



THE TRAFFIC SAFETY NAVIGATOR

Spring 2024

The Traffic Safety Navigator is the 2020–2024 California Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) e-newsletter. The newsletter provides SHSP updates along with insights into best practices for implementing strategies that achieve zero traffic fatalities and serious injuries on California’s roadways.

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WORKING TOWARDS THE SHSP GOAL OF ZERO FATALITIES AND SERIOUS INJURIES

Welcome to the spring edition of the Traffic Safety Navigator! This edition spotlights how various agencies and organizations — from Caltrans to regional Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and nonprofit organizations — are using the latest data and best practices to implement strategies to lead to zero traffic fatalities and serious injuries on California’s public roadways. On the national level, Caltrans Chief Safety Officer Rachel Carpenter seeks best practices for implementing the

Safe System Approach in the United States. Carpenter is a member of the multi-agency team responsible for the recent Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) report “Improving Pedestrian Safety on Urban Arterials: Learning from Australasia.” The team took a tour to Australia and New Zealand in 2022 to research these countries’ work implementing the Safe System Approach and conducted a comprehensive dissemination campaign as part of implementing the recommendations from their research. Carpenter presented on this topic at the Transportation Research Board workshop in Washington DC earlier this year, and was also the Institute of Transportation Engineers’ Spring Virtual Conference Closing Plenary presenter. During this presentation, she emphasized the importance of the Safe System Approach and how a collective effort is essential to achieving safer roads nationwide. There will be more information on these efforts from Carpenter in our next newsletter — read on to see how organizations are working towards this collective goal below.

CALTRANS SHARES FINDINGS FROM THE VULNERABLE ROAD USER SAFETY ASSESSMENT

In October of 2022, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) notified state Departments of Transportation (DOT’s) that each state would need to complete a Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment (VRUSA) by November 15, 2023. Caltrans completed the VRUSA ahead of schedule allowing a robust review process by Caltrans District staff, partner agencies, and the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA).

This first iteration of Caltrans’ VRUSA includes a comprehensive baseline analysis of fatalities and serious injuries resulting from traffic crashes that impact pedestrians and bicyclists across the state. Crashes were evaluated for characteristics and geographical location to identify trends that could be elevating the likelihood of serious injuries in the future if no corrective actions are taken. The analysis showed that pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities and serious injuries rose over 35 percent between 2011 and 2021 in California, which is at a similar rate to nationwide trends.

The VRUSA also reviewed potential safety impacts related to race, income, age, sex, and tribal areas to better understand potential inequities in fatalities and serious injuries in California. This analysis showed that racial minorities are more likely to be involved in fatal or serious injury crashes as pedestrians and that people in underserved communities are more likely to be fatally or seriously injured in traffic crashes as pedestrians or bicyclists.

Thirteen communities were identified as VRU safety improvement areas based on the rate of VRU fatalities and serious injuries relative to local pedestrian and bicycle activity, presence of geographic dispersion across the state, and proportion of minority and low-income residents. Those communities include:

- City of Fresno
- Sacramento County
- City of Stockton
- City of Visalia
- City of Watsonville
- Yuba City
- City of Bakersfield
- City of Compton
- City of Los Angeles
- City of Riverside
- City of San Bernardino
- City of South Gate
- City of Victorville

The California Highway Safety Improvement Program prioritizes safety strategies resulting in the greatest reduction of traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all California roads. This implementation includes several ongoing initiatives and identified opportunities specifically related to improving VRU safety.

As part of the VRUSA, a Safety Countermeasures Selection Matrix was created that outlines FHWA Proven Safety Countermeasures, countermeasures from the Crash Modification Factors (CMF) Clearinghouse, and countermeasures from the California Local Roadway Safety Manual (LRSM). The matrix was developed by reviewing existing Local Road Safety Plans (LRSPs), and Safe Streets for All (SS4A) guidance. The Selection Matrix also incorporates countermeasures recommended in local Vision Zero plans developed in these VRU Safety Improvement Areas.

Both the VRUSA report and a StoryMap tool that shares the underlying data behind the report are available on the Caltrans SHSP website. Learn more at dot.ca.gov/programs/safety-programs/shsp.

IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2023 TRANSPORTATION SAFETY SUMMIT AND MID-TERM EVALUATION

Over the past six months, the SHSP Team has worked in partnership with the Steering and Executive Leadership Committees on implementing the recommendations from the 2023 SHSP Mid-Term Evaluation, which assessed the progress being made towards achieving the SHSP Goal of Zero Fatalities and Serious Injuries on all public roads in California, and the May 2023 Executive-level SHSP Transportation Safety Summit. The Mid-Term Evaluation — which analyzed data, completed SHSP actions and process improvements — will help guide the 2025–2029 California SHSP.

The recommendations coming out of both the Mid-Term Evaluation and the Safety Summit point towards a need for additional partnerships and sharing of best practices of transportation safety countermeasures, as well as a desire for improvements to data collection and analysis, all of which will enhance collaborative, performance-based decision-making.

The Executive Leadership engaged in extensive discussion during its most recent meeting on March 21, 2024 about how the SHSP partner agencies can work together to strengthen partnerships with tribes, community-based organizations (CBOs), and local agencies to ensure that transportation safety initiatives are serving all people. A key point of this discussion was how innovative data sources and collection techniques can be utilized to ensure that the strategies developed most effectively target the safety issue(s). The Executive Leadership also discussed how to move the needle on addressing policy-related challenges related to funding, staffing, and resources — which are outside the purview of the SHSP — but that, if addressed, would greatly help the work of the SHSP.

Many of these recommendations have now been elevated to the appropriate partner agencies for additional follow-up. The SHSP Team is excited by the momentum gained from both the 2023 Safety Summit and the Mid-Term Evaluation, and will be moving forward on implementing many of the recommendations this year as part of the development of the 2025–2029 SHSP.

IMPACT TEEN DRIVERS' "BE THE CHANGE" PROGRAM

By Dr. Kelly Browning, Executive Director, Impact Teen Drivers

Impact Teen Drivers (ITD) is a leading traffic safety education nonprofit organization with the mission of saving lives by fighting the number one cause of serious injury and death of teens: car crashes. Impact Teen Drivers is dedicated to developing, promoting, and facilitating evidence-based education and strategies to save lives and reduce injuries and fatalities caused by reckless and distracted driving, including efforts focused on bicyclists, pedestrians, and micromobility safety. ITD aims to be a positive safe driving influence "from car seat to car keys," to change the culture of driving for current and future generations.

Dr. Kelly Browning, ITD Executive Director, recently presented information to the SHSP Executive Leadership on one of the many programs that ITD offers, "Be the Change." "Be The Change" is a fellowship for college and college-bound high school students that is part of the Impact Teen Drivers and Safe Kids Worldwide partnership initiatives. It is designed to empower Fellows to be the change and help stop reckless and distracted driving through community service projects, social media campaigns and other local activities.

ITD equips students with resources to identify and understand the prevalence of reckless and distracted driving in every community. Regardless of one's role as a driver, passenger, or pedestrian, these issues affect all individuals. However, through programs like "Be the Change," Fellows can actively contribute to the solution.

Importantly, "Be the Change" focuses its reach to include historically underserved and marginalized groups. The organization offers accessibility in both in-person and virtual formats, providing resources in English, Spanish, and several other languages. Annually, ITD engages with 500,000 teens and influencers through school presentations, community events, and training workshops. Moreover, the organization trains over 500 safe driving ambassadors each year across the United States. For more information visit impactteendrivers.org or impactteendrivers.org/bethechange.

SAFETY SPOTLIGHT: HOW METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS INFORM STATEWIDE SAFETY PLANNING EFFORTS

By Mike Gainor, Senior Regional Planner, Southern California Association of Governments

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are uniquely positioned to influence transportation safety policy at both the regional and statewide level. While all levels of government are committed to enhancing transportation safety, MPOs play a critical role in the coordination of resources across

jurisdictional boundaries to ensure a coherent and comprehensive regional safety planning and investment framework to effectively address issues that extend beyond the administrative limits of individual cities and counties. For this reason, the MPOs are indispensable partners for providing leadership and regional perspectives to inform statewide safety planning efforts, including the SHSP.

One of the primary ways by which MPOs serve to improve regional transportation safety outcomes is by supporting local planning agencies in their efforts to eliminate traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries. Development of High Injury Networks (HINs) is a key strategy used by MPOs to support local jurisdictions in addressing traffic safety issues. HINs identify roadway segments on the regional transportation network where the highest concentrations of collisions resulting in fatal or serious injuries occur. This information allows local agencies to focus safety investments in areas that are in greatest need.

MPOs also support local safety planning efforts through various community engagement and educational outreach programs. For example, the Southern California Association of Government's (SCAG's) [Go Human program](#) provides an important resource for reducing crashes, improving bicycle and pedestrian safety, and raising awareness of the importance of traffic safety through the provision of grants, local safety demonstration projects, and educational programs focused on active transportation safety. SCAG currently serves as the MPO representative on the SHSP Executive Leadership and Steering Committees.

Transportation safety should also be considered an equity issue that may most effectively be addressed at the regional scale by the MPO. In addition to the burdens endured by disadvantaged communities due to their experiencing a disproportionate share of serious traffic safety events, collisions also contribute to other regional equity issues including traffic congestion, travel time delay, air quality, and the generation of greenhouse gas emissions due to resultant traffic bottlenecks. In response, MPOs seek to integrate equity into the regional transportation safety planning process, focusing on the analysis and mitigation of disproportionate impacts on disadvantaged communities, while also identifying opportunities to improve the protection of more vulnerable roadway users such as pedestrians, bicyclists, older adults, and children.

GET INVOLVED AND SHSP RESOURCES



CHECK OUT THE SHSP CRASH DATA DASHBOARD

The California SHSP Crash Data Dashboard was developed to provide SHSP implementers with direct access to crash data to support data-driven implementation of the SHSP. The dashboard currently uses finalized crash data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) and the Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS) and allows users to customize reports by location and other characteristics, including whether a fatal or serious injury crash was within five miles of a tribal boundary. Reminder, the California SB 535 Disadvantaged Communities Dataset (2022) has been added to the Location tab within the SHSP Crash Data Dashboard. If you are unfamiliar with the Crash Data Dashboard, there is a user guide and videos in both English and Spanish.

[View Dashboard](#)



WE CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU

The SHSP is just the start. The 5 Es need to work together to implement the actions developed in the SHSP. Involvement in an SHSP Challenge Area Team is a direct way to influence countermeasures selected to improve safety. Volunteers are needed for all Challenge Areas.

Get Involved



SHARE YOUR STORIES

We want to know about your successful implementation of traffic safety countermeasures! We will highlight success stories on the SHSP website and in future newsletters.

Share Your Story



UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Training, Research and Education for Driving Safety (TREDS) Offers Free Online Courses**

For Law Enforcement: "Distraction Overload: Risk Reduction for First Responders" is a Train-the-Trainer program that addresses distracted driving challenges faced by law enforcement — [access this course here](#). TREDS also offers "Law Enforcement's Role in Older Driver Safety," a 2-hour online POST-certified course that assesses for driver disorientation and how to identify criteria for issuing DMV 427 re-exam referrals — [access this course here](#).

For Commercial Motor Vehicle Drivers: Coming soon, "Just Drive: Deliver Distraction-Free" This free 60-minute course for commercial motor vehicle drivers addresses the risks and consequences of distracted driving as well as provides strategies to reduce this behavior, focusing primarily on the use of cell phones and electronic devices. Sign up to be notified when available at [the sign-up page](#).

- **August 11–14, 2024, Traffic Records Forum, Town and Country Hotel, San Diego**

Join highway safety, public health, law enforcement and business leaders November 7–8 in Orange County for the California Traffic Safety Summit. The Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) and American Automobile Association (AAA) are teaming up to collaborate with other traffic safety

stakeholders on how to address the ongoing roadway safety crisis, and the future of traffic safety. There will be a variety of workshops and sessions focused on vulnerable road users, impaired driving, equity in traffic safety and emerging, evidence-based data tools. To register, visit the [registration page](#).

- **August 26–28, 2024 The Intelligent Transportation Society of California’s 29th Annual Conference & Exhibition, San Francisco Marriot, San Francisco**

Join the Intelligent Transportation Society of California (ITSCA) for their Annual Conference and Exhibition. ITSCA seeks to educate all sectors on the merits of technology in transportation and serve as a forum for industry-wide networking. ITSCA believes that manufacturers, service providers, technology companies, and end-users can all benefit from initiatives that drive the implementation and commercialization of technology in transportation. To register, visit the [registration page](#).

- **October 16–18, 2024, League of California Cities Annual Conference and Expo, Long Beach Convention Center, Long Beach**

Join the League of California Cities for their annual conference and expo, which will feature general sessions, workshops, and networking events. The conference attracts hundreds of leaders from all sections of city government, including mayors, council members, city managers, city clerks, city attorneys, fiscal officers, and other city staff. This year’s conference will offer educational and innovative leadership sessions across a variety of formats, with a roster of more than 100 speakers. To register, visit the [registration page](#).



SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE TOPICS?

We want to know what topics are of interest to California! Complete our simple feedback form to provide suggestions on future newsletter topics.

Submit Feedback

To stay up-to-date on SHSP news, subscribe [HERE](#).

WHAT IS THE SHSP?

The California Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) is a comprehensive, statewide transportation safety plan which provides a framework for reducing fatalities and serious injuries across all travel modes and on all public roads. Started in 2005, the SHSP is updated regularly to ensure continued progress and to meet changing safety needs. Currently, over 580 safety stakeholders from over 230 public and private agencies and organizations work together on this effort under the guidance of the SHSP Executive Leadership and SHSP Steering Committees. The SHSP addresses the 5 Es: Education, Enforcement, Engineering, Emergency Response, and Emerging Technologies. In summer 2020, state transportation leaders recognized a bolder and more focused approach was necessary to combat the rise in fatalities and serious injuries that have occurred on California roadways since 2010. Four new Guiding Principles have been incorporated into the SHSP update process to further improve safety:

- 1. Integrate Equity**
- 2. Implement a Safe System Approach**
- 3. Double Down on What Works**
- 4. Accelerate Advanced Technology**



VISION

Safe public roads across California



MISSION

Ensure safety for all modes of travel on California's public roads



GOAL

Zero Fatalities and Serious Injuries

[Learn More](#)

More Information

For more information about the California SHSP, please visit <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/safety-programs/shsp>

Questions? Comments? Email to SHSP@dot.ca.gov

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