

# Regional Safety Task Force Meeting

## HIGHLIGHTS OF FEBRUARY 2, 2010 MEETING

### **1. Welcome & Introductions**

Larry Bucci, RSTF Co-chairperson welcomed everyone. Introductions followed.

### **2. Moment of Silence for Fallen Safety Officers**

A moment of silence was held for Joseph Kealey, NJDOT and Cpl. Christopher Milito, DRPA, both recently killed in the line of duty.

### **3. Summary of October 2009 Meeting Highlights**

Mr. Bucci asked for a motion to approve the highlights from the October 16, 2009 meeting. The meeting highlights were approved.

### **4. PennDOT District 6 Safety Summit and Tracking Progress**

Larry Bucci, PennDOT, covered highlights from the District 6 Safety Summit. The summit intended to build on the Pennsylvania Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP), which set a goal of reducing fatalities by 100 per year until 2011. Since District 6 staff participated in the 2009 update of the DVRPC Safety Action Plan (SAP) for the Delaware Valley, they determined that focusing on action items flowing from the seven emphasis areas in the Safety Action Plan would be the most effective way to achieve the goals of both the SAP and SHSP. District 6 is still in the process of refining a list of doable actions that can be readily tracked for progress, based on the SAP emphasis areas. This list should be finalized by the end of February. Mr. Bucci stressed that tracking the progress of improvement efforts is the key to success. In addition, he said that PennDOT is working to organize a Legislative Symposium sometime in the near future.

Zoe Neaderland, DVRPC, discussed the draft *Tracking How Safety is Being Improved in the Delaware Valley* document. This document will track progress on doable actions that are identified in RSTF meetings about the seven emphasis areas of the SAP. She stressed the need to work together, track progress, and share resources whenever possible. Comments on the draft tracking document are welcome.

## **5. Panel: Reducing Crashes by Improving the Design and Operations of Intersections in the DVRPC Region**

A panel of experts discussed efforts to improve the design and operations of intersections. The panel consisted of: Fred Ranck, FHWA; Jeff Roecker, PennDOT Bureau of Highway Safety and Traffic Engineering; Charles Denny, Philadelphia Streets Department; and Kevin Conover, NJDOT.

Ms. Neaderland gave quick review of the SAP, stressing that while there are many ways to measure progress toward safety goals, the federal lead is to focus on fatalities. Ms. Neaderland reviewed the DVRPC analysis for the emphasis area, "Improve the Design and Operations of Intersections," including the priority strategies for this emphasis area. She said that the goal of the panel was to work from these strategies down to the level of specific, actionable items that build on the resources of the members of the RSTF.

### *Keynote Speaker*

Fred Ranck, Safety Engineer, Resource Center Safety and Design Technical Services Team/MUTCD Team, FHWA, focused his presentation on the systematic approach to intersection safety. He began by examining the rationale for focusing on intersections. Although intersections represent a small portion of the overall road network, they account for more than half of traffic fatalities at the national level. The traditional approach to intersection safety has been largely top-down, targeting a few intersections with the highest crash numbers for improvements. The systematic approach addresses intersection safety from the bottom-up, identifying the top five to ten percent of intersections in a state or region, which often contribute to 40 to 60 percent of crashes in the analysis area. After identifying priority locations for improvement, low-cost measures including improved signage, marking, and signal visibility are implemented. Seven states are currently using the systematic approach, and Pennsylvania is considering adopting it. According to Mr. Ranck, the two most important guiding principles of the systematic approach are to "clarify and simplify," Mr. Ranck detailed specific changes in the recent update of the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) which are intended to clarify and simplify the design and operations of intersections. He said that signal coordination is a relatively low-cost strategy with potentially large safety benefits. Mr. Ranck concluded his presentation with some data about the successes of some of the states that have implemented the systematic approach to intersection safety.

### *Guest Panelists*

Jeff Roecker, Transportation Planning Specialist, Bureau of Highway Safety Traffic Engineering (BHSTE) PennDOT, spoke about PennDOT's Intersection Safety Plan, which is currently in draft stage. The Plan would meet its goals via 18 low-cost countermeasures, including signage and signal improvements and various pedestrian enhancements. PennDOT is currently evaluating the top ten problem intersections for each district. The estimated cost to implement the program system-wide is \$11 million per year, and PennDOT is in the process of seeking out the necessary funds. If they're

unable to secure adequate funding, a top-down approach will likely be implemented. However, PennDOT's preference would be the more bottom-up approach. PennDOT found in its research that signal re-timing is the best countermeasure that's currently underutilized; LED traffic lights are the best countermeasure that is being implemented with regularity. Mr. Roecker said that PennDOT looks forward to working with MPOs and RPOs to address the safety and operation of intersections in Pennsylvania.

Charles Denny, Assistant Chief Traffic Engineer, Philadelphia Streets Department, shared information about the City of Philadelphia's efforts to improve the design and operations of intersections. In the 1970's and 1980's, the City added an all-red phase to all of its signalized intersections. However, after some time, Mr. Denny said that drivers learned they had a couple extra seconds to get through a light, and the effectiveness of this countermeasure was diminished. The City is now in the process of adding pedestrian countdown signals and updating overhead signals. In some cases, the City is planning to remove signals and replace them with all-way stops, as appropriate. Other priorities for improvements include adding corner clearances where needed, and addressing locations where left-turn movements are problematic. Mr. Denny said that conversations between police and engineers can be productive in helping to figure out what improvements could reduce accidents at a particular intersection. Philadelphia has about 22,000 intersections, he said, so the task of improving the design and operations of its intersections is not insignificant.

Kevin Conover, Section Chief, Bureau of Safety Programs: Crash Analysis and Safety Programs, NJDOT, addressed some of the challenges to improving intersections in New Jersey. Mr. Conover mentioned that in New Jersey, as in many places, the issue of limited resources and intense competition over them creates a number of challenges. Budget shortfalls, for example, can lead to backlogs of projects. In addition, the age of New Jersey's infrastructure can lead to additional delays and challenges. Keeping costs down whenever possible can help an agency do more with limited funds. Mr. Conover stressed the importance of filling out crash reports properly, especially in New Jersey, where road improvement programs tend to be data-driven. New Jersey roads in the Delaware Valley region include some extremely complex intersections, which present unique challenges that might not always fit the examples listed in the MUTCD. To address this issue, New Jersey has developed its own guide book to supplement the MUTCD with additional best practice examples. Mr. Conover said that New Jersey's approach to improving intersections has been to target high-priority locations. The most severe locations in terms of injuries and fatalities have tended to receive priority. Large, complex intersections have usually been addressed through the capital program. Mr. Conover also raised the issue of dealing with trade-offs in improving intersections. Safety improvements must be balanced with congestion and economic development issues. New Jersey is in the process of updating signal timing plans throughout the state. Also, he said that it is now a policy to have protected left-turns when traffic must cross two or more lanes.

### *Open Discussion*

The panel opened up the floor for discussion. Mr. Bucci said that Pennsylvania has not adopted the 2009 MUTCD update yet. He asked Mr. Denny how many of Philadelphia's intersections are signalized. Mr. Denny said about 3,000. Kelvin MacKavanagh, Delaware Goods Movement Task Force, gave some specific examples of confusing intersections in New Jersey, and asked Mr. Conover what could be done to clarify and simplify in those locations. Mr. Conover said that in some locations, NJDOT is planning to use pavement markers in addition to signage and overhead signals. Mr. Ward asked about weight issues related to placing multiple signal heads on mast arms, saying this seemed to be an impediment, at least in New Jersey. Mr. Ranck said that many states are using 50-foot mast arms with strong foundations, and have mounted up to six signal heads without problems. He cited an example of Florida using steel mast arms that are capable of withstanding hurricane conditions. Mr. Beans said that NJDOT may need to reevaluate old standards, and think about making changes. While stronger mast arms may cost more up front, they may also prove to deliver more value in the long run. Ms. Neaderland asked how to promote increased coordination with the enforcement community. Mr. Rauanheimo said that his community has a traffic safety commission, with regular attendees including police and township engineers. Michael Rann, Cherry Hill Township Police, said that funding is always an issue for enforcement, and that especially with many forces dealing with staffing cutbacks, it is harder than ever to do targeted enforcement operations. He also talked about the importance of NJDOT reaching out to local municipalities before redesigning an intersection from higher up. Mr. Conover said that the Safety Impact Team will typically reach out and involve local law enforcement in deciding what improvements to make at an intersection location.

### *Panel Recap*

Kevin Murphy and Zoe Neaderland recapped the potential action items to build on the strategies to improve the design and operations of intersections from the SAP. Mr. Murphy identified three common themes, which included focusing on addressing pedestrian crashes, identifying the most effective approaches, and improving communication efforts targeted at drivers. Mr. Ward said that the DVRPC safety program is working to improve outreach to municipalities, including an upcoming project to help identify high-risk rural roads in the region and a program to help study signal timing at the municipal level. Publicizing tools such as Plan4Safety (NJ) and CDART (PA) can benefit everyone, he said. George Fallat, Mercer County Engineering, said that having quantitative data to back up local feedback is essential for counties trying to prioritize problem locations, given limited funds.

### **5. Update on Security Planning**

Ms. Neaderland briefly mentioned that the security report is in draft stages and emphasized that it will help enhance coordination among the various entities engaged in transportation security planning in the Delaware Valley.

## **6. Open Forum**

An open forum was held for members to share and exchange information. Mike Castellano, FHWA, said that Harrisburg now has a cellphone ban in effect. There was a discussion of competing bills in Congress, one which would expand the legal limits for truck lengths and weights, and another which would maintain the status quo. Tracy Noble, AAA Mid-Atlantic, said that AAA is aware of these bills and is lobbying Congress to leave the regulations as they are currently written. Mr. Ward said that legislative updates will be transitioning to a standing RSTF agenda item going forward. Joe Ucciferro spoke about his work at the National Safety Council (NSC), a 98-year-old organization with many programs related to transportation safety issues. Some high-priority issues for the NSC include teen driving and distracted driving. NSC has a very wide reach and scope. For example, NSC is working with Oprah Winfrey on the distracted driving issue.

### ***Attendees:***

Anderson, Gastonia	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Anderson, Matthew	Chester County Planning Commission
Bartels, Stacy	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Beans, Bill	New Jersey Department of Transportation
Brahler, Richard	Bucks County Planning Commission
Bryant, Lt. Ed	Gloucester Township Police Department
Bucci, Larry	Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
Buerk, Jesse	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Castellano, Mike	Federal Highway Administration – Pennsylvania
Conover, Kevin	New Jersey Department of Transportation
Day, William	New Jersey Department of Transportation
Denny, Charles	Philadelphia Streets Department
Fallat, George	Mercer County Engineering
Feggans, Charles	New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety
Fought, Tricia	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Fulginiti, Cpl. Vince	Washington Township Police Department
Hansen, Janet	Rutgers University
Hufnagle, Lou	Delaware County Planning Department
Kelly, Bob	Camden County Engineering Department
L'Amoreaux, Jeff	Transportation Design Solutions
MacKavanagh, Kelvin	Delaware Valley Goods Movement Task Force
Matkowski, Laurie	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Moore, Regina	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Murphy, Kevin	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Neaderland, Zoe	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Noble, Tracy	AAA Mid-Atlantic
Nuble, Patrice	Philadelphia Streets Department

Pasternak, Sgt. Eugene	Lower Merion Township Police Department
Philbin, Officer James	Cherry Hill Township Police Department
Ragozine, Bill	Cross County Connection TMA
Ranck, Fred	Federal Highway Administration
Rann, Sgt. Michael	Cherry Hill Township Police Department
Ratko, Wes	Montgomery County Planning Commission
Rauanheimo, Ray	AARP
Reeve, Ray	New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety
Rickett, Bill	Bucks County TMA
Roecker, Jeff	Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
Stafford, Joe	Pennsylvania Bicycle Access Council
Sullivan, Officer Michael	Lower Merion Township Police
Thomas, Carol Ann	Burlington County Engineering
Trueman, Caroline	Federal Highway Administration – New Jersey
Ucciferro, Joe	National Safety Council
Ward, John	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Weiner, Bonnie	MADD – Southeast PA
Ziemer, Karl	Delaware River Port Authority