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Toward Zero Deaths (TZD): Aggressive Plans to Meet Aggressive Goals



Final Report **August 2011**

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**NCHRP Project No. 17-51 (02)
AASHTO Safety Leadership Forum V**

Toward Zero Deaths (TZD): Aggressive Plans to Meet Aggressive Goals

FINAL REPORT

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Transportation Research Board
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Executive Summary

Working within an existing framework of an aggressive goal to reduce traffic fatalities by one half in 20 years, the AASHTO membership gathered for the Fifth Safety Leadership Forum to review successes, engage key partners, and—most importantly—take the next key step in the development of a national highway safety strategy.

Named “Toward Zero Deaths (TZD),” the initiative strives to ensure that the end product is built upon the past successes achieved by the AASHTO strategic highway safety plan (SHSP) which was adopted in some form by many states and safety partner associations. TZD also looks forward to tap into new knowledge, advancing technology, and a more broadly-based partnership network.

Although the country has recently experienced a record low number of traffic-related deaths, the lives of too many families are still being shattered daily by preventable crashes. Primary causation continues to be driver error. Increased seat belt use, further reductions in impaired driving, infrastructure improvements, and crash avoidance technology can continue to play a part in saving lives.

To work toward an aggressive highway safety goal, the message must be made much more personal. Referred to as the fifth “E” (the 4Es being education, engineering, enforcement, and emergency medical services), **everyone** needs to become a part of the solution. The new focus is to better understand the strong influence of traffic safety culture within the United States and take action to change it. By doing so, the TZD strategy hopes to generate widespread and continuously growing support for these key strategies: implementation of proven countermeasures to reduce fatalities and serious injuries, full deployment of available technologies, and strengthening public policy at all levels of government.

Successful strategies which have been supporting state and local efforts to reduce fatalities were showcased

in a round of conversational circles. Federal resources have been made available and continue to be developed to provide technical tools and programs to be used by state and local agencies. Once again, the common theme of partnerships as a key to success received recognition. And since the majority of fatal crashes occur on rural roads, it was acknowledged that **all** roads must be addressed. In some cases, a state organizational structure has been designed to ensure high-level collaboration in all traffic-safety related funding and decision making. Other states have used high-visibility enforcement programs to reduce impaired driving and increase seat belt use working with a network of state and local law enforcement agencies. Technical resources, guidance on low-cost engineering safety solutions, and funding have been shared with local governments to understand the data and target efforts to make roadways safer to travel.

Traditional partnerships, at the Federal, state, and local level, have been the foundation of past positive outcomes. Although not a new partner, all aspects of the public health community now need to be welcomed to the table in recognition of their key role in achieving the TZD vision. The majority of unintentional injury deaths in the United States among young people are caused by traffic crashes. Injury care is the most expensive medical care. Addressing this aspect of the national highway safety strategy will be essential. Some of the public health strategies are increased and timely access for victims to appropriate trauma care, accountable care systems, and crash trauma data systems linked to crash outcome measures. Public health agency partners can also be recruited to assist with prevention activities by delivering traffic safety educational programs to current and future road users where they live, work, go to school, and socialize.

Throughout the year, AASHTO will work vigorously with its partners to complete the successful development of the national highway safety strategy. The active involvement of all states is needed to provide



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input into the plan and comment through the draft stages. When the plan is completed, a full commitment to aggressive implementation will be asked of all. States should examine each of the plan's strategies, determine where their data shows they can derive the greatest benefit, and incorporate those programs into their own SHSPs.

To make traffic safety a national priority, it has become clear that the traffic safety culture must be better understood and more highly influenced by the TZD community. Work has already begun with universities to have them share their knowledge in understanding the American mind-set and how to better affect behavior change. The experience and success already achieved by other countries can also be instructive.

For the families, the friends, the co-workers, the high schooler who lives down the block, and the person just walking down the street to buy a newspaper, the TZD vision must become a reality. The path is being mapped, the partners are being rallied, and the resources are being assembled. It is time for state transportation leaders to fully embrace the vision and move more swiftly together toward the vision.

