

Roadway Departure & Intersection-related Crashes CHSP Emphasis Area Virtual Meeting

Thursday, January 25, 2024
9:00- 11:00 a.m.



Attendees:

Captain Dan Carroll, Enforcement Bureau- Motor Carrier Services- Butte Division, Montana Department of Transportation (MDT)
Curtis Weidow, Safety Program Manager, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA)
Dwight Nelson, Traffic education Director, Office of Public Instruction (OPI)
Eric Belford, Operation Bureau , Motor Carrier Services, MDT
Damian Krings, Highways Design Engineer, MDT
Gabe Priebe, Traffic & Safety (T&S) Engineering Bureau Chief, Montana Department of Transportation (MDT)
John Althof, Rail Highway Safety, Traffic & Safety (T&S) Engineering, MDT

Pam Langve-Davis, CHSP Manager, MDT
Patricia Burke, Safety Engineer, T&S Engineering, MDT
Sai Patapati, Data Analyst- State Highway Traffic Safety Section (SHTSS), MDT
Shari Graham, EMS Systems Manage, Department of Health & Human Services (DPHHS),
Shelby Clark, Statewide Bicycle & Pedestrian Coordinator, MDT
Stan Brelin, Traffic Operation, T&S Engineering, MDT
Spencer Harris, Law Enforcement Liaison,) SHTSS, MDT
Willie Cole, Safety Coordinator, Montana Trucking Association

Meeting purpose- welcome new members, including introduction of safety programs, discuss 2024 strategies work plan, and overview of 2023 accomplishments from members.

Emphasis Area chair Patricia Burke welcomed everyone and requested everyone to share what challenges they encounter and where might be the biggest opportunities to move the needle.

Patricia Burke: Funding needs for safety, operations, and design

John Althof: Funding for rail highway safety improvements. MT Operation Lifesaver needs presenters.

Eric Belford: Challenges include distracted driving and identifying specific carriers.

Stan Brelin: Intersection control; and State Legislative recommendations; funding; roadside management with adjacent landowners; speed change management,

Shelby Clark: Road user behaviors

Shari Graham: Keeping emergency responders safe.

Spencer Harris: Involvement of education and funding for emergency equipment an ambulances

Damian Krings: Geometric challenges for roadway construction; balancing improvements with other needs.

Pam Lange-Davis: Continued coordination and communication of safety activities with state stakeholders.

Dwight Nelson: Getting parents and students more engaged; requiring in-person instruction as it is more impactful ; distracted driving; behavior education, funding,

Gabe Priebe: Project needs and competition issues; rising costs.

Will Cole: Getting smaller companies on-board and involved in safety programs.

Strategy Updates

Strategy 1: Reduce & mitigate roadway departure crashes through data driven problem identification and use of best practices.

S1.1 Continue to Implement the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)

The Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) is a core Federal-aid program with the purpose to achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads, including non-State-owned roads and roads on tribal land. The HSIP requires a data-driven, strategic approach to improving highway safety on all public roads with a focus on performance. Annual HSIP projects include intersection, roadway departure, and non-motorized related safety projects are currently under design and construction.

- Program implementation is ongoing.

S1.2 Continue to support and implement Roadway Departure Plan Using Montana Specific Safety Performance Functions (SPF) and Levels of Service of Safety (LOS) based on the Highway Safety Manual (HSM) focusing on roadway departure crashes. Implementation of safety countermeasures contribute to safe roads by mitigating conflicts between road users and reducing the risk of crashes. Safe roads include clear zones, roundabouts, cable median barriers, delineation, rumble strips among others roadway appurtenances designed to reduce the severity of roadway departure, and roundabouts to reduce speeds at intersections.

- Implementation of countermeasures is standard operating procedure and is ongoing.

Strategy 2: Reduce and mitigate speed-related roadway departure/intersection crashes

2.1 Continued implementation of Speed Enforcement Campaigns

As part of the shared responsibility for safety, road users are expected to comply with rules of the road. Including paying attention, adapting to changing conditions, not driving impaired, and driving without distraction. Education and enforcement components are important in enabling and encouraging road users to behave safely.

- Implementation of the Selective Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP) and Special Enforcement Traffic Team (SETT) are ongoing. FFY2023 STEP included Billings New Years mobilization, Butte St., Patrick's Day, Whitefish Winter carnival, Memorial Day mobilization, Billings airshow & fair, 4th of July, and Labor Day FFY 2024 Winter mobilization has wrapped up. Planned: St Patrick w/ BSB & MHP

S2.2 Continue to support and implement the Intersection Safety Plan

- Ongoing, and continues to be included in the HSIP. Systematic &/or spot improvements safety projects focused on reducing intersection related crashes continue to be implemented in both rural and urban areas.

S2.3 Continue to implement and consider speed management methodologies appropriate for Montana.

As part of the shared responsibility for safety, road users are expected to comply with the rules of the road including the traffic laws and speed limits. Speed limits are posted only after a traffic and safety engineering study has been conducted and approved by the Transportation Commission. Before setting limits, Engineering traffic investigator considers: the length and width of roadway, the roadway type and condition, the location of access roads & intersections, existing traffic control, sight distance, crash history, and traffic speed studies. Speed studies can be found at <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/roads/speed-limits.aspx>

- Speed studies are ongoing. Requests continue to be submitted from locals to the Transportation Commission. Implementing transitional speed limits.

Strategy 3: Reduce roadway departure & intersection crashes through education.

S3.1 AARP Driver Skills Training refresher course covers current rules of the road and defensive driving techniques. The AARP Smart Driver™ course, offered by AARP Driver Safety, is the nation's first and largest refresher course designed specifically for drivers age 50 and older. Courses are offered in either a traditional classroom setting or through an interactive online course that may be taken from your home computer at the pace of the participant. The course focuses on how to operate a vehicle safely in today's challenging driving and includes managing and accommodating common age-related changes in vision, hearing, and reaction time.

- No report provided.

S3.2 Sustain and continue to provide Share the Road and No-Zone training focusing on operating around large vehicles. Training focuses on the importance of operating passenger vehicles safely around large vehicles. Motor Carriers Services (MCS), Office of Public Instruction (OPI), and Montana Trucking Association (MTA) continue to work together to coordinate trainings throughout Montana to line up carriers, trainers, and equipment needed

- Montana Trucking Association (MTA) training is ongoing. Will Cole reports that 937 Montana youth enrolled in driver education received Share the Road training at over 20 locations around the state. Will has reached out to Great Falls Disaster and Emergency Services to set up an annual event to train all young drivers in the area with CPR/1st aid, impaired driving awareness, and Share the Road combined into one training event.

S3.3 Montana DRIVE CDL Program has been developed and implemented by OPI to train and test new school bus route drivers for school districts. Montana CDL is a federally recognized and approved program designed to provide comprehensive training fro becoming new school bus drivers in Montana. This program allows Class B drivers holding a Learner's Permit to take the new workshop, and in 10 days of training, and passing the tests, and be ready to drive students. Drivers are required to be CPR certified. [Montana DRIVE CDL \(mt.gov\)](https://www.mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/roads/speed-limits.aspx)

- Program is ongoing. Upcoming training classes for 2025 are scheduled for May 16-26 and August 12-22.

S3.4 Continue to sustain and support the implementation of MT D.R.I.V.E skills training

All types of drivers attend the summer workshops: school bus drivers; ambulance and fire truck drivers; state, federal and municipal employees; heavy truck and transit bus drivers; driver ed teachers, individuals, and teens (Teen Week in July). More than 16,000 drivers have taken the workshop since 1979. Teachers can earn one college credit from MSU-N when they take the workshop, stay an extra day to student teach, and write a paper.

- Program is ongoing. Adult Workshop Registration Opens February 1st and Teens Register March 1st [Montana DRIVE Summer Workshops \(mt.gov\)](http://www.mt.gov/montana-drive-summer-workshops)



S3.5 Continue to sustain and support implementation of the OPI Teen Drivers Education.

The Montana Traffic Education Curriculum Guide meets the standards, benchmarks & performance standards for state-approved teen driver education. Structured learning & guided practice are needed for students to acquire & demonstrate legal & safe driving skills, habits, and responsibilities. Teen drivers must complete an approved Montana driver's education & training program to obtain a driver's license before age 16.

The program continues. Number of students who completed driver education course in school year 2022-2023: 8,009.

- The curriculum is currently being updated and anticipated to roll out in Fall 2024. Community outreach and education is currently being done by the Traffic Education Director.

S3.6 Montana Motorcycle Rider Safety (MMRS) Training

Classroom and driving range safety education to learn and enhance motorcycle operator skills and importance of using motorcycle safety equipment; and applying operator skills to enhance abilities and improve defensive driving strategies.

- Jim Morrow has retired. A new program director to be named. 2023 MMRS reported numbers: Basic Rider Course: 694, Advanced Rider Course: 29. Total Trainings: 723.

S3.7 Continue to promote Montana Operation Lifesaver (MTOL)- RR safety program

Montana Operation Lifesaver (MTOL) is dedicated to reducing collisions, fatalities and injuries at highway-rail crossings and trespassing on or near railroad tracks. OL promotes rail safety through public awareness campaigns and education initiatives, including free safety presentations by authorized volunteers. Outreach activities included: annual outreach events/presentations (including high school assemblies, drivers education, and business meetings), and sharing public service and social media announcements.

- MTOL continues to gain presenters across the state. MTOL continues to use Amplified Digital to spread rail safety messages across Montana. Five targeted campaigns were utilized in 2023, and included Trespassing, Crossing Safety, Always on Roosevelt County, Rail Safety Week, and Brawl of the Wild. Strategies utilized in these campaigns included targeted display, creatives, pre-roll, YouTube, branded content, and mobile targeting resulting in over 700,000 views, not including print or face-to-face presentations.

S3.8 Continue to provide, promote, and encourage traffic safety education and information for vulnerable road users (pedestrians and bicyclists).

The State Bicycle & Pedestrian Coordinator oversees the State Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan, serves on the MDT Rumble Strip Committee, conducts public outreach, and provides technical support and safety resources for all ages (Head Start- Seniors) including PSAs and social media, including high risk populations. Efforts support and provide traffic safety education materials and resources to enhance safety awareness and Montana statute for non-motorized transportation system users with consideration of age and appropriate skill levels.

- Continued ongoing program implementation. First Quarter FFY 2024 activities included participation in MHTSA regional & national Bicycle & Pedestrian regularly scheduled meeting in discussion of best practices, conducting outreach with touring cyclist and providing Bicycling the Big Sky Bike data map which is currently in update process.

Strategy 4: Implement Railway-Highway Crossing Program

S4.1 Implement the Railway-Highway Crossings (Section 130) Program. This program provides funds for the elimination of hazards at railway-highway crossings including the installation of warning devices at crossings. The remainder of the fund's apportionment can be used for any hazard elimination project, including protective devices. MDT continues to implement the Railway-Highway Crossing program on an annual basis.

- Ongoing. Inventoried 500+ railroad grade crossings, which are being entered into inventory data base (ex: upgrades/ safety improvements). Rail Highway Crossing Program (RHCP) Annual Report has been submitted to FHWA. Eleven Diagnostic Reviews were completed in fall of 2023. Projects are currently being developed. 2023 report has been submitted. Looking at IJA section program flexibility.

S4.2 Continue to implement and enhance proven countermeasures.

The Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) is a core Federal-aid program with the purpose to achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads, including non-State-owned roads and roads on tribal land. The HSIP requires a data-driven, strategic approach to improving highway safety on all public roads with a focus on performance. Countermeasures include but not limited to gap analysis in traffic; access management; traffic operations, control, and signalization; lighting; vulnerable road users (pedestrians and bicyclists) safety improvements; road safety audits and other improvements.

- Ongoing. Sites under review to identify safety improvement needs. MDT utilizes FHWA Proven Safety Countermeasures throughout its safety program.

Strategy 5: Continue to improve the accuracy, completeness, integration, timeliness, uniformity, collection, and accessibility of safety data used in traffic safety analysis.

S5.1 Continue to support and enhance upgrades to the MDT's crash database.

- Ongoing. Upgrades have been implemented. Agreements in place with 6 -7 cities to access database. Studies in place to look at MDT taking over ownership of crash data base. Database challenge is getting local law enforcement consistency and electronic.

S5.2 Create crash database dashboards for safety stakeholders including CHSP safety partners.

New crash data base will include crash factor-related and fatality dash boards to align with safety programs.

- Dashboard development is ongoing.

Strategy 6: Support & increase enforcement of proper road use behaviors by all road users identified through crash data.

S6.1 Continue to conduct and implement Operation Safe Driver campaigns.

Commercial Motor Vehicle (CMV) enforcement activities within corridors where data indicates there are a high number of crashes involving vehicles involved in international commerce. Operation Safe Driver," a CVSA (Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance) and FMCSA (Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration) special operation associated with Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program (MCSAP). Montana's "Safe Driver" special operation is an innovative, proactive, and collaborative effort between MHP, MCS officers and MCSAP inspection teams.

Following the meeting Eric Belford provided the following update.

- The Montana Department of Transportation/Motor Carrier Services with the Montana Highway Patrol completed another Operation Safe Driver," a CVSA (Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance) and FMCSA (Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration) special operation associated with MCSAP. Montana's "Safe Driver" special operation is an innovative, proactive, and collaborative effort between MHP, MCS officers and MCSAP inspection teams. This was the second of three events planned this year in our state. Montana utilized these resources to improve highway safety for the entire motoring public. These operations have the ability to impact many drivers through commercial motor vehicle inspections and traffic enforcement of vehicles operating around the test CMV.

MCS inspection teams working on HWY 93 & HWY 35 around Flathead Lake completed 44 level I, 15 level 23 and 3 level III inspections noting 14 Vehicle out of service violations and 3 Driver out of service violations while operating commercial motor vehicles. In addition to our commercial motor vehicle inspections MCS and MHP completed traffic enforcement utilizing a CMV operating in the corridor with an MHP officer in the CMV calling out traffic violations. This 2-day event resulted in 12 vehicle stops, with a total of 7 warnings and 6 Notices to appear written. In addition to the traffic stops MCS and MHP assisted with 2 stranded vehicles, and crash event that happened while patrolling.

Strategy 7: Explore & implement best practices for reducing roadway departure.

S7.1 Research safety evaluation of sinusoidal centerline rumble strips.

This project will investigate the effectiveness of SCLRS in lowering the number of observed crashes. This project began in Jan 2022 and is expected to be a long-term project as sufficient data is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of SCLRS. Centerline rumble strips (CLRS) are a proven safety feature to reduce high severity cross-over type crashes on rural and suburban roadways. Although the primary crash types reduced are head-on and sideswipe opposite direction crashes, studies have shown a reduction for all crash types. When traversed, conventional CLRS create significant additional traffic noise which can travel several hundred feet and create a nuisance to nearby residents. Previous studies show a quieter CLRS option is the sinusoidal centerline rumble strip (SCLRS).

- Ongoing, long-term project. Evaluation of sinusoidal centerline rumble strips is the next step in this research project (2022-2026). The expected completion date is 2026.

S7.2 Median high-tension cable rail project.

Median barriers are longitudinal barriers that separate opposing traffic on a divided highway and are designed to redirect vehicles striking either side of the barrier. Median barriers significantly reduce the number of cross-median crashes, which are attributed to the relatively high speeds that are typical on divided highways.

- The project is broken into four phases that will install 150 miles of cable rail along sections of I-90 and I-15. Billings District completed. The installation in the median of I-90 from Three Forks east to the Bear Canyon Exit is completed. Butte installation I-15/I-90 expected spring 2024. East of Missoula Section expected this year (2024) and next (2025) assuming grizzly bear consultation wraps up. Helena I-15 installation expected in 2025.

Announcements

Next Meeting – Thursday, April 25th, 9-11 a, m,

2024 Annual Transportation Safety Meeting- calendar block October 15-18, 2024, at the Delta Colonial Hotel

Adjourn at 10:47 a.m.