Enhancing Safety Through Cooperation – Lessons from the Rural West

Jim Lynch, Director

Montana Department of Transportation
Montanans take more long trips than the national average. ...These trips are often on two lane highways at high speeds.
Percent Rural VMT

Top 6 States for Rural Travel Characteristics (% of all VMT):

- MT – 77%
- VT – 76%
- SD – 75%
- ND – 74%
- WY – 73%
- ME – 72%
Mileage Comparison-Distance to Trauma Centers

Albany to Boston: 163 miles
Roundtrip Sand Springs to Circle: 194 miles
Why Rural vs. Urban Travel Makes a Difference

- MT – most rural travel in U.S. at 77%
- Higher Speeds
- Time to emergency services avg: 1 hour
- State Patrol = 200 officers
- Area = 145,500 sq. mi.
- Less funding
  Fatality Rate = 2.3

- MA – least rural travel in U.S. at 8%
- Lower Speeds
- Time to emergency services avg: 15 min
- State Patrol = 2,500 officers
- Area = 7,840 sq. mi.
- More funding
  Fatality Rate = .8
Speed-Related Fatalities
Rocky Mountain Region – 2004 FARS Data

[Bar chart showing the percentage of speed-related fatalities across different states in the Rocky Mountain region.]

- ND: 23.0%
- UT: 31.0%
- US: 31.0%
- SD: 36.0%
- RMR: 37.0%
- CO: 39.0%
- WY: 39.0%
- MT: 44.0%
Percentage of Belted Fatalities by State, 2004

- CO: 42.3% State Rate, 42.3% Nat’l Rate
- MT: 26.9% State Rate, 26.9% Nat’l Rate
- ND: 28.0% State Rate, 28.0% Nat’l Rate
- SD: 27.1% State Rate, 27.1% Nat’l Rate
- UT: 39.0% State Rate, 39.0% Nat’l Rate
- WY: 37.7% State Rate, 37.7% Nat’l Rate

Average: 41.50%
IMPAIRED DRIVING
Native American Representation

[Bar graph showing Native American representation compared to the population across different states.]

States and Their Representations:
- CO: 3.0% A-R Fats, 1.0% Population
- MT: 6.2% A-R Fats, 2.3% Population
- ND: 4.9% A-R Fats, 0.0% Population
- SD: 8.3% A-R Fats, 5.0% Population
- UT: 1.3% A-R Fats, 2.3% Population
- WY: 5.0% A-R Fats, 1.0% Population
MT vs. US Highway Fatality Statistics

Fatality Rate (per 100M VMT)
U.S. Avg: 1.44  MT: 2.04  Best in U.S: .87

Alcohol Related
U.S. Avg: 39%  MT: 46%  Best in U.S: 24%

Safety Belts (MT Usage rate: 81.3%)
U.S. Avg: 41.3%  MT: 28%  Best in U.S: 59.3%
Montana Comprehensive Highway Safety -- Plan Process Flow

↓ Gather and define a mission -- OUTREACH
↓ Seek to understand the Problem -- DATA
↓ Define Goals and Strategic Objectives
↓ Discovery and Alignment of efforts
↓ Fill the gaps
↓ Find the champions
↓ Continue the journey
MDT’s CHSP:
Participation of the Passionate

MDT offices: Director’s Office, Motor Carriers, Engineering, NHTSA Programs Office, Planning

Non-MDT: Office of Public Instruction, Highway Patrol, Human Services, Ofc of Court Administration, FHWA, MCSAP, Safety Groups, Emergency Responders, Indian Health Service, MPOs, local law enforcement, AAA, Motor Carriers Assoc., Governor’s Ofc., NHTSA, BIA, Legislators, DUI Task Force


Participation at Each Meeting Ranges from 45 – 50
Most Important CHSP Objectives

- Reduce alcohol related fatalities
- Reduce Native American fatalities
- Increase seat belt use
- Decrease run-off-the-road crashes
- Reduce crashes on High Crash Corridors
- + 8 other objectives

PROGRESS ON ALL OBJECTIVES NEEDS INTER-AGENCY-CROSS JURISDICTIONAL COOPERATION
Solutions Must Be:

- Multi-Agency
- Multi-Jurisdictional
Cooperative Safety Efforts:

1. COMMUNITY SAFETY FORUMS
Montana High Crash Corridors

- Interstate Highways
- US Highways
- Montana Highways

Current as of July 2007
Subject to Further Revision.
US 191 From Big Sky Spur to Four Corners

Day of Week Crash Comparison
2002 - 2006

- Big Sky Spur - Four Corners
- State Rural Average

SATURDAY
SUNDAY
MONDAY
TUESDAY
WEDNESDAY
THURSDAY
FRIDAY
The rate of traffic increase is much greater for cars than for trucks.
Cooperative Safety Efforts:

2. Partnership With Montana Highway Patrol
MHP Roving Patrols

- MHP will field 1 Sergeant and 5 Troopers early 2008.
- Mission: Enforce for DUI and Speed
- Deployment: Concentrated on High Crash Corridors or High Incidence of DUI
- Speed violations will trigger for seat belt enforcement
- MDT Initial Commitment: 2 years funding
- Funding Commitment: $500,000 annually
- Long Term: May continue if effective
Mobile DUI Processing Trailer

- Goal: Deter DUI by Going on Site of Events
- Troopers do not have to leave event to process
- Presence of trailer is itself a deterrent
- MDT Grant: $250,000

Events: Miller Lite Hill Climb, Clinton Testicle Festival, Butte Rockin’ the Rivers, Eureka Bull Rodeo, Plains Fair, Football Games
Presence of DUI Processing Van at Events Deters DUI
Cooperative Safety Efforts:

3. Coalition for a Montana Primary Seat Belt Law
FATALITIES NOT WEARING SEATBELTS - 2001 through 2006

Map Legend
- FATALITY NOT WEARING SEATBELT

System Designations:
- U.S. Highways
- U.S. Access Roads
- Interstate
- Primary
- Secondary
- Other

74% OF OCCUPANT FATALITIES WERE NOT WEARING SEATBELTS
940 OF 1278 DEATHS

Prepared by the Department of Transportation
Road Inventory and Mapping Section
Closed February 2007 A.G.E.I. A.A.P. E.S.G. INC.
Map 1425 State Farm Mall Rd. #102

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Montana Making Progress on Enacting Primary Seatbelt Law

• 2003 Session – Never Out of the Senate
• 2005 Session – Passed Senate, Lost by 56 Votes in House
• 2007 Session – Passed Senate, Lost by 6 Votes in House
Postcard Campaign

Leading up to January 2007 Legislature

September:  Focus on Brain Injuries

October:   Focus on Cost to Society

November:  Focus on Public Perception

December:  Focus on Loss of Loved Ones
Coalition for a Primary Seat Belt Law

PRIVATE SECTOR CHAIR – AAA MT

• AAA, MT Hospital Assoc, MT Motor Carriers, Major Insurers, Major Hospitals and Clinics, Legislators, Highway Patrol, Educators, MDT, Indian Health Services

State Government Cannot Accomplish Major Policy Change Alone
Cooperative Safety Efforts:

4. Highway Traffic Records Strategic Plan
Highway Traffic Records Strategic Plan

• Goal: Improve Highway Traffic Records Quality and Increase Access to Information

• Interagency Members:
  - Department of Justice
  - MDT
  - Department of Health and Human Services
  - Department of Administration
  - Office of Court Administrator
  - Future: Local Law Enforcement, Local Judiciary
Emerging Trends

• Motorcycle Injuries and Fatalities
  - +31.6% increase in fatality crashes in 5 years
  - +35.1% of injury crashes in 5 years
  - Who are the Partners on this issue?

• Growing Volumes and Speeds on Local Roads in Suburban Fringe Areas
  - Community Awareness Needed

• Growth in older driver population
  - AARP is a willing partner
Progress but No Silver Bullet

• Alcohol Related Fatalities Down
• Injuries for 0-14 year olds down 25% since 2000 – more children being restrained
• Severe Injury Rate Level to Possible Decline
• Alcohol Involved Fatalities on Blackfeet Reservation Down