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*Creating a Traffic Safety Culture – A Case Study of Four Successful States
Case Study One: Michigan*

FINAL REPORT

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ABSTRACT

This is the first of a series of reports intended to document results from four case studies. Conducted in four States – Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota and Washington – the studies were designed to identify which technical and institutional factors most likely led to the creation of a successful culture of safety. The first study, conducted in Michigan, included interviews held with selected key Federal, State, and local safety officials. Interview questions centered on four key focus areas: background information, organizational leadership, political leadership and institutionalizing safety. The most effective strategies – documented in the report – lead to gains which were sustained over time. The findings suggest that Michigan’s safety legacy is largely credited to the early creation of a State safety commission which still exists today. This organization has provided leadership in every aspect of the safety program including planning, programming, legislation, outreach and communication. Several State and local agencies, as well as individual champions, have also taken prominent leadership roles and established a high level of commitment to improving safety. In addition, the State’s award-winning traffic records system is recognized as a key infrastructure tool to guide and evaluate safety programs at the State and local levels. In short, the many collaborative facets of Michigan’s comprehensive safety network appear to have resulted in the lowest traffic fatality rate in its history.

CREATING A TRAFFIC SAFETY CULTURE - MICHIGAN

Foreword

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) in cooperation with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) sponsored this Case Study to document organizational elements that support successful State programs and strategies to reduce highway fatalities and serious injuries.

The Case Study examines the technical and institutional factors implemented by the State Departments of Transportation (DOT) and State Highway Safety Offices (SHSO) in Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota and Washington that resulted in a culture of safety in each State. These States were selected based upon their success in reducing fatalities and serious injuries over time. The Case Study covers the past 30 years and focuses on key milestones, individuals and agencies. The champions of safety and the actions that led to both immediate gains and sustained safety achievements over time are highlighted. The Case Study for each State is contained in a separate report. An executive-level presentation describing common themes noted in all four States will also be available.

The primary focus of this Case Study is the role of the State DOT and the SHSO in supporting the traffic safety culture. Interviews were conducted in each State with the Governor's Highway Safety Representative/SHSO Director, the DOT Safety Engineer and Planner, FHWA and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) representatives, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), and local agencies. Although additional key State and local traffic safety partners have made significant contributions to the State safety programs, they were not individually interviewed for the Case Study and their contribution is referenced only in a general manner.

The target audience of the Case Study is the mid and higher levels of leadership in the transportation safety community, including the DOT Safety Engineers and SHSO Directors who are responsible for implementing the State Strategic Highway Safety Plans. It is hoped that sharing these lessons learned will provide other States with useful information and guidance to further enhance their safety programs.

Executive Summary

Despite a national environment with a continually stagnant number of traffic fatalities, some States have been successful in repeatedly achieving the lowest fatality records in their history. Because of this level of achievement, we can surmise that there is something that these States are doing differently which can be identified and shared with others. A culture of safety has been developed within them: a culture which has resulted in sustained safety achievements over time.

The safety record for the State of Michigan reveals a six year downward trend in the fatality rate as well as the number of overall and alcohol-related traffic deaths and

injuries. Moreover, Michigan reported the second highest seat belt usage rate in the country in 2006.

The Michigan traffic safety network is based upon a historical foundation of collaboration and coordination by State and local partners. The State's safety efforts have been lead by a commission which first began in 1941 and operates today as the Governor's Traffic Safety Advisory Commission. The Michigan Department of Transportation and Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning are key players in the network providing leadership, funding and technical resources to support the strategies selected and designed to address the State's top priorities. Supporting these players are a litany of partners that have had a major role in building the safety network including: law enforcement, local governments, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, prosecutors, universities, advocacy groups, emergency medical services, Federal agencies and the news media.

Michigan has enacted and enforces key traffic safety laws to support the program with a strong public policy component. This has been accomplished with the assistance of several champions including elected officials, university leaders, legislators and the Governor's office.

Michigan has developed an award-winning traffic records system which today provides the backbone of the information network. Internet-based access to traffic crash reports and analysis are now available within record time and for all roads.

Funding presents a continuing challenge in an atmosphere of shrinking State and Federal budgets. Support for many of the State's safety programs is provided through the Federal SAFETEA-LU authorization. The largest source of State income for roads, shared by the State and local agencies, is the gasoline tax (last raised in 1997).

Traffic safety public education programs – designed to increase public awareness of major safety campaigns, as well as attempt to influence behavior -- are well-researched, strategically directed, and supported by paid media whenever possible.

Future direction for Michigan's safety network has been set with the development of the Strategic Highway Safety Plan. This comprehensive plan identifies 12 emphasis areas which cover 80 percent of the State's traffic safety problems. An action team for each emphasis area has designed an implementation plan which will be evaluated annually through the commission framework.

Michigan's strong network of broad-based support for traffic safety and the leadership commitment at the highest levels has resulted in a long-term culture of safety largely credited with the success the State enjoys today. Other States can profit from this experience by examining and strengthening their safety leadership and organizational capacities using similar strategies. A strong commitment by even a small group of agencies can grow over time to a sustained statewide network dedicated to implementing collaborative and effective safety solutions.

I. Introduction

The State of Michigan’s long term success in significantly improving their traffic fatality and injury record is in sharp contrast to the national trend of a stalled effort over the same time period. While the U.S. fatality rate in 2005 crept up to 1.45 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles of travel (VMT), Michigan’s rate dropped from 3.9 in 1976 to 1.1 in 2005, the lowest in its history. When the 2006 crash data is released, the State fully expects to move even closer to its goal of 1.0. Michigan’s number of traffic-related and of alcohol-related fatalities are also at a record low, nearly halving during that same time period.

In 2006, the State announced that they had attained the second highest seat belt use rate in the country: 94.3 percent. The following table summarizes Michigan’s 2005 demographics and highway characteristics.

TABLE 1. MICHIGAN 2005 HIGHWAY CHARACTERISTICS

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Population: 10.12 million• Registered Drivers: 7.04 million• Registered Vehicles: 9.3 million• Roadway: 122,000 miles<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 92% city and county• 6.4% State non-freeway• 1.6% State freeway• Annual VMT: 103.2 billion

SOURCE: Michigan Traffic Crash Facts 2005; Michigan Department of Transportation

Michigan’s success story actually begins in 1941 when State legislators were faced with a harsh reality. Statewide crash records brought to light an alarming increase in the number of traffic-related fatalities on Michigan roads, and resulted in the public demanding solutions.

Table 2. MICHIGAN STATE SAFETY COMMISSION MEMBERS

<p><u>Michigan State Safety Commission Members</u> Department of Community Health Department of Education Department of State (Motor Vehicles) Department of State Police Department of Transportation Office of Highway Safety Planning (Secretariat) Office of the Governor</p>
--

Charged with the enormous challenge of improving roadway safety, State officials wasted no time initiating what we now know to be a sixty-six year traffic safety effort that has steadily moved Michigan to rank among the safest States in the country.

In response to the crisis situation, the Legislature formed the Michigan State Safety Commission (MSSC). Shortly after its inception, the MSSC began its work by fostering critical partnerships among key State agencies to strengthen the chance of significant

success. Together, these safety leaders were charged with spearheading legislative reforms and systematically addressing challenges that would lead to monumental improvements in Michigan’s roadway safety. From its onset, the MSSC has provided a solid foundation upon which all future success has been built.

II. Findings

Michigan’s Growing Traffic Safety Network: Building on the Foundation

Following the formation of the MSSC, Michigan began its journey toward achieving the success it celebrates today. From State and local government agencies, to educational institutions and private organizations, those dedicated to the cause knew no boundaries. In 1965 another historic occasion occurred when the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute (UMTRI) was founded for the sole purpose of addressing and researching motor vehicle injuries. Just one year later, the Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP) was created under authority of the new Federal Highway Safety Act, and began to help the MSSC pave the way for the many changes to come for Michigan.

Over the following 20 year period, Michigan realized enormous improvements in traffic safety laws. From the all-rider motorcycle helmet law enacted in 1969 (and still in place today), to the strengthening of the mandatory seat belt law in 2000 (designed to allow primary enforcement), strong legislation continued to be a high priority of those dedicated to Michigan’s roadway safety. With every new law or amendment that passed, the bar was raised higher. Helmet and seat belt use steadily increased, blood-alcohol level limits lowered, and serious injury and fatality rates continued to decline.

Strengthening the Network: Key Players

Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP)

Continuity and stability within the OHSP has been a major factor in maintaining a consistent, high profile focus on key safety programs. OHSP has only had 6 directors since it began in 1969. The Director is a civil servant rather than an appointed position. The Directors have withstood changes in political leadership and other outside influences that may cause other States’ highway safety programs to be sidetracked, even if only temporarily. Additionally, the level of Federal funding resources received by the State allows OHSP to support a full staff for planning, grant program development, oversight, data analysis, and collaboration with State and local partners.

Knowledge gained through the NHTSA assessment programs (EMS, impaired driving, motorcycle safety, police traffic services, and traffic records) requested by OHSP have helped identify effective and innovative solutions for the State. The benefit of a broad-

based review has allowed Michigan to focus resources across agency lines and strengthen commitments to improving safety in other organizations.

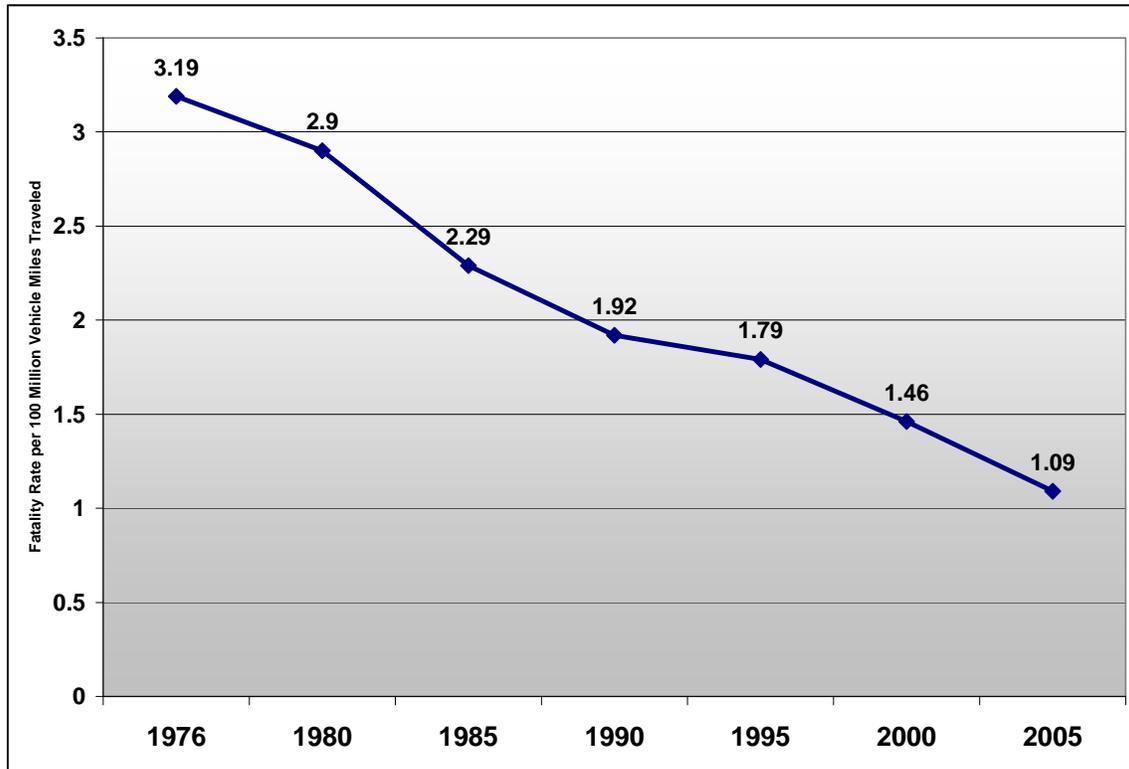


Figure 1. 1976-2005 Michigan Fatality Rate per 100 Million Vehicle Miles Traveled
 SOURCE: Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning

The annual Traffic Safety Summit organized by OHSP is now in its twelfth year. Over 400 traffic safety professionals are brought together to learn about the latest in traffic safety information, emerging issues and new technology. Formal presentations and informal networking allows a broad range of expertise to be communicated to State and local partners. The net result is the ability to continuously examine programs and priorities for enhancement and even better results. OHSP also facilitates the distribution of traffic safety information by publishing a bi-monthly newsletter and providing a comprehensive web site with links to useful information

Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT)

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), originally founded solely for the purpose of building Michigan’s transportation system, has evolved to become another key player in the State’s traffic safety network.

In the 1960s, MDOT’s efforts were focused mainly on building Michigan’s interstate system – a national initiative – leaving few resources available for the State’s growing need to improve safety on existing road systems. The department had a centralized

traffic safety and engineering office staffed with a number of specialists who reviewed every design project for safety components. Realizing the many benefits of law enforcement agencies working closely with traffic engineers, MDOT participated in a joint effort with OHSP to form a Traffic Enforcement and Engineering Coordinating Committee (TEECC). The TEEC membership included State and local law enforcement representatives, State engineers, OHSP staff and engineering partners from the Universities and local agencies. The committee analyzed traffic safety issues to identify coordinated resolutions and recommended programs to improve effectiveness. The cooperative spirit and work of the TEECC continues today although under different auspices.

A significant organizational and philosophical change occurred in 1996 when MDOT decentralized its organization from a centralized system into seven regions and twenty-seven (27) Transportation Service Centers (TSC) covering the entire State. As MDOT services became more accessible and visible, important local concerns were brought more quickly to light. MDOT regions took on the responsibility of identifying their own roadway issues, conducting safety analyses, assessing and performing necessary roadway maintenance, expending funds, and providing resources. Today this direct access to MDOT resources through the Regions provides an opportunity for local agencies to directly participate in the safety equation and develop closer ties with the State's safety network.

Over 60 percent of Michigan's traffic fatalities occur on the local road systems. Beginning in the 1970s, MDOT provided free engineering expertise to the counties through a special program funded partially by OHSP. Staffing cutbacks caused the program to be disbanded in the 1990s, but when the need for the program became apparent again, MDOT brought it back in 2006.

The new Local Safety Initiative (LSI) is a special unit, staffed by dedicated traffic engineers and an analyst. The unit gives professional assistance to local agencies by performing crash history reviews, crash analysis, and presenting countermeasure evaluations. The LSI program utilizes low cost fixes such as signing, pavement markings, signal modifications and improved sight distance and visibility to reduce fatal and serious injury crashes. Working in partnership with local road authorities the LSI program develops data-driven approaches while raising awareness of highway safety issues.

MDOT is an active partner with the Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) housed at Michigan Technological University in the upper peninsula of Michigan. LTAP serves as the Technology Transfer effort of the FHWA. The LTAP center conducts training sessions and demonstrations for local road agencies, and is a clearinghouse for information related to the technology used in construction and maintenance of roads and bridges. The center has specialized in software-based solutions.

Tort liability judgments and settlements, costing MDOT more than \$20 million a year at its peak, required safety to be included in all maintenance decisions and design standards. When major tort reform was supported by the State Legislature in the late

1990s, liability costs dropped significantly. Fatality and injury numbers became the motivating factor for continuing practices that make roads safer.

MDOT has been a driving force in addressing design improvements and leading data system development for the benefit of safety on both State and local roadways. Led by knowledgeable managers with long-term backgrounds in safety, planning and engineering, MDOT has proven to have an unwavering commitment to safety.

Michigan State Police (MSP)

The law enforcement community at all levels has been a major stakeholder in statewide safety initiatives. The Michigan State Police (MSP) is a full-service enforcement organization which must implement strategies to address both crime and traffic with an ever-shrinking work force. Despite these challenges, traffic enforcement activity and providing technical assistance to local agencies have always been key priorities of the MSP. MSP's position as a member of the MSSC is perceived by the agency as a call to provide leadership to the statewide enforcement community.

OHSP is a division within the MSP. This positioning has resulted in a strong working relationship among the MSP, the law enforcement community, and the grant-funded programs and campaigns sponsored by OHSP. Being located within MSP has provided additional statewide credibility for OHSP, and has afforded them direct access to the agency's leadership. Furthermore, these advantages have contributed greatly to the overall strength and success of OHSP-sponsored traffic enforcement initiatives.

The Evolution of the Network: MSSC Development

Michigan Traffic Safety Management System (MTSMS)

Formed in 1995, the next key player in Michigan's traffic safety network was the Michigan Traffic Safety Management System (MTSMS) created through the well-established framework of the MSSC. Initially developed to function as a separate entity from the MSSC, the MTSMS was developed by MDOT and OHSP in response to a Federal mandate for States to implement a Safety Management System (SMS). Although the requirement was soon removed, the MTSMS leadership recognized the value of collaboration and coordination among State agencies, local governments, Federal partners, non-profit organizations, and businesses. MTSMS was viewed as the "umbrella" bringing "silo" programs together for the benefit of the State's overall safety program. Michigan was one of only a few States to continue their SMS. Thus, when a new Federal movement to encourage integration of State safety programs began in 2000, the MTSMS was one of the first to participate in the "safety conscious planning" initiative. MTSMS held its first statewide safety forum, jointly with the MSSC, in 2001.

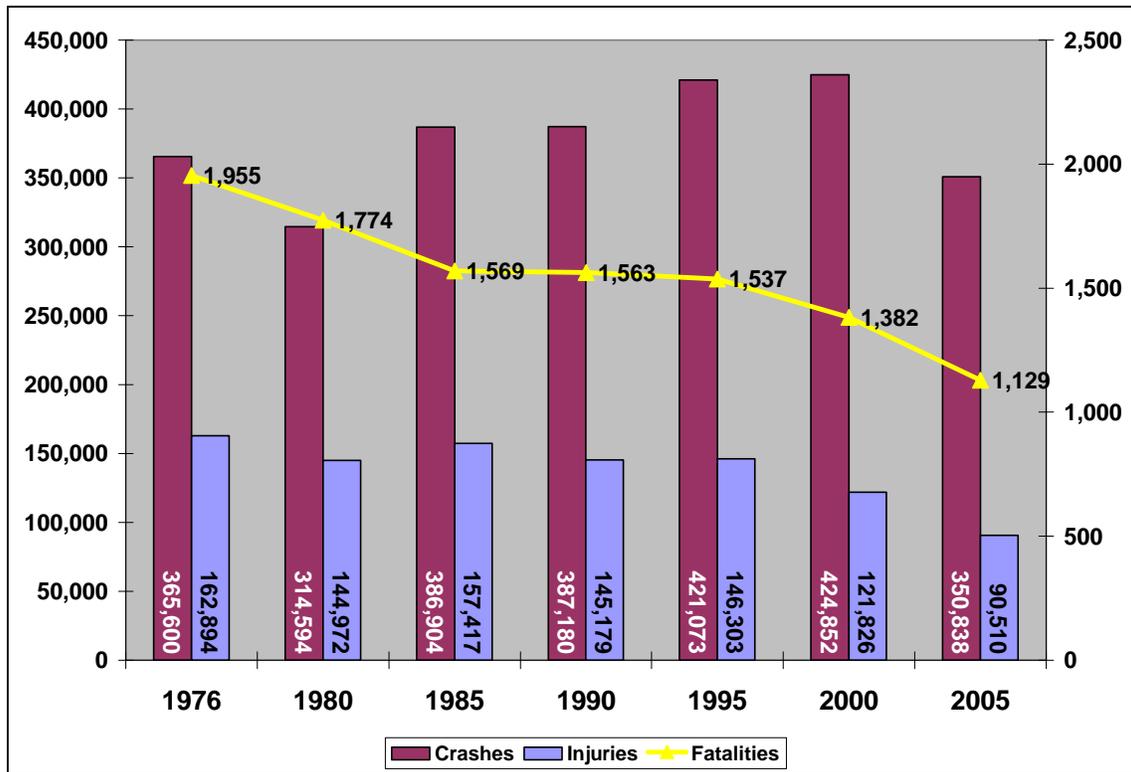


Figure 2. 1976-2005 Number of Michigan Traffic Crashes, Fatalities and Injuries
 SOURCE: Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning

Governor’s Traffic Safety Advisory Commission (GTSAC)

Due to its statutory roots, the MSSC remained the primary vehicle for the State agencies to address traffic safety issues. In 2002, the MTSMS and MSSC were merged by a Governor’s Executive Order into one organization for greater efficiency and named the Governor’s Traffic Safety Advisory Commission (GTSAC). To address the need for local input which had been provided by the MTSMS’ voluntary structure, the GTSAC added voting positions for three local agency representatives and the State Office of Services to the Aging. The new organization continued to foster increased cooperation between State and local agencies, while encouraging both public and private sector involvement for a comprehensive focus on statewide traffic safety issues.

Strong partnerships and committed leadership have been identified as critical components of the safety culture that has developed in Michigan. Without exception, every individual interviewed for this study agreed that a significant factor contributing to Michigan’s success today lies with the GTSAC and the coordinated efforts that have resulted from their activities. GTSAC links everyone in Michigan’s safety community, including private individuals who – even though not affiliated with an organization – are motivated to support safety initiatives.

Through the GTSAC, State agencies have been encouraged to assume leadership roles when responding through the Governor’s office to proposed traffic safety legislation. By

effectively leveraging resources and minimizing duplication of effort, GTSAC agencies have worked to establish a solid legislative agenda, as well as a successful matrix of programs to improve safety on Michigan's roads through the 4 Es (enforcement, education, engineering and emergency medical services).

Extending the Network: Significant Partners

The impetus for encouraging local agencies to embrace safety has developed from the many collaborative initiatives developed through the years. These partnerships were greatly enhanced as better data analysis tools became available to identify traffic safety problem areas and design effective solutions. Better data and timelier access has not only assisted local leaders with understanding what is happening on their roadways, it has also provided direct results of the applied countermeasures.

The following agencies have been instrumental in supporting the development of Michigan's roadway safety success story.

Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG)

Of the 13 MPOs and rural task forces (RTFs) organized across the State, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) is the largest by far. Covering Michigan's highest population area with seven counties, including the metropolitan Detroit area, SEMCOG has long been considered a leader in traffic safety initiatives. SEMCOG has been at the forefront of proactively using engineering data to identify problem areas and locating low cost, effective solutions for improving safety. In fact, this successful MPO consistently seeks the most innovative technology and ideas to address their region's safety challenges.

Since the early 1990s, OHSP has worked with SEMCOG to encourage the promotion of the behavioral side of safety within the MPO. OHSP provided grant funding in the 1990s to assist SEMCOG with the development of custom software designed to analyze local crash data, identify effective countermeasures, and calculate costs. OHSP also provided funding to deliver traffic safety engineering services through SEMCOG to municipalities which could not otherwise afford them. SEMCOG is a traffic safety leader in Michigan. Through a willingness to generously share their engineering and data analysis expertise with other agencies across the State and the nation, the MPO coaches and mentors other agencies to further develop their programs to improve safety.

Other Local Partners

Fortified by the safety conscious planning initiative that continues today, OHSP and MDOT have worked with all of the State's MPOs and Rural Task Forces (RTFs) to encourage the integration of safety into the local planning process. With the support of these two State agencies and FHWA, safety forums have been held in all of the MPO areas and some will soon conduct second forums. Data analysis, engineering and

behavioral safety resources, as well as funding, are offered to the local agencies to support the initiation and enhancement of safety programs.

County Road Association of Michigan (CRAM)

Since 1909, Michigan County Road Commissions have been responsible for delivering cost efficient, high quality maintenance and construction services for local roads. The County Road Association of Michigan (CRAM) was formed in 1918 to provide road commissioners in the 83 counties with State-level support, legislative advocacy, and the ability to promote uniform practices across county lines. Among the services CRAM provides, assistance using Roadsoft is key to the success of road commissions. Roadsoft -- a graphically designed, integrated roadway management system developed for local agency engineers and managers -- analyzes and reports roadway inventory, safety, and conditional data using the Michigan Accident Location Index (MALI) as a reference base. The software was developed by Michigan Technological University's Transportation Institute with Federal and MDOT funding. Through this and other programs, CRAM has helped County Road Commissions address local road issues and market the importance of roadway safety at the county, city and village levels. This partnership helps to identify potential crash threats before they become a liability.

Law Enforcement

Leadership provided by the MSP, the Michigan Sheriffs Association (MSA), and the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police (MACP) has resulted in a strong statewide network of law enforcement agencies dedicated to traffic safety with no regard to jurisdictional boundaries. County traffic enforcement cooperatives are often supported on a statewide basis by Federal overtime grant funding provided by OHSP. These efforts result in many effective campaigns widely credited as a major factor in the State's overall safety record.

Michigan county enforcement agencies have long benefited from a supplemental State funded program: the Secondary Road Patrol and Traffic Accident Prevention program referred to as "SRP". Created by Public Act 416 of 1978, the SRP program is administered by OHSP. It is the only one of its kind in the nation to provide funding to county sheriff departments to patrol secondary roads. (Secondary roads are defined as county roads and local roads outside the corporate limits of cities and villages.) A \$10 surcharge on most citations for moving violations funds the program. The law mandates that officers solely focus on traffic enforcement and traffic crash prevention while patrolling secondary roads. In 2006, the \$14 million dollar program supported the equivalent of 178 full-time officers on patrol.

Public opinion polls show that safety is a primary concern of citizens -- especially intersection safety and speeding -- and are often cited well before fear of crime. OHSP promotes the concept of using traffic enforcement to address multiple safety issues by providing training and marketing information to demonstrate the potential positive impact of a proactive traffic safety program.

The statewide traffic enforcement campaigns have also helped to strengthen the willingness of some local leaders to support legislative initiatives. The message of greater safety on community streets often resonates with the public and assists in demonstrating grassroots support for stronger traffic safety laws.

Enforcement challenge award programs, sponsored by OHSP, bring needed equipment or grant funds to the departments, and help to demonstrate the benefits of traffic enforcement to local government leaders. OHSP utilizes a team of Law Enforcement Liaisons (LEL) – composed of current and retired law enforcement officers working overtime – to provide direct contact with law enforcement agencies throughout the State. The LELs have been successful in increasing participation for the periodic enforcement mobilizations directed at seat belt use, impaired driving and speed, as well as strengthening the traffic enforcement network.

The primary enforcement seat belt law was enacted in 2000. In the following years, the State’s law enforcement agencies adopted an alternative strategy called “enforcement zones” to assist in fully implementing the law. Enforcement zones are now deployed in the counties that are members of the State’s grant-funded Task Force, and are credited with boosting the seat belt usage rate in 2006 to the second highest in the country.

Law enforcement agencies have been instrumental in changing driver behavior and convincing community leaders to embrace traffic safety. Through traffic safety initiatives coordinated – and many times funded – through Federal grant programs, law enforcement has been able to directly demonstrate the benefits of traffic safety at the community level.

Prosecutors

In the mid-1990s, OHSP and the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan (PAAM) teamed up to develop a pilot program to train prosecutors, judges, and law enforcement officers on key traffic safety issues. The training was designed to not only educate these individuals on new laws, but to also ensure that the current laws are enforced effectively. The program provides easy access to technical resources and promotes collaborative relationships within the criminal justice system at the local level. The project has been very successful and became a national model. With the inclusion of a traffic safety training resource attorney to the section 410 Federal Impaired Driving Grant Program, NHTSA has encouraged other States to adopt a similar program.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) has traditionally played an integral part in helping to enhance emergency services across the State. In the early 1970s, OHSP provided funds for the purchase of ambulances. In 1977, Michigan enacted a law requiring EMS personnel to be present when ambulances were en route to and from an emergency. With the emergence of new technology, equipment and training, the EMS program has grown steadily to significantly increase post-crash survival rates for State drivers and passengers. Jaws-of-life, enhanced 9-1-1 on cell phones, smart traffic signals, and medi-

vac capabilities have provided essential program enhancements and contributed to local government leaders' awareness and willingness to support more EMS programs. OHSP promoted this continuing partnership by providing funding for a number of education programs delivered by EMS personnel in their local communities. In the 1990s, OHSP supported the development of an award winning Camp 9-1-1 program for EMS providers to train children in first responder techniques. Additionally, the State is now preparing to conduct its third EMS program assessment to examine progress, and develop a strategic direction for addressing future challenges.

Michigan Truck Safety Commission (MTSC)

Established in 1988, the Michigan Truck Safety Commission (MTSC) is the only organization in the nation dedicated to commercial truck driver education and training. Supported not with tax dollars, but solely by the industry it serves, the 11-member commission has grown to become a renowned safety advocate for Michigan's trucking industry. The MTSC, whose programs are administered by the OHSP, meets bi-monthly to implement programs in the following areas: truck driver education and training, passenger vehicle driver awareness regarding the operational characteristics and limitations of trucks, data collection, and research initiatives. In addition, the MTSC is instrumental in supporting the enforcement of motor carrier safety laws.

Federal Partners

The State's traffic safety network has received and readily accepted continuous support from its Federal partners: NHTSA, FHWA and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). Through regional and divisional representatives, the State has received the benefit of technical resources, guidance, operational program ideas and support for public policy initiatives. The Federal agencies have also provided easy access to a regional network of peer agencies in the other Great Lakes States to encourage the sharing of best practices, infrastructure enhancements, and innovative program ideas.

As part of the Federal transportation funding package, regulations, sanctions, and incentives have also played a key role in supporting a culture of safety in Michigan. The potential for additional funding, or the concern over the potential loss of funding, have helped to motivate the State's safety public policy agenda in some instances. While only one of many contributing factors, the influence of budgetary dollars can be especially helpful when controversial issues are being debated in the Legislature.

Network Leadership: The Champions of Michigan's Traffic Safety Initiatives

Overall

In general, there is a sense of duty among the individuals in positions of leadership to include safety in their mission to improve the quality of life for the citizens of the State. There is also a sense of pride and accomplishment in Michigan that speaks to both the level of leadership that recognizes the importance of what has been done, and to the

responsibility of continuing to seek solutions to the complex problems facing the traffic safety community now and in the future.

When measuring success, we often point to winning strategies and strong programs, but what should not go unnoticed in Michigan's success story is the element of human achievement. Without human assets to initiate strategies, energize projects, and see them through to completion, Michigan would not be at its current level of success. Champions in the traffic safety arena have created a lasting culture of safety. Agencies, leadership within agencies, and individuals at all levels in the organizational structure, represent the difference between programs that have excelled, versus work that would have simply been completed. In Michigan, champions can be found in many places including the State agencies, local governments, universities, the private sector, non-profit organizations and the State Legislature.

Outstanding Individuals

There are two individuals who must be recognized by name due to the significant contribution made not only to the State's safety culture, but also to the nation

Richard H. Austin (1939 – 2001) was the longest serving Secretary of State in Michigan history. He was affectionately referred to as “Mr. Traffic Safety” because of the commitment and leadership he demonstrated in the area of traffic safety. Secretary of State for 24 years, and Chairman of the Michigan State Safety Commission for over a decade, Mr. Austin helped establish and guide the commission, serving as a key spokesman for the traffic safety community. He successfully led a 14-year effort to enact a safety belt law, spearheaded the effort to retain Michigan's motorcycle helmet law, was an early advocate of child restraint legislation, and supported tougher penalties for drunk drivers.

In the late 1960s, **Patricia F. Waller, PhD** (1932 – 2003) was already in the vanguard of traffic safety work. With a background in clinical psychology, and a well-established hands-on approach to safety issues, she focused her efforts on multiple interacting factors that influence driving behavior: driver characteristics, vehicle specifications, highway environment, and social and legal contexts. In the mid-1970s, Dr. Waller created the concept of a graduated driver licensing system providing supervised driving phases, and later championed the successful passage of the law in Michigan. Director of UMTRI for ten years, she was also appointed by President Jimmy Carter to the National Highway Safety Advisory Committee, served on the President's Council on Spinal Cord Injury, and was a past president of the Association for the Advancement of Automotive Medicine. On behalf of the Michigan traffic safety community, Dr. Waller delivered credible and impassioned messages – to the public as well as the State legislature - on essential safety initiatives such as motorcycle helmet, impaired driving, and occupant protection laws.

Governors

Underlying any effective traffic safety program, there must be a strong public policy infrastructure, and Michigan's success has proven it. Michigan's governors – with their

strong resolve to address the most critical public policy issues to improve safety – have signed every major traffic safety package presented to them by the Legislature and vetoed efforts to strip laws from the books that are saving lives.

During the debate on the State’s primary enforcement seat belt law, Michigan’s governor made his position known and provided motivation for legislators to support the bill. Additionally, the current governor vetoed a bill in 2006 which would have repealed a substantial portion of the motorcycle helmet law. Both instances elevated the importance of safety and demonstrated a commitment to protecting the public interest at the highest level of Michigan’s leadership.

Figures 3 and 4 compare the year key public policy initiatives were enacted and the fatality rate in Michigan at that time. Although there were other major contributing factors, such as infrastructure improvements, they are not identified in these charts.

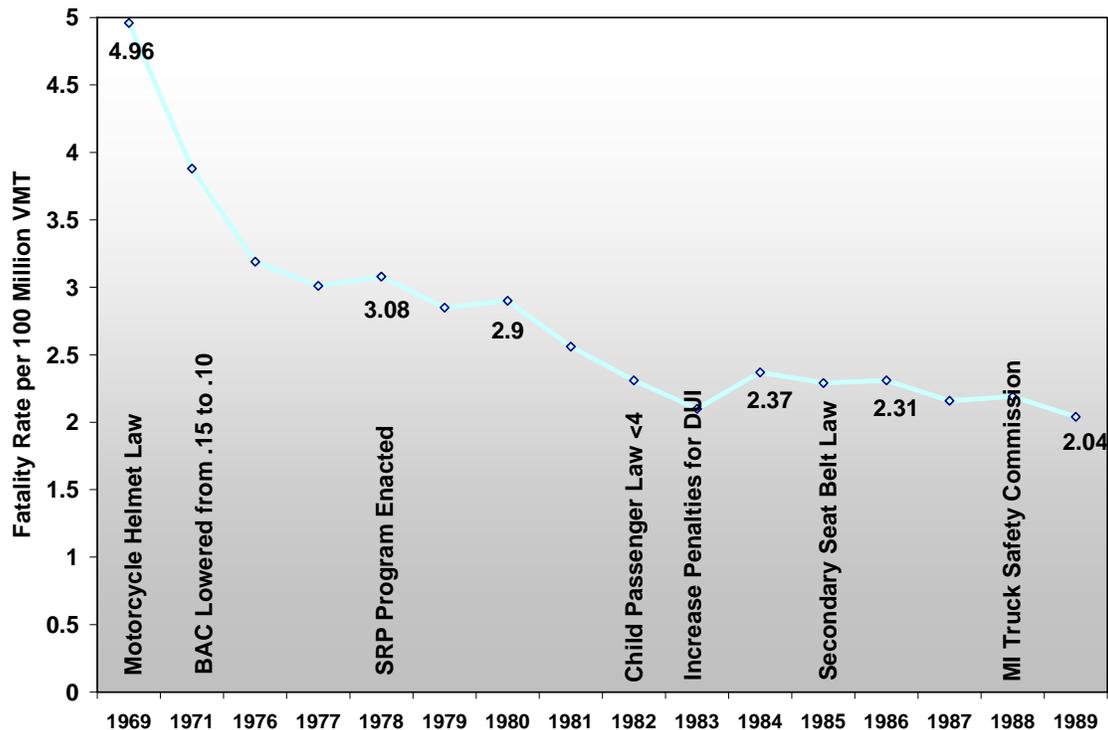


Figure 3. Major Policy Initiatives and Fatality Rates in Michigan from 1969 - 1989
 SOURCE: Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning

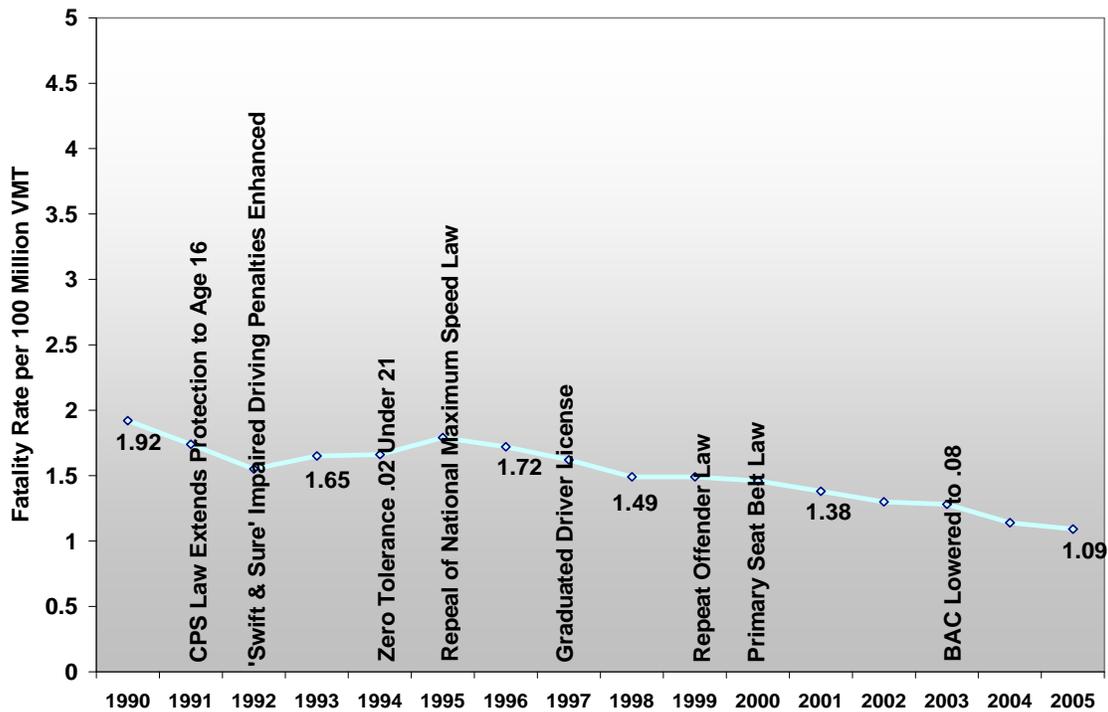


Figure 4. Major Policy Initiatives and Fatality Rates in Michigan from 1990 – 2005
 SOURCE: Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning

State Legislature

The GTSAC and its member agencies and organizations work together to follow the State’s public policy agenda and share information. Local agencies and advocacy groups provide additional specific support based upon their area of expertise. Special interest groups are able to rally grass roots and organizational support for traffic safety issues within local districts and at the State capitol.

Within the Legislature, there have been a number of key individuals willing to step forward and sponsor initially unpopular – but necessary – traffic safety laws. These champions were willing to go against the grain repeatedly for what they believed was in the best interest of Michigan families. Particularly noteworthy are the sponsors of the following: primary enforcement seat belt law, impaired driving penalties, enhanced penalties for repeat offenders, graduated driver licensing, and crime victims’ rights. Without their commitment to protecting public health and safety, as well as their dedication to understanding the technical information provided to them, Michigan would not have the excellent compilation of effective traffic safety laws it does today.

Prior to 1992 there was no limit on the number of terms that could be served in State elected offices including the offices of governor, secretary of state, and legislators. Advocates were able to develop long-standing relationships with key officials committed to traffic safety which helped to provide an accessible forum for new initiatives. In 1992, a citizen initiative was adopted which imposes limits on the number

of terms an individual may serve in these positions. While creating some new challenges, the traffic safety community has recognized the increased need for legislative briefings and other educational opportunities to continue to present their case for strong traffic safety laws.

Supporting the Network: Partnerships

Universities

Michigan's universities have a long history of assisting the traffic safety community to better understand the State's problems as well as utilize limited resources through data analysis, research, evaluation, and training programs.

State universities conduct high quality awareness and observation surveys for OHSP to track program success and identify weaknesses. With the many educational resources available through the universities, Michigan has been able to quantify the effects of new laws, provide engineering assistance, improve data quality, use information to make program improvements, and help project the benefits of proposed new laws for use in legislative debates.

A Highway Traffic Safety Center was created at **Michigan State University** in the mid 1950s as part of a series of governor's traffic safety proposals. In the 1980s the center became part of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering where it resides today. Several graduates of this program later became employed in State safety agencies. The university continues to provide engineering training programs with a focus on traffic safety improvements and collaborative techniques.

UMTRI is a nationally recognized resource for both the State and national traffic safety community. UMTRI has worked closely with OHSP over the years in providing assistance with data analysis and development, research, and statewide survey instrument design. Additionally, UMTRI has periodically developed a "crime versus crash" report which compares the cost of crime and traffic crashes by county, as well as at the State level. The report demonstrates that, in most counties, the cost of traffic crashes far exceeds that of index crimes. This information has been used as a helpful marketing tool to generate support and continued funding for traffic safety programs.

Advocacy Groups

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) of Michigan has championed many of the State's impaired driving and underage alcohol-related issues, in addition to supporting the Michigan Seat Belt Coalition's efforts to advocate for a primary seat belt enforcement law. Their network of local chapters and individuals bolstered grassroots efforts beginning in the 1980s and continues today. Strong leadership and dedication to working with other organizations on important alcohol-related safety issues have contributed significantly to the State's successful record in reducing the percentage of alcohol/drug-related fatalities from 63 percent in 1982, to 36 percent in 2005.

Michigan's regional **Traffic Safety Committees** bring local citizens, businesses, and traffic safety officials together on a regular basis to examine local safety needs and solutions. These voluntary, cooperative networking groups are supported with staff specialists and funded by **AAA Michigan** in partnership with OHSP. AAA staff is actively involved in the communities, providing a variety of traffic safety educational programs, as well as sponsoring the school crossing guard program. AAA Michigan's membership club has been a longstanding and unique advocate for traffic safety legislation, including vehicle occupant and motorcycle helmet issues.

Michigan has been fortunate to have the support of many special interest groups at the local level that share the same passion for safety. The **Traffic Improvement Association of Oakland County (TIA)** is one of the oldest traffic safety associations in the State and has served as a model for others to affect change at the local level. This unique organization is funded in part by the local units of government it serves, as well as through corporate support. TIA has been a leader in crash data analysis, engineering solutions, elderly mobility and – through its work with MDOT – has implemented some of Michigan's most innovative Intelligent Transportation Systems.

Although their primary emphasis is on traffic safety education, training and awareness programs, a similar non-profit organization has long existed in another heavily-populated metro Detroit area: the **Traffic Safety Association of Macomb County**.

A statewide non-profit association was first established in 1941 by the Michigan automobile manufacturers -- the Traffic Safety Association of Detroit -- to help with enforcement, and assist other public agencies in their efforts to provide safety for drivers. The association was instrumental in the passage of many key traffic safety laws and was later renamed the **Traffic Safety Association of Michigan (TSAM)**. Although in recent years the automobile companies have withdrawn membership, the organization membership continues to track legislative issues, provide defensive driver training, house the Operation Lifesaver program and serve as a conduit for sharing prevention information statewide.

Automotive and Insurance Industry Partners

Both the automotive and insurance industries in Michigan have a long history of providing leadership and program support to the safety community. These industries have a vested interest in safety, both as corporate citizens, as well as in their efforts to ensure that their customers drive Michigan's roads safely. Funding support, lobbying expertise, and educational programs have contributed greatly over the years to the positive record the State has realized. Moreover, the work of these industries has provided a model to encourage other businesses to make traffic safety a priority within their work place, and to support State traffic safety initiatives.

Supporting the Network: Crash Data System

To better quantify and prioritize the issues facing Michigan's decision makers, quality traffic crash data is needed to identify problem areas and measure results. A continuous commitment to improve the ability to collect, analyze, and share traffic crash data, has supported both State and local efforts to target and correct hazardous roadway conditions, as well as address specific driving behaviors that lead to traffic crashes.

MDOT first took the lead in developing data tools to address the need for better information. In 1966, in response to the Federal requirement that States implement a Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), Michigan created their first statewide computer file and Uniform Reporting Form UD-10 to collect crash data. The crash forms submitted were located on State routes only.

In 1976, the MALI system was developed. This new system featured analysis software providing statewide crash locating ability and automated locating of crash data on State roads. By 1979, the database was able to be used to locate crashes on all roads.

In 1980, Michigan's system was recognized nationally as a model. Data was shared widely with many partners including UMTRI, AAA Michigan, TIA and the MPOs.

Through the auspices of the MSSC and later the GTSAC, the State and local agencies responsible for data collection formed a committee to share information and work toward additional process improvements. The committee of data users assisted the State agencies responsible for funding the crash data processing system (MDOT, MSP and the Secretary of State's (SOS) Office), and this group evolved into the current Traffic Records Coordinating Committee (TRCC). Michigan's TRCC Executive Committee is comprised of OHSP, MDOT, MSP, SOS, Department of Community Health, the State Court Administrator's Office, and the Department of Information Technology. This broad base of leadership ensures that primary data users are also stakeholders in Michigan's data development. (The TRCC serves today as an action team within the GTSAC structure and has responsibility for addressing all traffic crash record issues.)

In 1992, to improve efficiencies in data collection, a 'bubble form' was introduced to be completed by 20,000 officers across the State. Most of the information on the form was optically scanned by a centralized staff. This quantum change resulted in efficiencies, but also created a new set of problems. And, even when the MALI database was merged with the new statewide geographic framework database, location data was only 70% completed.

In 1999, OHSP and MDOT proposed a comprehensive system redesign in sync with available technology. Funding for the system improvements was provided through Federal section 402 and incentive grant funds earned by Michigan's high seat belt use rate and later through the adoption of a .08 BAC law. By 2002, the project was fully

initiated, and resulted in the elimination of backlogs and the provision of web-based data analysis capabilities. Currently, data that can be submitted electronically by law enforcement agencies is available for viewing within 48 hours. Data submitted in a non-electronic format is available on the web within 19 days. In 2006 Michigan was again recognized for having a model crash data collection system.

The cooperative efforts represented by the success of the TRCC -- with leadership from OHSP, MDOT and other GTSAC partner agencies -- have been the mainstay of Michigan's data achievements. To continue the progress that has been made, and to better understand needs for future data applications, OHSP initiated a comprehensive traffic records assessment in mid-2004. The results of that effort provided the TRCC with additional guidance from which future improvements will be made.

By creating a structure that merges State agency assets and provides quality data to State and local agencies, Michigan is able to make the best use of its resources for traffic safety even in a difficult budgetary climate.

Supporting the Network: Funding

Obviously funding is a key element of a successful traffic safety program and additional funding is a need cited in every State and local community. Each State must deal with the same limitations as Michigan on State and Federal funding programs for highway safety, and undoubtedly encounters similar challenges. It would be redundant to report them.

Each State does generate State funds to support safety and transportation needs, as well as to distribute money in their own unique way. The reality is that some legislators are reluctant to raise any fees or taxes. Recently, a coalition of Michigan transportation related agencies and organizations have begun lobbying, once again, for an increase in State road funds.

The Michigan Constitution requires that 90 percent of the State gas tax and registration fees be used on the road system and split between the State and local agencies using a statutory method. This dedicated funding source is unique within the country. Public Act 51, first enacted in 1951 and most recently amended in July 1998, specifies the transportation funding formula used to distribute transportation dollars to agencies in Michigan. Under Act 51, the State receives 39.1 percent; 39.1 percent goes to counties; and 21.8 percent to cities and villages.

The largest source of income for roads is the State gasoline tax which was raised from 15 cents per gallon to 19 cents per gallon in 1997. From the increase, one cent goes directly to MDOT to fix seriously deficient bridges on the State road system. The remaining three cents is distributed to MDOT, County Road Commissions, cities and villages.

Michigan’s highway and safety funding needs have always far exceeded the available dollars. This makes it even more important for the limited resources to be used in the most effective and efficient manner through collaborative and coordinated efforts at the State and local level.

Supporting the Network: Public Education

Traffic safety public education programs have evolved over time both in the recommended methods of delivering the message and in the ability to more specifically identify and target those most likely to drive unbuckled or alcohol/drug impaired. OHSP has taken the lead in designing and delivering public education and awareness campaigns. The agency’s major focus has been publicizing enforcement mobilizations to ensure that the message reaches the target group before, during, and after the campaigns. Raising the perception of the risk of receiving a citation has been a key goal at OHSP.

OHSP has taken full advantage of the technical assistance provided by NHTSA in this area and uses crash data, phone surveys, and focus groups to assist them in developing appropriate messages to raise awareness and address driver behavior. When the United States Congress gave the States the ability to purchase paid advertising in the 1990s to support enforcement mobilizations, Michigan took full advantage of this new tool to directly reach the public. Additionally, evaluation is a key component of the success of its paid media programs. OHSP continues to refine its message delivery mechanisms as more is learned about the target audience through continual public awareness surveys and opinion polls.

Community outreach is another key element of the State’s traffic safety program because the most effective solutions are initiated and implemented at the local level. State and local partners are enlisted to assist with these efforts including many businesses recruited by the State’s Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS) program.

The centralized distribution of safety materials has been streamlined by OHSP so that regular partners receive materials automatically rather than having to ask for samples.

Although OHSP carries much of the responsibility for public education, other State agencies also initiate outreach activity. MDOT has provided leadership and funding for public education efforts on construction zone safety (“Give ‘em a Brake”) and utilizes changeable message boards on major roads and expressways to deliver safety messages.

As the driver licensing authority in Michigan, the Secretary of State’s office develops and distributes a considerable amount of public education material regarding driver licensing requirements, driver education, impaired driving, driver penalties, graduated driver licensing, and motorcycle safety training and awareness.

Various aspects of the State’s public education program are coordinated to ensure that messages are being efficiently and effectively delivered without redundancy or gaps.

The Future of the Network: Strategic Highway Safety Plan

The Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) is a relatively new process created by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). Michigan’s safety agencies have worked together through the framework of the GTSAC to fully embrace the era of the SHSP. In the past, the GTSAC had never developed a comprehensive plan. Instead, each State agency developed a plan for their program and communicated it to the GTSAC. The new Federal requirement for an SHSP has motivated Michigan to develop and implement a fully coordinated statewide safety plan.

SHSP Development Process

When development of an SHSP became a mandate, Michigan was well positioned to make the necessary decisions due to its long standing collaborative approach to safety, first begun by the MSSC and continued by the GTSAC.

In late 2004, the GTSAC requested development of a statewide, multi-disciplinary SHSP with the leadership of MDOT and OHSP. A broad-based working group was formed from the GTSAC membership to develop the plan. The group proposed a mission, vision, and goal. The current state of traffic safety was discussed and an analysis of the traffic crash data presented. The plan resulted in the identification of 12 strategic focus areas for reducing fatalities to 1.0 per 100 million VMT traveled by 2008. The focus areas, in order of priority, are:

1. Alcohol/Drug Impaired Driving
2. Commercial Vehicle Safety
3. Drivers Age 24 and Younger
4. Driver Behavior and Awareness
5. Intersection Safety
6. Lane Departure
7. Motorcycle Safety
8. Occupant Protection
9. Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety
10. Senior Mobility and Safety
11. Traffic Records and Information Systems
12. Work Zone Safety

The GTSAC then reorganized its existing action teams to assign a team to each emphasis area and gave them responsibility for developing an implementation plan. The emphasis areas selected focus on the traffic safety problems which involve over 80 percent of all Michigan highway fatalities. In 2006, action plans were completed for all 12 focus areas.

SHSP Accountability

The GTSAC meets on a bi-monthly schedule where implementation plan updates and progress are regularly reported. Performance measures for each emphasis area are being developed by the action teams and overseen by a subcommittee. Publicly reporting progress creates an incentive to move the agendas forward. Leadership at the State agency level makes succeeding in the emphasis areas a priority. Accountability is instilled as much through communications and focus from the highest levels, as it is through the tracking of performance measures.

SHSP Evaluation and Data Analysis

Technical assistance will be provided to the action teams in the form of periodic data analysis and special requests for assistance to the State agencies. This analysis will provide assistance with monitoring the progress of each emphasis area goal, as well as the overall SHSP goal.

In addition, a process will be developed to ensure that the statewide SHSP is scheduled to be updated every other year. A traffic safety strategic planning meeting will be held annually. Michigan's traffic safety partners from across the State and the nation will be brought together to review the current traffic crash data, as well as the progress of SHSP and individual emphasis area action plan implementation. The SHSP will be updated and revised based upon the results of the data analysis and implementation update. This will ensure that Michigan's plan will remain relevant and focused on achievement of the State's priority goals.

III. Conclusion

Michigan's culture of safety began in 1941 with the early recognition of the magnitude and future impact of the traffic crash problem leading to the formation of the MSSC. Since that time, cooperation between State and local agencies – with the inclusion of public and private involvement – has created a statewide focus on traffic safety.

This high level of attention to providing a framework that encourages collaboration among State and local safety agencies is an approach that can be created by other States. Regardless of the size of the State, a similar system can be initiated by legislative or gubernatorial mandate, or, simply voluntarily established by a committed group of willing agencies.

The strength of Michigan's safety initiative can be credited also to the State's ongoing interest in continually improving both State and local efforts to effectively collect, analyze, and share traffic crash data. This approach has, in turn, supported initiatives to diligently target and correct hazardous roadway conditions, as well as address specific driving behaviors that threaten safety.

Strong legislation, law enforcement commitment, individual champions, partnerships with the business and university communities, and funding support for engineering and behavioral safety programs, have all been critical success factors in the safety formula.

Since the beginning of the MSSC, Michigan has gathered an incredible amount of support from safety advocates who have joined together to help reach the level of success that the State celebrates today. With a strong vision and an unrelenting passion for realizing it, Michigan’s traffic safety leaders – from the State agency level to the grass roots efforts of local organizations – have successfully built an effective network that will not easily be broken.

IV. Summary of Critical Success Factors

- *Continuous focus on safety through the structure of the MSSC (GTSAC)*
- *Inherent pride in producing effective safety programs and achieving results*
- *Strong commitments from leadership at the State agency level*
- *Continuous stability in the director’s position at OHSP*
- *Broad-base of committed partners at the local level*
- *Statewide network of law enforcement agencies at the State, county and local levels*
- *Dedicated universities providing quality research and evaluation*
- *Outstanding individual champions at critical times*
- *Critical support from the governor and legislators for key traffic safety laws*
- *Quality statewide crash data and the ability to quickly share it*
- *Well-researched and strategically directed public education programs*
- *Data-driven development and implementation of the SHSP by the GTSAC*

V. Epilogue

Despite the strong partnerships that have developed in the State, the agencies are continually challenged to maintain the high level of focus on improving traffic safety. This concern was evident during most of the study interviews. The following list identifies the most frequently cited potential “threats” to the continuation of Michigan’s traffic safety achievements.

TABLE 3. POTENTIAL THREATS TO MICHIGAN’S TRAFFIC SAFETY FUTURE

Potential Threats to Michigan’s Traffic Safety Future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Losing the State’s strong momentum on safety due to complacency • Cultural shifts causing a loss of focus on the importance of safety • State and local government budget cuts • Early-out State government retirement programs which result in the departure of key safety champions • Restructuring of State government and significant turnovers in leadership • Term limits for elected officials • Political influences that dictate a significant change in investment strategy • Congressional earmarks on limited Federal highway funds • Economic challenges and competing priorities facing Michigan’s automotive industry • Difficulty in communicating with the public due to the predominance of the Internet versus traditional newspaper readership and TV/radio broadcast news

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VII. Interviewees

Jack Benac, Project Manager - Department of Information Technology, MDIT
Mark Bott, P.E., Traffic Operations Engineer, MDOT
Tom Bruff, Senior Transportation Engineer, SEMCOG
Jim Culp, P.E., Traffic and Safety Engineer, MDOT
Kathy Farnum, Planning and Operations Section Manager, OHSP
John Friend, P.E. Bureau Director - Highway Delivery, MDOT
Dale Lighthizer, P.E. Traffic and Safety Division, MDOT
Don McNamara, Regional Administrator, Great Lakes Region, NHTSA
Dave Morena, Safety and Traffic Operations Engineer, Michigan Division, FHWA
Susan Mortel, Bureau Director - Transportation Planning, MDOT
John Niemela, Director - County Road Association of Michigan, CRAM
Mike Prince, Division Director, OHSP
Anne Readett, Communications Section Manager, OHSP
Deborah Savage, Grant Operations Manager, OHSP
Larry Tibbits, Chief Operations Officer, MDOT

APPENDIX - CASE STUDY QUESTIONS FOR STATE VISIT

1. What convinced top leadership to embrace safety and coordinate efforts?
2. What were the processes used that brought about the institutionalization of safety?
3. How did safety become a focus for other agencies (i.e., MPOs, law enforcement, EMS)?
4. Who or what agencies were the champions for safety in the State and what did they do?
5. How are resources shared among State agencies and with local agencies (staff, technical information, and data)?
6. What types of public education efforts have been undertaken?
7. How has the State utilized partnerships in general, including the State’s relationship with Federal partners?
8. What motivated elected officials to embrace traffic safety issues?
9. What have been the primary traffic safety regulatory and enforcement initiatives over the years?
10. How was the cost of safety initiatives balanced with other demands on resources?
11. What types of coordination and technical support are available for safety analysis and programming?
12. How was the process for developing the SHSP determined?
13. What agency is primarily accountable for oversight of the SHSP?
14. Are performance measures in place to measure the results of SHSP strategies?
15. What is the biggest threat to sustaining the traffic safety gains that have been made?

Case Study Focus Areas

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Background Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State demographics • Fatality number and rate targets 2. Organizational Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State agencies • Other government agencies • Champions • Resource sharing • Public education • Public involvement • Partnerships • Media 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Political Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership • State safety legislation 4. Institutionalizing Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOT organizational structure • SHSP development process • Accountability • Participating agencies • Evaluation • Funding • Data analysis, quality and sharing
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