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## MEMORANDUM

TO: Nevada County Transportation Commission

FROM: Daniel B. Landon, Executive Director 

SUBJECT: Executive Director's Report for the March 2020 Meeting

DATE: March 18, 2020

### ZERO TRAFFIC FATALITIES TASK FORCE

AB 2363 (Friedman – Statutes of 2018) added Chapter 8 to Division 2 of the California Vehicle Code, requiring the Secretary of Transportation to establish and convene the Zero Traffic Fatalities Task Force, on or before July 1, 2019. In addition, AB 2363 required the Secretary of Transportation to prepare and submit a report of findings based on the efforts of this task force by January 1, 2020.

I had the opportunity to represent NCTC and the Rural Counties Task Force on the Zero Traffic Fatalities Task Force. The Task Force had membership of 25 people representing rural and urban; southern, central, and northern California; advocacy groups, and engineering and traffic safety specialists.

The report prepared by the Task Force includes a detailed analysis of the following topics:

1. The existing process for establishing speed limits, including a detailed discussion on where speed limits are allowed to deviate from the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile.
2. Existing policies on how to reduce speeds on local streets and roads.
3. A recommendation as to whether an alternative to the use of the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile as a method for determining speed limits should be considered, and if so, what alternatives should be studied.
4. Engineering recommendations on how to increase vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle safety.
5. Additional steps that can be taken to eliminate vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle fatalities on the road.
6. Existing reports and analyses on calculating the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile at the local, state, national, and international levels.
7. Usage of the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile in urban and rural settings.
8. How local bicycle and pedestrian plans affect the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile.

The report presents 27 recommendations for policy consideration in the following categories:

- Establishing Speed Limits – 13
- Engineering – 9
- Enforcement – 4
- Education – 1

Some of the recommendations that are likely to be of high interest to rural counties are shown below:

**CS-1** Develop and implement a new roadway-based context sensitive approach to establish speed limits that prioritizes the safety of all road users. This approach should be based on how a street is used and by whom, how protected non-motorized users are from vehicles, how likely it is that there will be a conflict between vehicles and other street users, and how likely it is that a collision will result in a fatal or serious injury.

Possible implementation steps may include convening an expert advisory group in 2020 to evaluate national and international data-driven approaches to establishing speed limits; examine evidence-based research; and solicit public input and comment.

Note: This is a long-term recommendation. In contrast, the recommendations regarding changes to the speed-limit-setting process are short-term.

**CS-3** Revise traffic survey procedures to specifically require consideration be given to bicyclist and pedestrian safety and develop guidance to describe how to consider bicyclist and pedestrian safety in a traffic survey.

**CS-5** Increase the reduction allowance for posted speed limits to allow greater deviations from the 85th percentile speed. Currently, the posted speed may only be reduced by 5 mph from the nearest 5 mph increment of the 85th percentile speed. Classes of locations where the posted speed may be reduced further should include:

- High Injury Networks (HIN). Steps to implement include developing a statewide definition of a HIN. Possible criteria may include:
  - A minimum of three years of the most current crash data
  - Weighting of fatal and serious injury crashes
  - Weighting of crashes that occurred in disadvantaged communities

The resultant HIN should: identify specific locations with high crash concentrations; identify corridor-level segments with a pattern of crash reoccurrence; and be able to be stratified by mode.

- Areas adjacent to land uses and types of roadways that have high concentrations of vulnerable road users. Steps to implement include defining vulnerable populations (e.g., pedestrians, bicyclists, scooter users, transit users, seniors, children) and developing criteria to identify eligible streets (e.g., streets close to transit centers, homeless shelters, urban parks/playgrounds, and healthcare facilities as well as types of streets like bicycle boulevards and neighborhood greenways).

**CS-9** Allow for a traffic survey to retain the existing speed limit (or revert to one determined in a prior traffic survey) unless a registered engineer determines that significant design changes have been made to the roadway since completion of the last traffic survey with the specific intent of increasing the safe operating speed.

Currently, if a speed survey shows that vehicle operating speeds have increased, agencies must raise the posted speed limit even if the roadway design has not changed, contributing to speed creep over time.

The full report can be viewed at:

<https://calsta.ca.gov/subject-areas/enforcement-and-safety/zero-traffic-fatalities>

Assemblymember Friedman, the author of AB 2363, was quoted in StreetsBlog, a web-based magazine, "Hopefully this report will finally give the legislature an incentive to change the way we set speed limits going forward." She is in discussion with staff and other legislators on upcoming legislation. "We're still going through the report, but we will be introducing bills soon." She indicated that legislators have to decide which issues to tackle first, and whether to put them together in a single bill or spread them out.

### **SR 49 CORRIDOR PLAN AND ROADSIDE SAFETY AUDIT**

Caltrans District 3, in cooperation with NCTC and Placer County Transportation Planning Agency (PCTPA), has launched a coordinated effort to identify and seek funding for improvements in the SR 49 corridor between Auburn and Grass Valley. Information developed during this coordinated effort will be disseminated through a Highway 49 Roadside Safety Audit Communication Plan (see attached). In addition to the participants identified in the Highway 49 Roadside Safety Audit Communication Plan, NCTC has reached out to state and federal legislators.

The first phase of this effort was the completion of a "Roadside Safety Audit" during the week of February 16th through the 22nd. Road Safety Audits/Assessments (RSAs) are a valuable tool used to evaluate road safety issues and to identify opportunities for improvement. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) defines an RSA as a "formal safety performance evaluation of an existing or future road or intersection by an independent, multidisciplinary team."

Members of the SR 49 Roadside Safety Audit team included Caltrans Maintenance, Traffic Operations and Safety staff, representatives of California Highway Patrol, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), NCTC, PCTPA, and representatives of Fehr and Peers, a transportation planning consulting firm. The audit team reviewed accident data (see attached) and observed conditions throughout the corridor from Auburn to Grass Valley. Following the observation of operating conditions, the audit team identified problems/issues, potential safety treatments, and a long-term vision for the facility. The corridor was divided into four segments: 1) I-80 to Dry Creek Road, 2) Dry Creek Road to Wolf Road/Combie Road, 3) Wolf Road/Combie Road to La Barr Meadows Road, 4) La Barr Meadows Road to McKnight Way.

The information compiled by the safety audit team will be released in a draft report during April 2020. Following review and comment on the draft report, a final report will be prepared during May 2020. The report will identify Near-Term (0-2 years) and Mid-Term (2-10 years) improvements for the corridor.

Following completion of the roadside safety audit report, the SR 49 Corridor System Management Plan (CSMP) will be updated and expanded to encompass both Nevada and Placer counties. Caltrans will begin work on the update in June 2020, and it is expected that the document would be completed by January 2021.

NCTC staff have scheduled a meeting of the SR 49 Stakeholders Committee on March 25<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m. in the Grass Valley CHP classroom to update the committee members about this Roadside Safety Audit.

# Communication Plan

## Highway 49 Roadside Safety Audit



Placer County  
Transportation  
Planning Agency



Dan  
Landon



Technical  
Leadership

Mike  
Woodman



Executive  
Leadership

Dan  
Landon



Political  
Leadership

Ed  
Scofield  
Dan  
Miller



Public  
Stakeholder  
Engagement

Kena  
Sannar



# HIGHWAY 49 FATAL COLLISIONS

## 2015-2019



ACCIDENT TYPE	NUMBER
CROSS CENTERLINE/HEAD-ON	26
SIDE SWIPE	85
REAR END	260
OVERTURN	19
BROADSIDE	94
PEDESTRIAN	3
HIT OBJECT	101
OTHER	51
<b>TOTAL (2015 - 2019)</b>	<b>639</b>

