

Regional Safety Task Force Meeting

HIGHLIGHTS OF JULY 29th, 2009 MEETING

1. Welcome & Introductions

The meeting began with Ray Reeve, RSTF Chairperson welcoming everyone. Introductions followed.

2. Summary of April 2009 Meeting

Mr. Reeve asked for a motion to approve the highlights from the April 8, 2009 Regional Safety Task Force meeting. The meeting highlights were approved.

3. Pending Legislation on Bicycle Safety Bills in Pennsylvania

Joe Stafford, Bicycle Access Council, provided information on two bicycle safety bills introduced this year in Pennsylvania. Mr. Stafford thanked DVRPC for bringing together such a diverse group of stakeholders. He went on to emphasize that although bicyclists and pedestrians are often grouped together by default, they actually have some distinct differences regarding safety needs.

The two bills Mr. Stafford described would legitimize bicyclists' rights to the roadway by including explicit protection under Title 75 (Vehicles) and Title 18 (Crimes and Offenses) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes. The proposed amendments to Title 18 would treat as a serious offense any situation in which a motorist recklessly endangers a bicyclist either by maneuvering a vehicle in an intimidating fashion, or by using threatening language or gestures. The amendments to Title 75 would protect bicyclists in situations where a motor vehicle is passing or overtaking them on a roadway. Unfortunately, action on both bills has been delayed by the ongoing budget crisis in the Pennsylvania legislature.

4. Panel: What are the Traffic Rules Regarding Pedestrians

Kevin Murphy, DVRPC, introduced the panel and provided some background information on pedestrian safety. In the Delaware Valley, there were 92 pedestrian fatalities per year on average between 2005 and 2007. Because there seems to be a widespread lack of understanding regarding the laws and expectations for pedestrians, experts from both states were brought in to inform the RSTF. The expert panel consisted of Ranjit Walia, Senior Research Specialist at the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center, Rutgers University, representing NJDOT; and Gary Modi, Chief of the Safety Management Division of the Bureau of Highway Safety and Traffic

Engineering at PennDOT. The panelists provided explanations of pedestrian laws in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, with an emphasis on pedestrian crossings.

Mr. Walia opened the panel with a detailed discussion of pedestrian laws in New Jersey. He explained that most people do not understand the laws because they are complex and at times open to interpretation. He added that when the laws are unclear, enforcement becomes much more difficult. Mr. Walia described laws pertaining to crosswalks, signalized and unsignalized intersections, and situations in which drivers must yield to pedestrians. He described the New Jersey Pedestrian Safety Act, which would change the language from “yield” to “stop,” with the goal of greater clarity. It would also increase the fine for failing to stop from \$100 to \$200, half of which would go to a pedestrian enforcement fund. Mr. Walia stressed the need for education and training, both for the general public and police officers. Although communities tend to focus on engineering solutions, there is a need to cover education and enforcement as well. Mr. Walia concluded his presentation with a discussion of the Pedestrian Safety Enforcement (PSE) program and the Pedestrian Decoy program in New Jersey. The decoy program is a highly successful education/enforcement effort that can give out as many as 100 warnings/tickets per hour, which seems to have a real impact on changing behavior.

Gary Modi spoke about pedestrian laws in Pennsylvania, which he said are nearly parallel to those in New Jersey. Mr. Modi began by stating that pedestrian fatalities comprise about 10 percent of the total traffic fatalities in Pennsylvania, which is a lower percentage than in New Jersey. However, the overall number of pedestrian fatalities in Pennsylvania is higher. He described pedestrian laws including: laws defining crosswalks and unmarked crosswalks; a law requiring motorists to yield to pedestrians on crosswalks going across alleys, roads, or driveways; and the fact that jaywalking is not defined explicitly in Pennsylvania, but must be inferred from descriptions of pedestrian violations.

Chris Drda, PennDOT, spoke about ongoing work in PennDOT District 6 to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Standards have changed, which means that many ramps installed in the 1990s no longer meet requirements. John Ward, DVRPC, pointed out that in District 6, a significant portion of federal stimulus funding is being spent on ADA ramps.

Mr. Modi spoke with enthusiasm about PennDOT’s Yield to Pedestrian Channelizing Devices (YPCDs) program, which has deployed 5,300 such devices since 2001. According to Mr. Modi, driver compliance has increased 30 to 40 percent where YPCDs are deployed. Pedestrian fatalities have also decreased 10 percent over the 5-year baseline average (2004-2008) for fatalities. Ray Rauanheimo, AARP, raised the point that to be most effective, YPCD signage must be as clear as possible, for example explicitly stating, “Yield to Pedestrians State Law Within Crosswalk.” Mr. Modi highlighted some other PennDOT pedestrian safety programs, including the Community Traffic Safety Programs (CTSP), the Safe Routes to School program, and the Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) Walkable Communities program.

Ray Reeve thanked both panelists for their informative presentations. A discussion followed about the best ways to educate drivers and pedestrians. Gary Modi said that sending out information with driver's license renewal information has proven to be ineffective. PennDOT has found that when police officers hand out warnings with informative fliers, there is a much better chance of the information being read. However, Mr. Modi said education campaigns can often be expensive and less effective than enforcement. Mr. Walia and Mr. Modi both agreed that education, enforcement, and engineering solutions must all play a role and be mutually reinforced to have the most impact on reducing pedestrian fatalities.

Draft Implementation Table for Safety Action Plan

Zoe Neaderland, DVRPC, gave a brief presentation on the implementation table for the draft Safety Action Plan for the Delaware Valley. The table lists strategies for each of the seven emphasis areas in the Plan, as well as programs and regional leaders. The seven emphasis areas cover contributing factors for 96 percent of the traffic crashes involving fatalities in the Delaware Valley. Aggressive driving was found to be a contributing factor in over half of the crash fatalities. Ms. Neaderland asked for additional input, comments, and suggestions on the implementation table by August 7th. The Safety Action Plan is scheduled to be presented before the DVRPC Board for adoption in October. Ms. Neaderland also mentioned a set of cards being developed by DVRPC staff to illustrate the key points relevant to each of the seven emphasis areas in the Safety Action Plan. These cards will be made available as an outreach tool.

Open Forum

An open forum was held for members to share and exchange information. Ways to encourage local ownership of the Safety Action Plan were discussed. Bill Beans, NJDOT, suggested circulating the plan to counties and municipalities, asking local officials to list actions they have taken to address the emphasis areas, and further actions they would consider taking. He also suggested developing an online reporting form to track progress. Matt Anderson, Chester County Planning Commission, said that he attended the PA 896 Road Safety Audit, and is looking forward to improvements based on the recommendations. Carissa Sestito of the Transportation Safety Resource Center handed out postcards for the New Jersey Safety Forum on October 21st, 2009. Mike Castellano, FHWA, asked about the differences in how aggressive driving is reported in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Gary Modi explained that in the next year, Pennsylvania will be shifting to a new system requiring two or more of a list of actions to be checked off by an officer at the scene of an accident for aggressive driving to be listed as a contributing factor. He said that this change will likely result in a drastic reduction in reported aggressive driving in Pennsylvania. John Ward noted that the Safety Action Plan will be updated every two years with the most recent data available. There was a discussion of the challenges of pursuing legislative action related to safety issues such as aggressive driving. Ranjit Walia made the point that it is very important to be concise and persuasive to convince legislators about why these are important and

real issues. Gary Modi announced that the 2010 Life Savers Conference will be hosted in Philadelphia, and represents an excellent opportunity for all members of the RSTF.

Attendees:

Aguilera, Lori	Chester County COAD Group
Anderson, Gastonia	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Anderson, Matthew	Chester County Planning Commission
Arcaro, Tina Lt.	New Jersey State Police
Bartels, Stacy	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Bauer, Janine	AARP
Beans, Bill	New Jersey Department of Transportation
Belmonte, Lou	Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
Brahler, Richard	Bucks County Planning Commission
Bryant, Edward Lt.	Gloucester Township Police
Bucci, Larry	Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
Buerk, Jesse	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Bullick, Tom	Philadelphia Police - Traffic Unit
Castellano, Mike	Federal Highway Administration - Pennsylvania
Dixon, Mary Beth	AARP
Drda, Christopher	Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
Ferich, Steve	Greater Valley Forge TMA
Ferraro, Donna	Philadelphia Public Health Management Corp.
Fiocco, Joe	McMahon Associates
Fleischer, Lauren	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Greenly, Scott	Greater Valley Forge TMA
Hoffman, Bill	FHWA - NJ
Hufnagle, Louis	Delaware County Planning Department
Kozak, Diane	Camden County Highway Traffic Safety
Lee, Brendan	Philadelphia Schools
Marrero, Violet	New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety
Merlin, Debbie	Philadelphia Mayor's Commission for Aging
Modi, Gary	Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
Moore, Regina	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Moyo, Jabulani	Philadelphia Streets Department
Murphy, Kevin	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Nederland, Zoe	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Nuble, Patrice	Philadelphia Streets Department
Ott, Pat	New Jersey Department of Transportation
Quick, Susan	Brain Injury Association of New Jersey
Ragozine, Bill	Cross County Connection TMA
Ratko, Wes	Montgomery County Planning Commission
Rauanheimo, Ray	AARP
Reeve, Ray	New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety

Rickett, Bill	Bucks County TMA
Rollins, Emily	PA Senator Daylin Leach's Office
Schaaf, Debbie	Philadelphia Planning Commission
Sestito, Carissa	Transportation Safety Resource Center
Snyder, Brian Cpl.	Delaware County Sheriff's Office
Spino, Sam	Camden County Division of Highway Traffic Safety
Stafford, Joe	Bicycle Access Council
Strumpher, Warren	DVRPC – Regional Citizen's Committee
Thomas, Carol Ann	Burlington County Engineer's Office
Trimbell, Shayne	Greater Valley Forge TMA
Voluck, Ela	AAA Mid-Atlantic
Walia, Ranjit	Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center
Ward, John	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Wolf, Jay Trooper	New Jersey State Police
Ziemer, Karl	Delaware River Port Authority
Zito, Joe Sgt.	Delaware River Port Authority