

# DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION



Highlights of November 21, 2005 Emergency Services Subcommittee Meeting

## **Attendees**

Manny Anastasiadis  
Rosemarie Anderson  
Stacy Bartels  
Regina Moore  
Kevin Murphy  
Josh Tamarin  
John Ward  
John Waters  
Dave Wolfe

## **Organization**

Traffic Operations Center, PennDOT  
Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission  
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Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission  
Greater Valley Forge TMA  
Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission  
Chief Fire Marshal, Upper Merion Township  
Traffic Operations Center, PennDOT

## **Introductions**

Everyone in attendance introduced him or herself and briefly mentioned their relationship to the transportation safety community, and their involvement in specific programs and projects.

Kevin Murphy, Senior Transportation Planner chaired the meeting and began with opening remarks. From the 4 E's concept of safety conscious planning, the purpose of the subcommittee is to focus on the emergency services component of the Regional Safety Action Plan by identifying current programs, and develop transportation safety strategies for the region.

## **Overview of the Meeting and Program Goals**

Rosemarie Anderson, Manager, Office of Corridor Planning and Project Manager for DVPRC's Safety Program briefed the committee on the emphasis areas identified by AASHTO, PennDOT, NJDOT, and DVRPC. Both PennDOT and NJDOT have adopted AASHTO's goal of 1.0 fatality per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (PMVMT) by 2008. The current fatality rate for the region is 1.3 PMVMT where PA is 1.43 (based on 2003 data), and NJ is 1.07. The five counties in PA are lower than that state average rate of 1.48. The four counties in NJ are higher than the state average rate of 1.05.

## **Overview of Emphasis Areas**

The handout provided in the folder, listed AASHTO, PennDOT, NJDOT, and DVRPC emphasis/focus areas. SAFETEA-LU legislation mandates that all states have to have

a strategic highway safety plan. AASHTO identified 22 goals. Both states used AASHTO goals as the basis in developing their plans. PennDOT has identified 19 areas for emphasis on safety. The other 4 areas listed will be included in the plan; however the emphasis areas for funding will be the 19. NJDOT has identified 8 emphasis areas. These 8 actually represent a total of 11 areas because three areas—pedestrian, bike, and railroad crashes—have been combined into one. Hit fixed object crashes have been included in the minimize run off the road crashes category to formulate the other emphasis area.

An analysis of crash data from PennDOT and NJDOT served as the basis for developing DVPRC's list of 13 emphasis areas. DVRPC will be concentrating on these areas for the region's action plan. Therefore, the main purpose of the subcommittee meeting is two-fold: 1) to gather information on projects and programs currently in use and to discuss their effectiveness, and 2) to identify areas of need and to identify potential strategies to meet those needs. This was determined to be the first logical step in toward meeting the goals of the regional safety plan, to reduce the rate of fatal crashes.

### **Emergency Services in Relationship to Emphasis Areas**

Emergency services differ from engineering, education, and enforcement techniques in that the identified emphasis areas don't directly apply. These approaches are focused on preventing crashes. The primary focus of emergency services is saving lives after a crash has occurred, preventing secondary crashes, and protecting the responders. This subcommittee meeting concentrated on these concepts and related issues.

### **Meeting Highlights**

The discussion focused on the "golden hour" concept. This term refers specifically to the first sixty minutes after a cardiac arrest. The victim's chances of survival are greatest if he or she can be in the operating room within the "golden hour". In broadly applying this concept to crash victims, it simply means minimizing the response time and providing the best possible pre-hospital care. Because injury types and severity can vary widely at a crash scene, a more appropriate term than golden hour is needed to characterize the importance of "critical response time." A crash victim's chances of survival may be a matter of only a few minutes, not an hour. Thus, the faster the responders arrive on the scene, the better the victim's chances for survival.

Two recurring themes in the discussion were: 1) Locating the Crash Scene, and 2) Getting to the Crash Scene. The following text describes the problems, techniques and technologies currently in use, and potential strategies, discussed by the subcommittee.

Locating the Crash Scene The first objective when responding to a crash is pinpointing the location of the scene. Many technological advances have better enabled the reporting of crashes (cell phones), and the verification of crash locations (closed circuit television cameras-CCTV). While cell phone usage has become ubiquitous, CCTV cameras are typically only found on major highways. According to those in attendance at the meeting, cameras provide a myriad of data including crash location verification,

mile marker, direction of travel, and closest exit for access. In some cases, camera operators have identified crash scenes even before 911 had received a call. Crash reports via cell phone call made by by-standers are still useful, especially where closed circuit cameras are not available.

### Locating the Crash Scene

#### *Issues:*

- Cell phones
- Poor signage
- Inadequate lane markings
- Divided highways
- Lack of funding

#### *Strategies:*

- CCTV
- Global Positioning System
- Geographic Information System
- 911
- Network access on response vehicles and in station houses
- Funding for technology and personnel
- Automated Collision Notification (CAN) system

Getting to the Crash Scene concerns issues of access, response time, and protocol. Once the location has been pinpointed, obstacles are invariably encountered between the responder's station and the accident scene. Minimizing or eliminating these obstacles can mean the difference between life and death.

### Getting to the Crash Scene

#### *Issues:*

- Congestion
- Traffic signals
- Poor signage
- Impenetrable sound walls
- Divided highways
- Lack of emergency protocols
- Proximity to scene
- Resources (technology/personnel)
- Sound proof cars and/or loud music make emergency sirens difficult to hear
- Lack of funding

#### *Strategies:*

- Traffic signal preemption
- Integrated preemption technology that clears the path between responder and crash scene before responders embark
- GIS/GPS enabled stations and vehicles which provide real time traffic data allowing responders to plot a path of least resistance

- Sound wall access points (from neighborhood streets)
- Divided highway access points
- Coordinate emergency responses, develop protocols
- Funding for technology and personnel
- 800 megahertz phone system

Emergency Responder Training, Technology, and Equipment These are important focus areas for the Emergency Services Subcommittee. Although these topics were touched on briefly, EMTs and police were not represented during the discussion. The importance of pre-hospital care cannot be understated. Having the most qualified personnel at the scene, working with the best equipment, can play a crucial role in saving lives.

#### Responder Training, Technology, and Equipment

##### *Issues:*

- Career versus volunteer responders
- Lack of funding
- Lack of equipment
- Varying standards of certification
- Better technology for communicating with hospital
- Finding victims thrown from vehicles

##### *Strategies:*

- Increased funding
- National and local standards for training and certification
- Pooling of resources (personnel, equipment)
- Infra-red/thermal imaging cameras
- Development of more incident management task force groups/coalitions

##### Other Considerations and Data

There may be a need for greater coordination between agencies and for the development of goals. The committee will be surveying emergency services personnel in the future to establish an inventory of existing services and facilities. One approach is the development of an emergency preparedness plan or model. Some of the goals of a model are to:

- Develop and implement a plan to increase education and involvement of emergency personnel in the principles of traffic safety
- Develop and implement response time goals
- Educate the public on the steps to take if they are the first to arrive on the scene of a crash

The discussion also touched on the need for data specifically related to emergency service issues, i.e.:

- Number of crash victims transported to hospitals each year by state, county, and by destination hospital
- Number of crash victims that died enroute to the hospital

- Information on all pre-hospital training available to emergency personnel, and funding available for such training
- Pre-hospital trauma protocols

After the meeting, via email, John Waters identified data that is being collected by Montgomery County that may prove useful to this effort:

- Dispatch time
- Turn-out time
- On-Scene time
- Off-Scene time
- At hospital time

### **Next Steps**

The group had a lively and informative meeting that focused on fire service and traffic operations control center issues. Due to the lower than expected attendance, the discussion was lacking several components. For the next subcommittee meeting we hope to have representation from the EMT and law enforcement communities.

### **Please mark your calendars**

- The next meeting for the **Emergency Services Subcommittee** will be held on Monday, December 19<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 AM at DVRPC in the 8<sup>th</sup> Floor Main Conference Room. A light breakfast will be provided.
- The next meeting of the **Regional Safety Task Force** will be held on Tuesday, January 31<sup>st</sup> at 9:00 AM at DVRPC. More information will be forthcoming.