

Breakout 10: Federal Initiatives

Moderator: Bob Musselman, Regional Manager, Federal Highway Administration

Session Summary:

This session provided both an overview of current highway and traffic safety initiatives and guidance endorsed by FHWA and NHTSA, the two primary federal agencies with regulatory and funding authority in these areas, and presentations by TxDOT about what it is doing in response to federal safety initiatives.

The first presenter, David Nichol of FHWA's Office of Safety, summarized nine proven engineering/roadway design countermeasures addressing roadway departures, intersection, and pedestrian crashes. FHWA's Office of Safety believes widespread implementation of these safety countermeasures can serve to accelerate the achievement of local, State and national safety goals. The nine countermeasures discussed comprise:

- Road Safety Audits
- Rumble Strips and Rumble Stripes
- Median Barriers
- Safety Edge
- Roundabouts
- Left and Right Turn Lanes at Stop-Controlled Intersections
- Yellow Change Intervals
- Medians and Pedestrian Refuge Areas in Urban and Suburban Areas
- Walkways.

Following Mr. Nichol, NHTSA Region 6 Program Manager Frank Marrero discussed NHTSA's traffic safety perspective and priorities. Set against the backdrop of a 1930's era piece: *Modern Traffic Safety-Yesterday, Tomorrow and Today* (including classic examples of the application of the "3E's"), Mr. Marrero highlighted several current NHTSA priorities. Included among them is the continuing need to:

- Increase seat belt and other occupant protection use,
- Reduce impaired driving
- Reduce rollover crashes
- Reduce motorcycle crash involvement with other vehicles through increased awareness of motorcyclists by other drivers
- Improve crash and other safety data.

With regard to occupant protection, improved safety seats and state implementation of booster seat laws was emphasized. Notable is the availability of §2011 funds to states enacting sufficiently strong booster seat laws. In the impaired driving area, Mr. Marrero stressed the importance of high visibility enforcement coupled with establishment of DWI courts and screening, referrals and behavioral interventions by health care professionals.

The final presentation summarized some of TxDOT's on-going safety initiatives, many of which are consistent with FHWA and NHTSA priorities. TxDOT is pursuing both

engineering and behavioral approaches as discussed by Meg Moore and Terry Pence, respectively.

Among the Texas initiatives noted by Ms. Moore, were the:

- \$73 million Hazard Elimination Program for FY2010
- High Risk Rural Roads Program
- Safe Routes to Schools
- Improvement of Texas 10,000 public rail/highway grade crossings
- Texas' extensive Safety Bond Program
- Texas' application of Road Safety Audit activities as part of planning process for new roads.

Mr. Pence discussed some of Texas' behavioral traffic safety initiatives. Highlighted were:

- Texas' long-standing *Click It or Ticket* Program. Cited among the ancillary benefits of that program - in addition to increased seat belt use - are increases in speeding and DWI citations, and even fugitive arrests. The 2009 *Click It or Ticket* Program will emphasize a Teen Safety Demonstration Project.
- *Look Learn Live*, a statewide motorcycle safety and awareness campaign developed by TxDOT, the Texas DPS and TTI to address the upward trend in motorcycling injuries and fatalities.
- Pre-filing of booster seat legislation in the Texas State Senate's upcoming 2009 legislative session.