in part, advance roadway safety. (FHWA, FMCSA, FRA, FTA, NHTSA, OST)
3. Build capacity to improve safety in rural areas by working with stakeholders at the State, local, and Tribal levels through focused technical assistance, training, and research. This includes taking action to address impaired driving and other risky driver behavioral safety issues, and to enhance post-crash care. (FHWA, FMCSA, NHTSA)

### New Safer People Actions

4. Implement new Federal and State motor carrier safety processes and policies to better identify commercial motor carrier safety risk, and to enhance the effectiveness of commercial motor vehicle crash reductions strategies. (FMCSA)
5. Address underlying factors that create barriers to the recruitment and retention of qualified commercial motor vehicle drivers and contribute to safety issues of commercial motor vehicle drivers by convening the Women of Trucking Advisory Board and the Truck Leasing Task Force, and developing specific action plans on these topics. (FMCSA)

### New Safer Roads Actions

6. Advance the use and deployment of technologies (e.g., Intelligent Transportation Systems [ITS], interoperable vehicle to everything [V2X] capabilities, an Intersection Safety Challenge, etc.) to further roadway safety through training, knowledge transfer, and grant funding. These technologies should adhere to cybersecurity practices, and enhance safety for all users. (FHWA, OST-R)

7. Advance strategies and practices for safe and reliable travel through work zones for all road users, including highway workers, through training and knowledge transfer to State and local agencies. This action includes leveraging funding opportunities outlined in BIL, such as work zone safety grants, and continuing technology efforts such as the Work Zone Data Exchange (WZDx). (FHWA, OST-R)
8. Develop guidance to promote designs and construction methods of roads that facilitate safer travel. (FHWA)
9. Advance motorcyclist safety by developing resources and providing technical assistance focused on technologies, effective strategies, and noteworthy practices to State, Tribal, and local agencies. (FHWA, NHTSA. Also linked to Safer People)
10. Amplify effective safety countermeasures and interventions by promoting and facilitating their use at the State, regional, Tribal, and local government levels. (FHWA, FMCSA, NHTSA, OST. Also linked to Safer People and Safer Speeds)

### **New Safer Vehicles Actions**

11. Implement technology settlement agreements that would allow motor carriers that are subject to civil penalties for safety violations to instead use those funds to invest in vehicle safety technologies. (FMCSA)
12. Continue a rulemaking effort for Seat Belt Reminder Systems in passenger vehicles. (NHTSA)
13. Update existing FMCSA regulations that address the safe operation of commercial motor vehicles to harness technology for improved safety. (FMCSA)

### **New Safer Speeds Actions**

14. Consider further rulemaking actions for motor carriers to limit the maximum speed of their Commercial Motor Vehicles. (FMCSA)

## **How is USDOT Working with Others to Advance Roadway Safety?**

America's roadway network is highly complex, with decentralized responsibility for safety actions and outcomes. State, Tribal, regional, and local governments manage many elements of this system, with significant levels of autonomy and flexibility to make context-specific decisions, including roadway location and design, how and where funds are spent to create and maintain road networks, what laws should be enacted within their jurisdiction, and how these laws are implemented. Those who use our roadways for commercial purposes, original equipment manufacturers such as automotive manufacturers who make vehicles that travel on our nation's

roadways, first responders and the nation’s health system that respond when there is an emergency, and the traveling public further influence safety outcomes.

USDOT is in constant communication with our roadway stakeholders to help advance safety across the system. Beyond our recurring interactions and engagements with people and organizations, the Department launched a [Call to Action campaign](#) that invites stakeholders from all levels of government, industry, non-profit, advocacy, researchers, and the public to embrace and commit to specific action to improve safety on the Nation’s roadways. The campaign focuses on stakeholders who can strongly influence the transportation system, and encourages stakeholders to redouble their efforts and to share how they are:

- Taking steps to actively reduce the number of fatalities and serious injuries on America’s roads and streets.
- Expanding adoption of the Safe System Approach and a Zero Fatalities vision.
- Transforming how we as a Nation think about road safety.

The Call to Action was launched in February 2023 with a select group of “First Movers” who committed to concrete, substantial actions to save lives. The campaign invites more stakeholders to join us as “Stakeholders in Action” from all levels of government and from a wide array of professional disciplines and organizations to address the crisis on our roadways.

## Conclusion

This report provided an update on the roadway safety problem, an overview of the Departmental actions underway to address the ongoing crisis on our roadways, a description of new priority actions that will build on the NRSS, and an explanation of how USDOT is working with stakeholders to further advance safety to save lives and prevent harm to all people who use our highways, streets, and roads. We believe it is important to be transparent about our progress in implementing key Departmental actions, as well renewing our commitment to a future without serious injuries and fatalities on our roadways. Achieving this will not be easy; however, through a Safe System Approach supported by significant Departmental actions, we are optimistic that, working together, we can and will save lives and make our roadways safer for everyone who uses them.