Speed, Speeding & Safety in Rural Areas

Jaime Sullivan, Director
NCSL “Safer Streets, Safer States”
Pre-conference 2022
Key Takeaways for Today

- Introduction to the National Center for Rural Road Safety
- Relationship between speed and safety
- Impact of speed
- Compare speeding statistics in urban vs rural
- Factors that influence rural speeding
- Strategies like Safe System Approach and Vision Zero
- List successful interventions in rural areas
- Opportunities for legislative impact
National Center for Rural Road Safety

- FHWA Center of Excellence
- Established in Dec. 2014
- Next Generation Center
  - New operations started Feb. 1, 2022
  - Updated management team
  - (Some) new partners
What We Do

▪ All rural road safety, all the time
▪ Focus on local practitioners
▪ Rural road safety resources and tech assistance
▪ Multi-disciplinary training
▪ National connections
Center Resources

- Webinars
- Socials
- Safety Sidekick
- Newsroom
- Training E-blasts
- Rural Safety Summits
- Annual Rural Road Safety Awareness Week

@ruralroadssafety
www.ruralsafetycenter.org
Relationship Between Speed & Safety

“without speed there can be no movement, but with speed comes kinetic energy and with kinetic energy and human error come crashes, injuries, and even deaths.”

Graphic Source: FHWA
Quote Source: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
Relationship of Speed to Likelihood of Survival

Closure Collision Time and Speed

55 MPH 400 feet 7 sec.

15 mph

55 MPH 400 feet 5.7 sec.

7 mph
Safe System Approach

- Different way to think about road safety problem
- Holistic approach
- Aims to eliminate fatal and serious injuries for all road users
- Accommodates human mistakes
- Keeps impacts on the human body at tolerable levels
Safe Speed Element

- Not about universally reducing speeds
- Designing to meet user expectancies
  - Self-explaining roads
  - Self-enforcing roads
- Matching speed appropriate to the road conditions that exist
  - Vulnerable road users
  - Curves
  - Tourist areas
  - Weather

Some roads are engineered to accommodate higher speeds …

… and others not.
When a High Speed Road Becomes Main Street

August 24, 2022

Photos courtesy of Jon Kaplan, Vtrans and FHWA
Impact of Speeding on Safety

11,258 people died in speeding related crashes in 2020

~31 people per day

~1 person during discussion on speeding

Data Source: NHTSA 2022
Consequences of Speeding

- Greater potential for loss of vehicle control
- Reduce a driver’s ability to negotiate curves or maneuver around obstacles in the roadway
- Increase distance traveled before a vehicle can stop
- Increase the risk of crashes and injuries because other vehicles and pedestrians may not be able to judge distance correctly
- Reduced effectiveness of occupant protection equipment
- Increase degree of crash severity
Rural Experience Imposes Unique Challenges

- Road Infrastructure
- Vehicle Mix
- Vulnerable Road Users
- Tourism
- Lack of lighting
- Rural Culture
- Resources and Funding
- Data
- Communication and Power Infrastructure
- Geographical Jurisdictions
Speed Management Program

- Defining the relationship between speed, speeding, and safety.
- Applying road design and engineering measures to obtain appropriate speeds.
- Setting speed limits that are safe and reasonable.
- Applying enforcement efforts and appropriate technology that effectively target crash-producing speeders and deter speeding.
- Effectively marketing communication and educational messages that focus on high-risk drivers.
- Soliciting the cooperation, support, and leadership of traffic safety stakeholders.

Source: NHTSA

https://www.ite.org/pub/?id=BCD0260A-BF52-D7D0-44BD-1C3CBE531AE8
Safe Speed Road Design & Engineering Examples

https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/

Photo Sources: Jaime Sullivan, WTI (top) and FHWA (bottom) and graphic source: FHWA

August 24, 2022 | 16
Opportunities to Make an Impact

- Review your State’s Policies
  - Vision Zero
  - Safe System Approach
  - Complete Streets
  - Adoption of Safety Action Plans
  - Local speed limit setting
  - Speed cameras

- Understand Challenge of Match

- Support National Initiatives
  - High Visibility Enforcement
  - NHTSA campaign

Thank you!

Questions?

Jaime Sullivan, Director
jaime@ruralsafetycenter.org