

IMPROVING SAFETY IS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (MoDOT)

Objective

Missouri responded to the call from the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) in 2003 by developing a strategic plan to reduce traffic crashes. One of the guiding principles is the concept of “shared responsibility.” Missouri’s Blueprint for Safer Roadways, the State’s strategic highway safety plan, was developed “by utilizing a partnership approach that outlines strong opportunities to reduce fatal and serious injuries.” Roadway users; Federal, state, county, and local governments; elected officials; safety advocates; and nongovernmental organizations were included in the process. The objectives of this approach were to increase coordination, communication, and cooperation among the partners and to concentrate available resources on key safety countermeasures.

Approach

In August 2003, the Division of Highway Safety was transferred to MoDOT resulting in a more global view of transportation safety. Engineering personnel, for example, who had often limited their view to engineering-related solutions in the past, became more aware of behavioral issues while safety and law enforcement personnel, who previously focused on behavioral issues, achieved a better understanding of engineering solutions. The transfer, however, is only part of the story. Two other key efforts also advanced the shared responsibility concept:

- The formation of a statewide Missouri Coalition for Roadway Safety and 10 regional coalitions to engage the broader safety community in plan development and implementation; and
- Involvement of the Coalition in the development of Missouri’s Blueprint for Safer Roadways (November 2004) which set the goal of 1,000 or fewer fatalities by 2008 (from 1,232 in 2003), and identified an “Essential Eight” strategy to help reach that goal. The Blueprint serves as the primary policy document for Missouri’s safety programs and was developed with input from more than 150 Missouri safety partners.

The Coalition is involved in a number of safety-related activities including enforcement, public information, legislative activity, and DWI issues. Key members of the Coalition are the two largest Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) in Missouri, the East-West Gateway Coordinating Council (EWGCC) in the St. Louis area and the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) serving greater Kansas City. Both of these

Figure 1. Travel Safe Zone Poster (East-West Gateway Coordinating Council)



“The Missouri Coalition for Roadway Safety is committed to implementing the Blueprint for Safer Roadways by providing MoDOT funding to the regional coalitions. This funding has enabled MARC to more actively engage local constituents and implement strategies targeted at the Kansas City region’s high-priority safety areas. The SHSP provides an opportunity to make transportation safety decisions on a local level where these incidents are occurring every day.”

Michael Briggs, Transportation Planner, Mid-America Regional Council

MPOs, which also are members of their respective regional coalitions, actively embraced the goals and objectives of the Blueprint and launched multifaceted safety initiatives in 2004.

These initiatives have not only continued but also expanded. EWGCC, for instance, implemented the “Travel Safe. Someone’s Future Is In Your Hands” campaign which includes posters, presentations and other materials. Recently, they established a “Travel Safe Zone” program that has marked five roadways with large black-and-yellow signs designating each area as high-risk.

Both of these large MPOs, along with smaller MPOs, are making greater use of crash data and disseminating reports to local transportation and law enforcement personnel to enable them to track the region’s progress in improving transportation safety throughout the year. Figure 2 depicts a regularly scheduled report generated by MARC that shows the number of crash fatalities in the Kansas City region.

Figure 2. Portion of the Kansas City Region Fatality Report
August 6, 2006

State Fatalities						
Roadway Fatalities						
Kansas 2006	240	Missouri 2006	640			
Kansas 2005	264	Missouri 2005	771			
2006 +/- to 2005	-9.1%	2006 +/- to 2005	-17.0%			
Kansas City Region Fatalities						
Roadway Fatalities		Historical Data				
2006 Fatalities	122	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001
5 Year Average	134.6	145	125	138	129	136
2006 +/- to Average	-9.4%					

Resources

About \$2 million in safety funds are distributed directly to the 10 MoDOT Districts and regional coalitions. The coalitions set priorities and determine how funds are spent. The allocation of dollars to regions is based on their fatality and incapacitating injury rates.

Half the funds are dedicated to a public information plan required for each region. Other funds are primarily used for capital improvements but they have also been used for enforcement and other operational and educational programs.

The regional coalitions have been very effective in involving local law enforcement as well as the State Highway Patrol, which coordinates with MoDOT on data and crash records. Development of a GIS logging system, training that provides law enforcement with direct access to data, and monitoring/quality control of data as it comes into the system have been implemented through this relationship.

There has been strong participation by other local government officials, and the regional coalitions provide a place and structure for involving the many volunteers who are interested in highway safety. An important element in the success of these coalitions is that the participants feel ownership of the process. MoDOT sees itself as one of many partners and feels the process is successful because it is collaborative. All parties are able to share the responsibility and take credit for successes.

Outcomes

The Coalition set a clear goal of reducing fatalities and disabling injuries. As illustrated in Figure 3, the outcome has been mixed. Fatalities rose in 2005, but data for 2006 show a 17 percent reduction in fatalities through July. Disabling injuries have been reduced and in 2005 reached their lowest level in four years. Overall indications are that the long-term goals of MoDOT, the MPOs, and other participating agencies and organizations are being met.

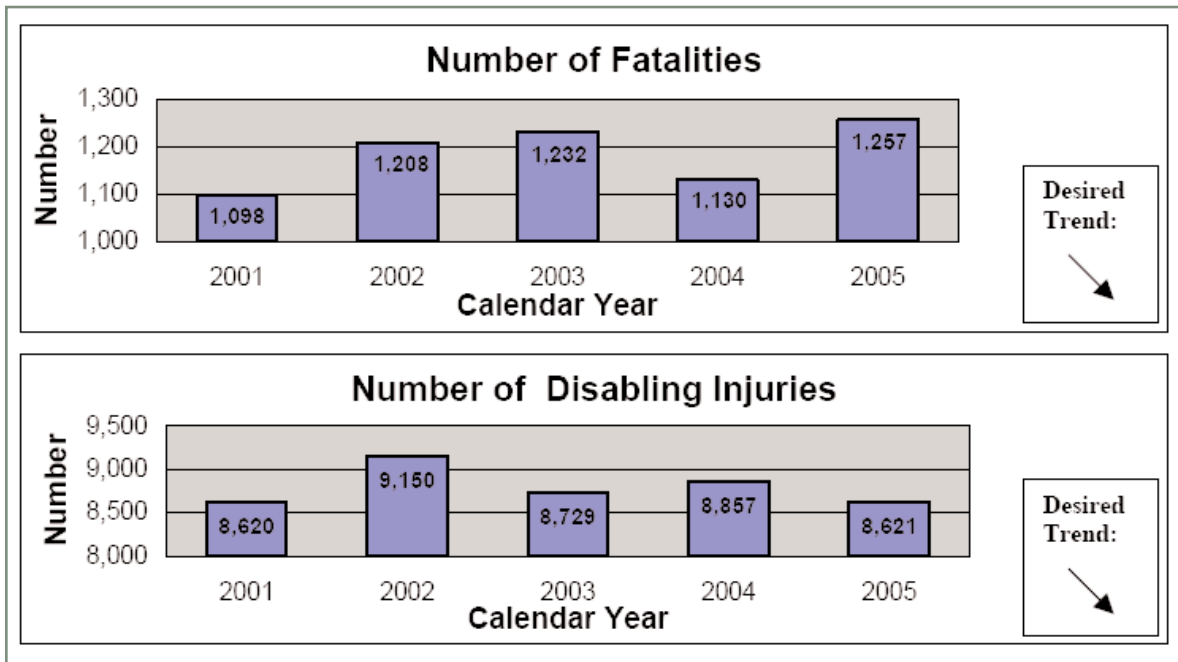
One clear outcome has been improved cooperation and communication among members of the safety community and increased involvement from a diverse group of agencies and organizations, such as the MPOs. This has led to implementation of programs and solutions that address physical improvements, education, and enforcement.

“Local people solve local problems. We at the state level can provide guidance and influence on ways to reduce motor vehicle fatalities and injuries, but local heart must be behind the issue. In Missouri, MPOs have been heavily involved in projects and provide a great conduit for data which helps them take action because it is based on evidence and not politics.”

Leanna Depue, Director, Highway Safety Division, Missouri Department of Transportation

The availability of funding for regional safety activities also has helped the regional coalitions maintain a high level of participation in the safety planning process. The success of this approach is demonstrated by a significant increase since 2004 in the number and range of MPO safety activities. MoDOT has noted that while it may take some time to show a definite trend, they are confident that the concentration on clear goals and the development of statewide and regional coalitions will lead to reduced fatalities and disabling injuries.

Figure 3. MoDOT Tracker Summary
July 2006



Leanna Depue
Missouri Department of Transportation
573-751-0599
Leanna.Depue@modot.mo.gov

For information on the East-West Gateway Coordinating Council, visit
<http://www.ewgateway.org/safety/safety.htm>
For information on the Mid-America Regional Council, visit
<http://www.marc.org/transportation/safety/>

Best practices are being identified and documented by the Transportation Safety Planning Working Group (TSPWG). For more information go to tsp.trb.org or www.fbwa.dot.gov/planning/SCP.

