

WASHINGTON STATE FEDERAL REAUTHORIZATION POLICY PAPER ON SAFETY

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Executive Summary:

A national vision of zero traffic fatalities, accompanied by a comprehensive, national strategic highway safety plan involving all levels of the government and the private sector, is needed to advance the nation in reducing traffic deaths.

Washington State supports the new core Safety program (HSIP) authorized in SAFETEA-LU. The HSIP emphasizes a data-driven, strategic approach to improving highway safety that focuses on results. We support increased investment in traffic safety, focusing on the priorities and strategies identified in state Strategic Highway Safety Plans (SHSP), including engineering, enforcement, education and EMS. To help meet states' performance-based safety goals, increase the flexibility provided with these funds so states can apply these resources to their most pressing safety needs as identified in their own state SHSP.

Background:

SAFETEA-LU established the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) as a new core program for FFY 2006 to 2009, with flexibility to allow states to target safety funds to their most critical safety needs. As part of this flexibility, each state was required to develop and implement a SHSP that includes all public roads in the state. The program includes set-asides for High-Risk Rural Roadways and Railway-Highway Crossing Program. The estimated HSIP funding for Washington State is \$98.3M, including \$18.5M for Railway-Highway Crossing Program.

To complement the HSIP funds that WSDOT receives, the Washington Traffic Safety Commission (Title 23 USC, section 402, 406, 408, etc) and the Washington State Patrol (motor carrier safety program) qualify for federal highway safety grants that together total about \$12 million per year. These federal funds are typically invested in programs to change behavior, primarily through education, enforcement, providing equipment and implementing new technologies.

Since adoption of the *Washington State Strategic Highway Safety Plan: Target Zero* in 2007, projects funded with these federal highway safety funds have been aligned with the priorities and proven strategies identified in *Target Zero*. **The ultimate goal of *Target Zero* is to eliminate all traffic deaths and disabling injuries on all public roads in Washington State by 2030.**

Subcommittee Recommendations:

1. **Support the establishment of a National Safety Plan and a national vision of zero transportation deaths.** Adopt an intermediate goal to cut surface transportation fatalities in half by 2025.
2. **Increase the level of funding for all safety programs commensurate with increases in the other core programs' funding in order to meet the national safety goal.** Allow State's the flexibility to invest federal safety funds in educational, engineering, enforcement, and driver behavior programs in accordance with their Safety Plans
3. **Continue the current funding level for the High Risk Rural Road and Safe Routes to School programs.**
4. **Federal highway safety incentive grants should recognize performance before rewarding process.** Under SAFETEA-LU section 406, for instance, the incentive is incorrectly placed on process (when a state passes a primary law) rather than performance (a high seat belt use rate.)
5. **Fund the modernization of the Commercial Driver Licensing Information System (CDLIS) needed to implement fully "One Driver-One Record."** Provide funding through DHS for the final phase of the information hub to allow motor vehicle agencies to implement a one-driver one-license system.
6. **Increase funding for the Section 408 data improvements program to \$100 million per year.** GAO, the U.S. DOT Inspector General and the National Surface Transportation and Revenue Policy Study Commission have all recommended federal behavioral highway safety programs become more performance-based. If Congress concurs, it must provide the resources to states to collect the data necessary to track performance.
7. **Implement a single grant application and a uniform application deadline for behavioral federal highway safety grants. Provide the states with access to all behavioral funds on October 1st of each year.** Currently, there are different application forms and application deadlines for each incentive program, and the funding is allocated at different times. Such a fragmented approach makes it difficult for states to plan their annual programs effectively.
8. **Fully fund the Highway Trust Fund to avoid a catastrophic loss of federal funding for highway safety programs.**