



MEETING HIGHLIGHTS:

Safe System Approach Focus Area: Distracted Driving

Friday, September 16, 2022

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Presented Via Zoom; 79 attendees

All presentations and related meeting handouts are located on the RSTF Website:

www.dvrpc.org/Committees/RSTF

Welcome Remarks

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM by Marco Gorini, DVRPC. RSTF co-chair Sharang Malaviya, PennDOT, introduced the purpose of the RSTF: to reduce roadway crashes and eliminate serious injuries and fatalities from crashes in the Delaware Valley. Mr. Malaviya then introduced the RSTF safety [action items tracking list](#), a spreadsheet where volunteers can update themselves or claim unclaimed action items that were proposed in previous meetings. DVRPC's Tom Edinger was spotlighted for his completion of an action item exploring the pandemic's effect on speeds in the region.

Before introducing the topic, Kevin Murphy, DVRPC, introduced a five-year overview of regional killed and serious injury (KSI) crash trends, noting that the problem has worsened since 2016. Mr. Murphy highlighted that in 2021 fatalities increased again marking the highest death toll since 2007. Mr. Murphy transitioned to the distracted driving section of DVRPC's Transportation and Safety Analysis & Plan (TSAP) [storymap](#), released in spring of 2022.

Next, Mr. Murphy introduced the topic of behavioral safety within a Safe System Approach and guest speakers Eric Heitmann and Dr. Mohammad Jalayer.

Presentation 1: Eric Heitmann, NJ Division of Highway Traffic Safety

Mr. Heitmann opened with an introduction of the GHSA/Cambridge report "[Putting the Pieces Together](#)," a driving behavior report that follows the Safe System Approach. Mr. Heitmann highlighted the importance of robust data collection and teased an upcoming project in which the New Jersey Department of Transportation is collaborating with the New Jersey Safety and Health Outcomes (NJ-SHO) data warehouse to capture crashes from all possible data sources in New Jersey. In his presentation, Mr. Heitmann demonstrated how the Safe System Approach can be used to address behavioral safety at a programmatic level and within operations planning. Mr. Heitmann also argued that the drop in traffic citations and the reduction in high visibility enforcement campaigns like Click It or Ticket, representing a drop in enforcement and education efforts, contributed to the increase in unsafe driving behaviors during the pandemic. Equity considerations in enforcement, education, and engagement were briefly discussed.

Mr. Heitmann concluded his presentation by presenting himself and other highway safety officers as partners in traffic safety planning.

Presentation 2: Dr. Mohammad Jalayer, Rowan University

Distracted driving is the leading cause of fatal crashes. Dr. Jalayer's [research](#) seeks to capture real-time driving behavior to detect and analyze distractions and the roadway elements that have an impact on distracted driving. By using a camera mounted outside a vehicle, the research team is able to capture a continuous stream of data and later use machine learning to analyze and label various distractions with a confidence of roughly 85% accuracy. Preliminary findings included the effects of speed limits, time of day/year, and roadway geometry (shoulder width, median width, number of lanes, etc.) on prevalence of distracted behaviors. Dr. Jalayer concluded his presentation by answering questions from the chat, which clarified the classification of various distracted driving behaviors.

Special Strategies Breakout Rooms

Each of the four breakout groups discussed potential "action items," with a focus on the Safe Systems Approach, that each person could take on to support the RSTF goal of eliminating KSI in the region. These action items were recorded and are being tracked by DVRPC, which will check in on progress before future meetings. Discussion lasted approximately 30 minutes and each began by discussing reactions to the presentations, following with discussion on potential action items.

In reaction to the presentations, breakout groups reiterated the importance of the following points:

- The Safe System Approach includes enforcement, but enforcement can't be the only approach to address distracted driving.
- Distracted driving could be related to new vehicle technologies, and AAA has reached out to automakers to address this. Additionally, safety features don't affect insurance policy and are therefore not currently being incentivized in that way.
- Distracted driving increases as speed increases, and the pandemic saw an increase in speeds due to lack of congestion. As volumes return to pre-pandemic levels, will we see a decrease in distracted driving?
- Distractions beyond the typical 7am-7pm times are more dangerous due to darker conditions and higher speeds associated with fewer drivers on the road. Research needs to focus on these nontraditional distractions, as they see more severe consequences.

Some of the proposed action items included:

- Analyze data about driver behavior during pandemic by comparing numbers of citations in areas with automated enforcement cameras.
- Prepare messaging about distracted driving in the style of broad public service announcements. What are other states/countries doing?
- Research differences in distracted driving in countries with fast-paced versus slower-paced societies to see if cultural differences impact driving safety.
- Prepare a Safety Ambassadors toolkit for RSTF members to help facilitate conversations in every-day life about driving safety.
- Request that state DOT district safety officers promote more distracted driving messaging.

After the breakout sessions finished, RSTF members left their groups and returned to the main session. One person from each group reported back on their discussion.

Safe Streets for All Update

Mr. Murphy then gave a presentation on DVRPC's application to the federal Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant program, which funds both action plan and implementation grants. It is important to note that only projects from a qualifying Vision Zero Action Plan would be eligible for an SS4A implementation grant. To ensure that the entire Greater Philadelphia region is eligible for these once-in-a-generation grant opportunities, DVRPC is pursuing a Regional Vision Zero 2050 Action Program. This program will have three primary components: a regional High Injury Network (HIN) with actionable safety projects and initiatives, a web platform of Action Program components (HIN, supporting safety data, maps, and project progress), and an integrated regional pipeline for local safety planning and project development. Recipients are expected to be announced by January 2023. Mr. Murphy assured RSTF members that should DVRPC not be selected for funding, components of the Regional Vision Zero 2050 Action Program will still be pursued.

Closing Remarks

RSTF co-chair Sean Meehan, Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center, concluded the meeting with gratitude to the attendees for participating in the program and asked attendees to complete the meeting survey.

Next, Mr. Meehan invited RSTF members to share any announcements they may have. Announcements included an invitation to the [Trenton Open Streets](#) day on September 17th, an announcement for [National Roundabouts Week](#), and a reminder for the [New Jersey Safety Summit](#) on October 11th.

Mr. Meehan reminded attendees that the next RSTF meeting is scheduled for December 2022.

Meeting Attendee List

Ahmed Sajid Hasan, Rowan University
Alex Sankaran, CCPC
Alyson Strigle, DCTMA
Amon Boucher, NJDOT
Anahita Kakhani, Rowan University
Andrew Thompson, Kittelson and Associates
Anna Busler, Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey
Anne Messner, CCMPO
Betsy Mastaglio, DVRPC
Bill (Zacahry) Spaeth, Sellersville Fire Dept
Carrie Long, Gannett Fleming
Catherine Bull, Rutgers - VTC
Charleigh Logothetis, Hazlet Township Police Department
Daniel McArdle, Rowan University
Daniel Steele, PSP Avondale
Darrell Merritt, PennDOT
David Burman, Township of Haverford
Deep Patel, Rowan University
Doris Lynch, Port Richmond Neighborhood Association
Eric Heitmann, NJ DHTS
Eric Hicken, NJ DOH OEMS
Grace Faughnan, NJDOT
Greg Woltman, Rutgers - VTC
Gustave Scheerbaum, City of Philadelphia
Hailey Graf, NJ Transit
Ian Schwarzenberg, DVRPC
James Weist, Cherry Hill Police Department
Jeevanjot Singh, NJDOT
Jody Hersh, Atlantic City Police Dept
Joe Rapp, NJDOT
John Oliveira, Union Police Department
John Taylor, Archer Public Affairs
Jon Dugan, Rutgers - VTC
Justin Lesko, Princeton Planning
Kasim Ali, City of Philadelphia
Kaylen Phillips, DVRPC
Kevin Murphy, DVRPC
Kristi Metzger, CHOP
Lauren Fink, DCTMA
Leigh Von Hagen, Rutgers - VTC
Lily Reynolds, City of Philadelphia
Linda Wong, BCBC
Lisa Serieyssol, Greater Mercer TMA
Marco Gorini, DVPRC

Maridarlyn Gonzalez, DVRPC
Mark Washington, City of Philadelphia
MaryAnn Sandone, DCTMA
Matthew Lee, Chesterfield Township Police Dept
Matthew Popek, MCPC
Md. Arifuzzaman Nayeem, Rowan University
Mohammad Islam, NJDOT
Mohammad Jalayer, Rowan University
Morgan Hugo, Liberty Resources
Nathan Grace, City of Philadelphia
Omar Al-Sheikh, Rowan University
Parisa Hosseini, Rowan University
Pascal Medina, Perth Amboy PD
Patricia Ott, MBO Engineering
Patrick Farley, Cross County Connection TMA
Reba Oduro, NJDOT
Richard Rabinowitz, NJDOT
Richard Timmerman, Little Falls Police Dept
Ross Buchan, Kittelson & Associates
Ruqaya Alfaris, Rowan University
Samantha Donovan, Sam Schwartz Consulting
Samuel Rosenthal, Rutgers - VTC
Sean Connelly, Noroc
Sean Meehan, Rutgers - VTC
Sharang Malaviya, PennDOT
Shereyl Snider, East Trenton Collaborative
Steve Baron
Suzanne O'Hearn, DHTS
Themelis Soulounias, DRPA
Tracy Nerney, Jersey Shore Regional Trauma Center
Tracy Noble, AAA
William Beans, MBO Engineering
William Riviere, NJDOT
Zahra Vafakhah, Rowan University