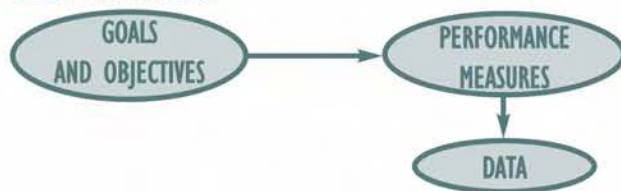


## BEST PRACTICE



## FIRST STEPS: SAFETY PLANNING INITIATIVES

MID-AMERICA REGIONAL COUNCIL

### Objective

The Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) serves both as the association of city and county governments and as the metropolitan planning organization for the bistate Kansas City region. MARC's effectiveness depends upon how it addresses regional issues, spanning beyond the jurisdiction of a single city, county, or state. To address regional transportation issues, MARC adopted a goal in 2002 to "... increase the safety, security, and well-being of the traveling public," which was initiated in Transportation Outlook 2030. By setting this goal and committing to incorporating safety in its regional planning efforts, MARC has proven itself as a leader in safety-conscious planning. In an effort to respond to accident statistics as well as goals established regionally and nationally, MARC has begun developing a three phase Transportation Safety Planning Program to be integrated in its transportation planning and programming processes for the metropolitan Kansas City area.



### Approach

MARC's three-phase approach aims to achieve the goal set in 2002. Phase I of their Transportation Safety Planning Program seeks to incorporate safety issues throughout the transportation planning process. MARC's approach focuses on teaching local and state officials how to design and implement safety-conscious transportation investments as well as providing the decision-makers with the technical support they need to make those investments. MARC hosted the "Planning It Safe" workshop in February 2003 sponsored by the U.S. Department of Transportation, which brought together local and regional leaders and planners to discuss the desire to incorporate safety issues into their transportation planning, design, and operations. In April 2003, MARC hosted the "Safe Routes to School" workshop, which brought together similar leaders along with health care professionals and law enforcement officers to collaborate on bicycle and pedestrian safety. The participants of the workshop learned about the "Safe Routes" initiative, methods of launching this program in their community, and the importance of safe, alternative travel modes to school. MARC partnered with Johnson County, Kansas to videotape the training to extend its value to many other local officials. MARC also addressed bicycle safety in the region by hosting the Midwest's "Community Bicycle Safety Course: For Law Enforcement." Two participants of this train the trainer course became certified instructors, and the course was offered in May 2004 through MARC's Government Training Institute. In June 2004, the National Highway Institute and National Transit Institute's Safety Conscious Planning course was held to help transportation planners, safety professionals, and government officials identify ways to further incorporate safety into their transportation planning processes.

Another element of this Phase will be the development of a crash database for the region and a white paper which will provide an inventory of the crash data, its status, and the major transportation safety issues in the region. The crash database will be evaluated and updated on a regular basis to reflect changing transportation trends and to measure the effectiveness of safety programming. As of 2005, this database is in the compilation phase, but crash information will be used in future updates of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).



MARC also has been instrumental in building partnerships. MARC fostered a unique partnership with the Kansas City chapter of the American Public Works Association (APWA) to develop guidelines and standards for community bicycle facilities in the Kansas City region. Public works officials and bicycle advocates worked together for approximately two years to develop the Local Bicycle Facilities Design Guidelines, and to ensure that the guidelines were consistent with those set forth by the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT), the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), as well as Federal guidelines. These guidelines and standards have since been adopted by the APWA on behalf of the bistate metro region and are available for replication in other communities for planning safer and more appropriate bicycle facilities.

The next two phases of the Transportation Safety Planning Program will maximize and expand upon efforts started during Phase 1. Phase 2 of this program seeks to build additional partnerships with safety stakeholders throughout the region, including KDOT's Bureau of Traffic Safety, MoDOT's Division of Highway Safety, Midwest Trauma Society, KC Metro SAFE KIDS, and others. In 2005, MARC is working with bistate safety partners to coordinate safety conscious planning techniques with the development of Comprehensive Highway Safety Plans by the Kansas and Missouri DOTs. A newly formed regional transportation safety coalition is assisting with the plans and with updates to the TIP and LRTP to reflect ongoing integration of safety into the metropolitan transportation planning process. Phase 3 of the program will further utilize data from the crash database to map crash records throughout the region. This will allow planners to target areas for education, engineering, enforcement, and emergency response. The geocoded crash data, traffic counts, and transit ridership data will be integrated in metropolitan transportation planning and programming.

## Outcome

MARC's commitment to safety as shown by their numerous safety-related efforts, illustrates the benefits of establishing a proactive approach to safety planning. MARC's commitment to bicycle and pedestrian safety is reflected in the "Explore KC" regional initiative. This campaign promotes the exploration of Kansas City by foot or bicycle while encouraging citizens to get more exercise and help reduce air quality and traffic congestion issues. MARC is enhancing this program to explicitly include safety. The "Explore KC Safely" campaign will be rolled out through new media materials being developed by MARC which will be located on area buses, trails, and the MARC website. MARC also has advocated highway and traffic safety by promoting the "Make It Click" and "Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day" campaigns in the Kansas City region with press releases to local media.

Integrating the three-phase Transportation Safety Planning Program into its transportation planning and programming process will help MARC achieve its goal of improved safety for the traveling public across all modes. Partnering with other agencies and organizations has and will continue to increase MARC's resources for addressing safety problems throughout the regional transportation system; and the development of the crash database will serve both as an analysis and performance measurement tool.