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Safety Sidekick Newsletter

Vol. 18
April 2020

STAY CONNECTED



As we prepare to release the Rural Safety Center's Volume 18 newsletter, we are more than a month into quarantine for the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Rural Safety Center wants to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation for ALL essential workers who are working tirelessly to keep everyone safe, healthy, and provided with necessities.

In This Issue

[Safety Center Update](#)

[Safety Center Blog](#)

[Noteworthy Practices](#)

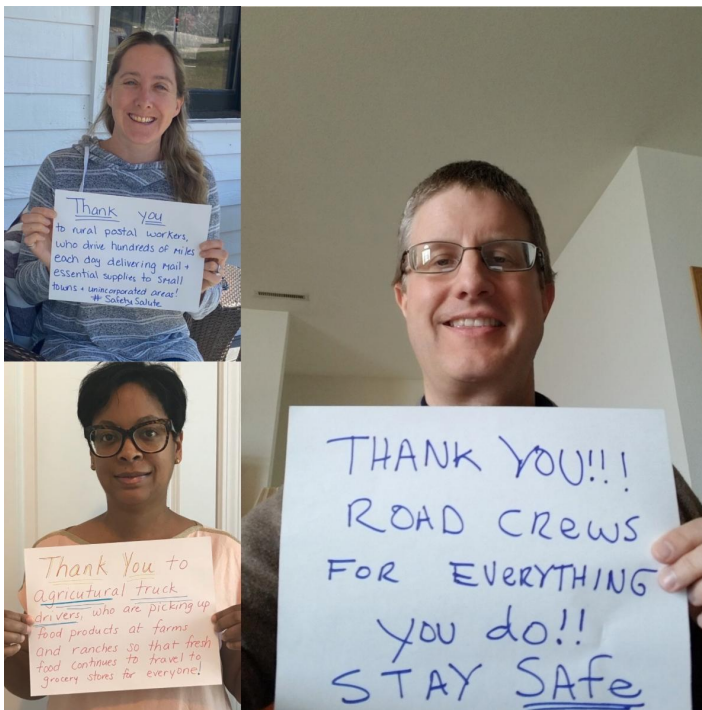
[Engineering](#)

[Road User](#)

[Road](#)

[Upcoming Trainings & Events](#)

[Hot Off the Press](#)



In order to practice social distancing and keep people safe, many agencies and organizations have had to rethink how their services are offered. To read more about what some of our transportation partners are doing, please read the article "[Coping with Continuing Services during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)." The Pandemic has also had many impacts on transportation. The article "[COVID-19 Impacts on Rural](#)

[Transportation and Safety - Challenges and Opportunities Ahead](#)" delves further into these impacts.

On a lighter note, we are also excited to highlight the Rural Safety Center's FHWA Manager Hillary Isebrands and congratulate her on being selected as a finalist for the 2020 Federal Engineer of the Year Award! You can read more about this in the article "[2020 National Society of Professional Engineers Federal Engineer of the Year Awards!](#)"

This volume of the newsletter also features a new [noteworthy practice](#) on CT LTAP and CT DOT in celebration on National Work Zone Awareness Week 2020, information about the [ROUTES](#) initiative including a MAY webinar announcement, updates on [FoRRRwD](#) including the release of a new video and a webinar series, and much more.

Stay safe.

Jaime Sullivan
Center Director
National Center for Rural Road Safety
info@ruralsafetycenter.org

Safety Center Update

2020 National Society of Professional Engineers Federal Engineer of the Year Awards!

Ten individuals were chosen as finalists for the 2020 Federal Engineer of the Year Award, honoring the best and brightest engineers employed at a federal agency. Among those top ten finalists was Hillary Isebrands, PE. Hillary is the Federal Highway Administration project manager for the National Center for Rural Road Safety. In this capacity, Hillary provides oversight and guidance for the Rural Safety Center's work plan and resources.

Hillary has served in the transportation profession for 24 years. She focuses her work on improving the design and safety of our nation's roadways by providing technical assistance, training and technology deployment of proven safety countermeasures.

She specializes in roundabouts and local and rural roadways. Hillary is currently a Senior Safety Engineer and Team Leader with the FHWA Resource Center, Safety and Design National Technical Service Team. Among her credentials, Hillary is a Professional Engineer, a National Highway Institute Certified Instructor and has her BS, MS and PhD in Civil Engineering.



Hillary is a member of the Transportation Research Board (TRB) Committee on Roundabouts, past Member of the TRB Committee on Geometric Design, and past Chair of the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Roundabout Task Force. Hillary is also a very familiar face to the local transportation community. One of her greatest contributions has been as an instructor to many of the Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) centers as a subject matter expert on roundabouts, intersections, safety data, and safety countermeasures. She has also been a valued advisor to the National Local Technical Assistance Program Association's Safety Work Group.

[Return to Top](#)

COVID-19 Impacts on Rural Transportation and Safety - Challenges and Opportunities Ahead

The National Center for Rural Road Safety is closely monitoring the rapidly changing COVID-19 situation, which has transformed the way we live and work every day. First and foremost, we hope that all of our partners and readers are staying safe and healthy. Here at the Center, we continue our work to the extent possible, with the hope of providing ongoing service and assistance to rural transportation practitioners.

To that end, we recognize that COVID-19 is having impacts throughout the transportation sector. Some are immediate; others may be more long-term. Some are expected; others are more surprising. We are interested in documenting some of these impacts, particularly those that relate to rural transportation and safety. This information may help us adapt our current programs and services, and plan for future ones.

Here are just a few examples of preliminary impacts that we are hearing about from our team and partner organizations.

Challenges:

- Access to training. Many organizations that provide training to transportation agencies and practitioners have cancelled or postponed in-person programs. Most of these organizations are expanding distance and online options; however, many rural and tribal areas have less access to high-speed/broadband internet, which may in turn limit their access to online training.
- Rural transit services. In some areas, public transit and transportation systems are reducing available service hours or routes, due to staff shortages or other limitations caused by COVID-19 restrictions. Some senior center shuttle systems have transformed their services, for example providing meal delivery to clients instead of transportation. In rural areas, where public transportation services are already typically limited, reduced access to services will likely have a disproportionately greater impact on low income and transportation-disadvantaged residents who need to travel to jobs, grocery stores, or health services.

Opportunities:

- Vehicle traffic on roads and transit ridership are both significantly lower during the current travel restrictions and shelter in place orders/recommendations. Does this present an opportunity for transportation agencies to conduct deferred maintenance or install safety upgrades with less disruption to mobility?
- More people are walking and biking, either due to the difficulty of physical distancing when using transit services or as means to increase activity levels during shelter in place restrictions. Will this lead to greater demand and support for trail development and active transportation infrastructure in rural areas?
- As more people learn to conduct portions of their jobs from home, there may be long-term reductions in commuting and business travel, potentially reducing energy consumption and carbon footprint impacts from transportation, and delaying the need to expand roadway infrastructure.

More short-term and long-term impacts of COVID-19 will come to light as the situation progresses, and during the recovery period. The Center will look for opportunities to reach out to our users to learn more about your experiences and needs. If you would like to submit feedback, please contact Jaime Sullivan at Jaime.sullivan2@montana.edu.

[Return to Top](#)

Safety Center Blog

Coping with Continuing Services during the COVID-19 Pandemic

As the spread of COVID-19 continues across the country, its effects have been felt across our transit systems and by transportation agencies around the country. Even with a general quarantine on many parts of the country, especially in the nation's busiest hubs, our transportation agencies are still helping first responders get to their jobs, performing important maintenance repairs, and helping move supplies across the country. Across all

levels of government, everyone has been pitching in to do their part to help the nation through this difficult time.

Read the Safety Center April [blog post](#) to learn more about how many transportation agencies are making sure that people across the country get the information, support, and training they need during these uncertain times.

[Return to Top](#)

Noteworthy Practices

Work Zone Safety - Connecticut LTAP and CT Department of Transportation Partner to Provide Critical Equipment and Training to Crews on High Risk Roads

When was the last time you had 98% participation in one of your agency's programs?

In Connecticut, there are 119 "rural road towns" that are eligible to participate in the FHWA's High Risk Rural Road Program. To enhance the safety of the crews that work on these roads, the T2 Center (the Local Technical Assistance Program) and the Department of Transportation developed a program to offer work zone equipment packages and corresponding training. Thanks to proactive outreach and positive feedback, 117 towns - or 98% of those eligible - took part in the program!

[Read more](#) about how Connecticut LTAP and CDOT partnered to provide critical equipment and training to crews on rural roadways.

[Return to Top](#)

Engineering

National Safety Council Postpones Distracted Driving Awareness Month

Source: National Safety Council

The National Safety Council (NSC) has postponed events so employers can focus on managing the global coronavirus pandemic.

Scheduled for April, the National Safety Council has postponed observing Distracted Driving Awareness Month. Over more than 10 years, the month of April has been designated to raise awareness of driver distraction; however, this year the NSC will push that off until a later date as a response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. We will share updated information, with the new assigned month, as soon as that becomes available.

[Return to Top](#)

Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success (ROUTES)



Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success (ROUTES) is an initiative to address disparities in rural transportation infrastructure. Specifically, rural transportation infrastructure's unique challenges need to be considered in order to meet our Nation's priority transportation goals of safety and economic competitiveness.



Source: United States Department of Transportation

Rural transportation networks are critically important for domestic production and export of agriculture, mining, and energy commodities, as well as the quality of life for all Americans. Two-thirds of rail freight originates in rural areas, and nearly half of all truck vehicle-miles-traveled (VMT) occur on rural roads. These industries require heavy trucks that create significantly more wear-and-tear on roadways. Ninety percent of posted (limited weight) bridges are in rural areas and heavy trucks cannot cross posted bridges - to find a safe bridge, heavy trucks hauling in rural areas must traverse three-times the distance as in metro areas.

The ROUTES Initiative is needed for safety.

A disproportionate number of roadway fatalities occur in rural areas. While only one-fifth of the nation's population lives in rural areas, 46% of the nation's highway fatalities occur on rural roads, 39% of all highway-rail crossing fatalities occur in rural areas, and the highway fatality rate is more than twice that in urban areas.

In fact, 44% of personal vehicle miles traveled on rural roadways are actually urban residents traveling to destinations outside their home metro areas, so rural roadway safety matters for our entire country.

To learn more about the ROUTES Initiative, please join us for the Rural Safety Center's May webinar on Wednesday, May 20. To register, click [here](#).

Shared from <https://www.transportation.gov/rural>

[Return to Top](#)

Low-Cost Safety Countermeasures: Small Changes Make a Big Difference on Rural Roads

By: Rosemarie Anderson, FHWA Office of Safety, and Jennifer McCabe, ARA- reprinted with permission from the FHWA Safety Compass Newsletter

You may think "the road less traveled" is a safer one, but of all people killed in traffic crashes in 2017, about half died from crashes on rural roads.

To combat this deadly problem, the FHWA is promoting proven, affordable solutions to agencies nationwide.

Many local transportation practitioners may feel they don't have the money, time, or technical expertise to deploy extensive safety



Paving the shoulder of a rural road gives pedestrians more room to

countermeasures on local and rural roads. When applied using a systemic approach, the cost savings can be significant.

walk along the rural roadway.
(Source: FHWA)

FHWA's proposed countermeasures, including enhanced signage, pavement markings, speed management techniques, crosswalk enhancements, sidewalks, and road diets, offer significant safety improvements for relatively low investment.

See the Big Picture

Thousands of local and Tribal agencies struggle with improving rural road safety. These unique roads widely vary-straight, winding, paved, unpaved-and may travel through any terrain, from mountains to farmland. Crashes in rural areas tend to be widely dispersed, which can delay emergency response.

In these areas, the key to evaluating where and what to invest in is to use data to prioritize locations and countermeasures that will best mitigate risk.

A systemic approach, recommended by FHWA, evaluates risk across an entire roadway system rather than only looking at specific crash locations. This takes a proactive approach to safety rather than a reactive one. This is especially valuable for rural road systems, where risk may be spread over many miles of roadway, painting a misleading picture of safety due to low crash density.

Low Cost, High Impact

Pavement markings are one of the least expensive countermeasures available to improve safety. They can help drivers stay in their lanes, stop at intersections, become aware of approaching curves or pedestrian crossings, and encourage slowing down.

"Pavement markings can be used to create lane narrowing which makes the driver feel more constrained and slow down," said Shaun Hallmark, director of Iowa State University's Institute for Transportation.

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) has demonstrated the benefit and affordability of the systemic approach of these countermeasures. SCDOT identified and targeted more than 2,000 locations across the State to receive improvements, mostly in the form of pavement markings and updated signing. The State wanted to reduce frequency and severity of crashes at stop-controlled intersections by alerting drivers to the presence and type of approaching intersection.

"In the past, our typical approach was to treat hot spot locations which may involve a new signal or a left-turn lane," said Joey Riddle, SCDOT safety program engineer. "The total cost of these projects was roughly half a million dollars. The systemic approach allowed us to treat 80 similar projects for nearly the same price as one."

Learn More

FHWA created a series of six short videos, entitled [Low-Cost Safety Improvements](#), to help practitioners incorporate road safety into their existing responsibilities. In the videos, learn about low-cost safety improvements designed to make stop-controlled intersections, curves, unpaved roads, walking, and biking safer. The videos also highlight the use of pavement markings and speed management techniques to improve safety on a small budget.

To learn more, contact Rosemarie Anderson at rosemarie.anderson@dot.gov.

[Return to Top](#)

More Rural Roadway Departure Resources Available

Move FoRRRwD --> Focus on Reducing Rural Roadway Departures

Nearly 12,000 people die every year in rural roadway departures. That's 30 people today and every day. If there were a way to save the people behind the numbers, would you use it? Rural lane departures are typically not found in "hot spots," but spread across the State and local road networks. Using systemic analysis, risk factors can assist decision makers in planning where to add proven roadway departure countermeasures.

In continued efforts to share the value of low cost safety improvements, the Federal Highway Administration has created a new [rumble strip video](#) . There is also a new storyboard on [curve signing](#) .



These two new resources are soon to be joined by a series of informational webinars as a joint effort between FHWA, the National Center for Rural Road Safety, and the National Local Technical Assistance Program.

An archived version of the first webinar " FoRRRwD on All Public Roads: Funding and Data to Identify Projects" can be found [here](#) . The next webinar " FoRRRwD on All Public Roads: Innovative Mechanisms to Deliver Safety Projects" will be held on Tuesday, May 12, 2020 (11:00 AM to 1:00 PM Mountain/1:00 PM to 3:00 PM Eastern). To register for the webinar, please visit [here](#) (using Internet Explorer).

[Return to Top](#)

Vision Zero Success Story!

The Norwegian Capital of Oslo has completely eliminated cycling and pedestrian fatalities in 2019. We are sharing in hopes that United States communities can learn from this example. Read all of the details [here](#) .

[Return to Top](#)

Road Users

Motor Vehicle Deaths Estimated to Have Dropped 2% in 2019

For the second consecutive year, the U.S. experienced a small decline in roadway deaths, according to preliminary estimates released today from the National Safety Council. In 2019, an estimated 38,800 people lost their lives to car crashes - a 2% decline from 2018 (39,404 deaths) and a 4% decline from 2017 (40,231 deaths). About 4.4 million people were injured seriously enough to require medical attention in crashes last year - also a 2% decrease over 2018 figures.

At the state level, fatalities are estimated to have dropped more than 13% since 2018 in seven states - Alaska (-16%), Connecticut (-14%), District of Columbia (-21%), Nevada (-14%), New Hampshire (-30%), South Dakota (-21%) and Vermont (-31%). Six states experienced estimated increases in fatalities by more than 5% - Delaware (20%), Maine (35%), Nebraska (8%), Ohio (8%), Tennessee (10%) and Wyoming (32%).

Research to definitively determine why fatalities have decreased for the last two years is likely to lag several years. However, the NSC preliminary estimate signals that the country may be experiencing the benefits of several risk mitigation actions implemented in the last few years. For example, 10 cities have embraced Vision Zero models, which make streets safer by taking actions that include redesigning high-crash areas to reduce crash risk. Other proven measures include lowering the legal alcohol concentration limit. Utah's implementation of a .05 legal limit has prompted other states to consider similar laws. Coalitions such as Road to Zero have raised the national dialogue.

And today, the majority of newly manufactured vehicles include advanced driver assistance systems, such as automatic emergency braking, lane departure warning systems, backup cameras and adaptive headlights, all of which are proven to reduce the severity of crashes or prevent them altogether.

"Thirty-eight thousand deaths is still unacceptable, even if it is fewer than in years past," said Lorraine M. Martin, NSC president and CEO. "We are encouraged by the actions so many organizations are taking to reduce deaths, and we applaud legislation that curtails common crash causes such as impairment, distraction and speed. But as a nation, we still

need to demonstrate better commitment to saving lives. Roadway deaths can be prevented by doubling down on what works, embracing technology advancements and creating a culture of safer driving."

Shared from <https://www.nsc.org/in-the-newsroom/motor-vehicle-deaths-estimated-to-have-dropped-2-in-2019>

[Return to Top](#)

Road

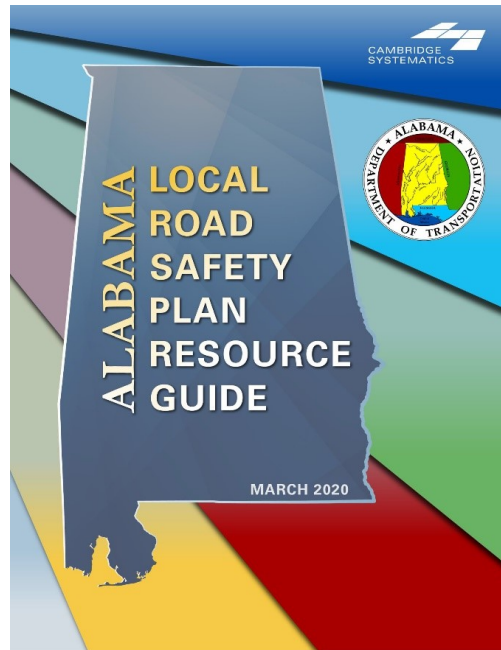
ALDOT Develops Local Road Safety Plan Guidebook for Cities and Counties

Alabama is a Toward Zero Deaths state, meaning even one fatality on the transportation network is too many. To achieve this vision, safety performance must improve on all roads and across all modes. Local road safety plans are a valuable and simple tool local governments may use to identify and document safety issues and develop a strategic framework to lower fatalities and serious injuries.

ALDOT recently completed a Local Road Safety Plan Guidebook to assist its counties and cities with safety challenges. The Guidebook lays out the steps for developing a LRSP including: Alabama-specific data sources to use, strategies to consider other plans (Long Range Transportation Plan, comprehensive plans, modal plans) in the process, data analysis techniques and resources, and stakeholder involvement strategies.

There is no one size fits all approach to developing a LRSP. Alabama's local agencies can customize their LRSP development process to meet their needs, however the guidebook identifies the minimum requirements for LRSPs submitted to qualify for HSIP funds from ALDOT.

The Guidebook includes a LRSP Process Checklist which provides a simple way for locals to organize the process and track progress through the steps. The checklist can also be used to determine how a county or city can customize the process to fit its community's needs. The Guidebook also lays out roles and responsibilities in the development process, FHWA resources on LRSPs, sample meeting agendas, tips and resources to help engage local elected officials, and a sample LRSP outline. The guidebook will be available on the ALDOT website soon.



[Return to Top](#)

Upcoming Trainings and Events

Upcoming Safety Center Trainings

May 2020

FoRRRwD on All Public Roads: Innovative Mechanisms to Deliver Safety Projects

Date: May 12, 2020

Time: 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM ET

Hosted in collaboration with FHWA EDC-5 and NLTAPA

An FHWA EDC-5 Webinar in collaboration with NLTAPA and the National Center for Rural Road Safety. Rural roadway departures make up a third of U.S. traffic fatalities-about 30

people a day. The Every Day Counts round five (EDC-5) initiative, Focus on Reducing Rural Roadway Departures (FoRRRwD), features four pillars: Addressing All Public Roads, Systemic Approach, Safety Action Plans, and Proven Countermeasures. This webinar focuses on the first pillar.

This webinar will feature:

- Steve Landry, Maine DOT, will discuss Maine DOT's use of safety supply (Curve Warning Signs, RRFBs, Speed Feedback Signs) procurement projects where state procurement procedures are used, and local public agencies or State forces perform installation at their cost.
- Mark Thomas, Mississippi DOT (MDOT), will discuss how agencies in Mississippi have used agency force account to deliver roadway departure countermeasures, and a program where MDOT provides warning and advisory signage to local governments to install.
- Patricia Burke, Montana DOT (MDT), will discuss MDT's use of Job Order Contracting to streamline the delivery of safety projects.

Click [here](#) to register. Space is limited.

ROUTES Initiative

Date: May 20, 2020

Time: 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM ET

This webinar will feature background on the ROUTES initiative and coalition, why they were created, what the coalition learned so far from their Requests for Information (RFI), and their next steps.

Click [here](#) to register.

June 2020

FoRRRwD on All Public Roads: Systemic Approach - Risk Factors for RwD

Date: June 17, 2020

Time: 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM ET

Hosted in collaboration with FHWA EDC-5 and NLTAPA

A n FHWA EDC-5 Webinar in collaboration with NLTAPA and the National Center for Rural Road Safety. More information and registration link TBA.

The Human Trafficking Tie to Transportation

Date: June TBD

Time: TBD

This webinar will provide a background on human trafficking, the human trafficking tie to transportation, and resources for training transportation staff and educating the general public. Registration link is TBA.

[Return to Top](#)

What's Hot Off the Press?

STEP Crosswalk Visibility Enhancement Outreach Video

Crosswalk Visibility Enhancements, one of the Safe Transportation for Every Pedestrian (STEP) program countermeasures, can reduce crash risk for pedestrians by using low cost improvements such as signage, markings, and overhead lighting to increase the conspicuity of pedestrians at or in the crosswalk. [Here](#) is a STEP Crosswalk Visibility Enhancements outreach video from the Federal Highway Administration.



[Return to Top](#)

FHWA Roadway Safety Fundamentals Guidebook

The FHWA Roadway Safety Fundamentals guidebook is available for download [here](#) . This guidebook explores concepts, strategies, and practices that reduce fatalities and injuries on the road.

[Return to Top](#)



High-Risk Impaired Drivers: Combating a Critical Threat

The Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) has produced High-Risk Impaired Drivers: Combating a Critical Threat , which focuses on the challenges and opportunities associated with the high-risk impaired driver - a person who lacks the restraint or self-control to resist driving impaired. The report is available [here](#) .



[Return to Top](#)

The Safety Band: Separating Myths from Facts

Curious about the Safety Band and transportation communications? The USDOT has posted The Safety Band: Separating Myths from Facts online [here](#) .

[Return to Top](#)



Interactive Highway Design Manual 2018 Release Now Available

The Interactive Highway Design Manual 2018 Release is now available! FHWA developed the IHSDM as a suite of safety analysis tools designed to evaluate the safety and operational effects of project-level geometric design decisions on highways. The IHSDM Crash Prediction Module (CPM) serves as a faithful implementation of Highway Safety Manual (HSM) Predictive Methods (Part C) for two-lane rural highways, multi-lane rural highways, urban and suburban arterials, freeways and ramps/interchanges. The complete IHSDM suite consists of six modules and is [available for download](#) at no cost. Registered IHSDM users: visit the [IHSDM Home Page](#) and use your IHSDM username and previously assigned password to access and download this new release. If you have an earlier version of IHSDM installed, a "call home" feature will remind you to update to the latest version the next time you use the software. New IHSDM users: visit the " [Download Registration](#) " page and follow the instructions.



[Return to Top](#)

Highway-Rail Crossing Handbook

The new 2019 edition of the Highway-Rail Crossing Handbook is a joint publication from FHWA and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and is available today on the Office of Safety website at www.safety.fhwa.dot.gov/hsip/xings/com_roaduser/fhwasa18040/ .

[Return to Top](#)



GHSA Report Pedestrian Traffic Fatalities by State: 2019 Preliminary Data Now Available

The Governors Highway Safety Association annual spotlight report, Pedestrian Traffic Fatalities by State: 2019 Preliminary Data is now [available](#) . The report offers a first look at state and national trends in 2019 pedestrian deaths. The report projects 6,590 pedestrians were killed on U.S. roads in 2019, the highest number in more than 30 years.



[Return to Top](#)

Recommended Practice for Traffic Signal Change and Clearance Intervals

The Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) has released Recommended Practice for Traffic Signal Change and Clearance Intervals. There is a cost for this publication. Please read more about it on the [ITE website](#) .



[Return to Top](#)

On the Safe Side: A New Podcast

The National Safety Council has produced On the Safe Side: A new podcast. This is Episode #1 of a new series. You can sign up for the NSC podcasts [here](#) .



[Return to Top](#)

Road Safety @ Rush Hour Podcast Series

The Roadway Safety Foundation has produced a series of podcasts called Road Safety @ Rush Hour. You can view and sign up for their podcasts [here](#) .



[Return to Top](#)

Contributing Authors

National Safety Council
Rosemarie Anderson, FHWA Office of Safety,
Jennifer McCabe, ARA
Danena Gaines, Cambridge Systematics
Janet Leli, Rutgers' Center for Advanced Infrastructure and Transportation
Omid Sarmid, Rutgers' Center for Advanced Infrastructure and Transportation
Carla Little, Western Transportation Institute
Jaime Sullivan, Western Transportation Institute
Karalyn Clouser, Western Transportation Institute

