

## **FY19 Pedestrian Safety Coalition Meeting #1 - Minutes**

**December 6, 2018 - 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

### Welcome

Mike Manser of Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) welcomed attendees to the first meeting of the FY19 Statewide Pedestrian Safety Coalition.

### Update on 2019 Statewide Pedestrian Safety Forum

Ben Ettelman reviewed the planning committee's activities so far. Potential dates for the Forum currently include April 25, May 2, June 20, and June 27. TTI will work with TxDOT during the next couple of weeks to narrow down these dates; June 20 is the frontrunner at the moment. The Forum will be held in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

Based on last year's Forum feedback, the 2019 Forum will include more interactivity and more opportunities for networking. Stakeholder updates were well received and will be continued and potentially expanded in 2019. Potential activities will also include lightning-round presentations and round table discussions. Topics will be pulled from diverse disciplines including public health and enforcement in addition to engineering and planning; one topic that has also been raised is the implications of environmental justice/equity on pedestrian safety. The committee is looking at the potential for FHWA to hold a STEP workshop on the day before the Forum.

Suggested Topics:

- Jay Crossley mentioned a half-day workshop on speed management that was offered as part of a Vision Zero conference; the workshop presenters may be able to come to the Pedestrian Safety Forum.

### Award Committee Discussion

Based on feedback from the Forum members, TTI will start to develop award topics, criteria, and the nomination process and will present these ideas at the next Coalition meeting in March. We will need 2-3 volunteers to serve on an Award Committee.

### Survey Results

Ben Ettelman presented results from the survey of Pedestrian Safety Coalition members.

Future Coalition activities requested by survey respondents included:

- Identify barriers that cities in Texas face to improving pedestrian safety
- Street safety audits
- Outreach and education for drivers of fleet vehicles
- Need better outreach and education for safe pedestrian practices
- Updates on new research in the field of pedestrian safety
- Updates on implemented safety projects with "before" and "after" stories.

Requested presenter topics for future Coalition meetings:

- Presentations on design and the built environment, such as ped-friendly highway design, traffic signalization and lighting strategies, transit access
- Law enforcement perspective on pedestrian safety
- City of Austin sidewalk program
- Examples of how cities and TxDOT are working together to build safe pedestrian facilities
- Safe Routes to School implementation and impact.
- State-level policy perspective: funding, legislative action and other items that impact pedestrian safety.

## Stakeholder Updates

**Dan Brooks, City of Austin** – Austin Strategic Mobility Plan (ASMP) is the update to the city’s transportation plan; this is updating a plan that was developed in 1995. We’ve tried to make this a comprehensive plan that covers all aspects of transportation. One of the subtopics focuses is on the culture of transportation safety, including distraction, impairment, highway speed, and other non-engineering factors that affect the safety of transportation users. There is also a focus on the sidewalk system to improve connectivity of the city’s sidewalks. The plan website (<http://Austintx.gov/asmp>) includes a number of maps identifying high-injury areas, to help prioritize safety improvements; there is a feedback mechanism for people to suggest projects and improvements. The maps are currently in English only, but will soon be translated to Spanish as well.

**Rubi Mares, Teens in the Driver Seat, TTI** – a new TxDOT grant is beginning, involving outreach and education in junior highs and high schools, with students helping to do local pedestrian observations, including observations of distracted walking.

**Jay Crossley, Vision Zero, Texas** – Reviewed the annual vigil held as part of the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims, and summarized Austin Vision Zero’s legislative agenda for this year, which includes the following:

- Safe neighborhood streets bill; allow cities to apply safer speed limits in residential areas.
- Hands-free device ban while driving
- Change Texas from a “yield to pedestrian” state to a “stop for pedestrian” state. A similar law was recently enacted in Illinois
- Vision Zero bill – asking TxDOT to develop a plan for reducing traffic deaths, over and above the Strategic Highway Safety Plan.

**Srinivas Geedipally, TTI** – TxDOT Safety Grant project improving pedestrian safety at transit stops. Last year’s project analyzing mid-block pedestrian crashes found that many of these were near bus stops. This year a pilot project in Houston will collect data on pedestrian risk factors at 50 bus stops with high crash frequencies and develop outreach material on pedestrian safety around transit stops for distribution to bus passengers.

Clint McManus from H-GAC asked if the stops selection process will also consider boarding/alighting data.

**Clint McManus, H-GAC** –

- In the middle of updating active transportation plan for the region
- Received a record number of active transportation projects; looking for more funding for this group of projects
- Grant from FHWA to conduct a pilot study to calculate performance measures related to connectivity of walkway/bikeway networks in Sugarland and in Houston around one of the METRO transit centers.

## Intersection of Pedestrian Safety and Public Health

Mandy Fultz, [Safe Kids San Antonio](#) and Carlee McConnell, [Safe Kids Austin](#)

Safe Kids is a nonprofit organization working to help keep kids safe from unintentional injuries. Each coalition is led by a lead agency and includes a variety of community partners.

In San Antonio, pedestrian crashes are among the top five reasons that kids and adults come to emergency and trauma centers. Safe Kids presents to kids about ways to stay safe on and near roadways. International Walk to School Day in October targets schools that have high numbers of pedestrian crashes. Presentations are targeted to the different ages of students.

Barriers and challenges for these efforts include the following:

- Finding the best ways to get into schools to provide pedestrian safety education; dealing with the need to align pedestrian safety messages with the TEKS requirements.
- Manpower – need to find a way to multiply capacity/available staff, collaborate and converge messages from multiple potential partners to get similar messages into schools.
- High refugee population in the area means that there are language barriers to overcome.
- Need to support education efforts and behavioral changes with improvements to infrastructure and policy. Always looking for ways for Safe Kids to collaborate with other stakeholders to promote these other elements.

Safe Kids Austin is led by Dell Children’s Medical Center. Activities include educating kids and parents on safe pedestrian behaviors, raising awareness on pedestrian safety. The group produces a weekly news segment on pedestrian safety, participates in advocacy including Vision Zero ATX, and works to increase local collaboration on pedestrian and bike safety issues.

Amber Trueblood, [Texas A&M Transportation Institute](#)

Public health is the science of protecting and improving the health of people in a community. In transportation, there are several categories of public-health interest:

- Safety and crash prevention
- Environmental exposure/emissions
- Built environment/walkability
- Policy

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death, and disproportionately affect vulnerable road users including pedestrians and bicyclists. Most of these deaths are preventable, and vulnerable road users include a majority of our population. Top five states for pedestrian fatalities include California, Florida, Texas, New York, and Arizona. These five states account for 43% of pedestrian fatalities in the U.S.

Of the top ten counties for pedestrian fatalities in U.S., three are in Texas: Harris, Bexar, and Dallas.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) identified factors for pedestrian crashes including age (people over 65 and younger than 15 are most vulnerable), alcohol impairment (involved in 50% of pedestrian fatalities, with a majority of those involving an impaired pedestrian), and location/environmental factors (high speed roads, urban locations, midblock locations, and nighttime conditions).

CDC recommendations to improve pedestrian safety include the following:

- Increase visibility/conspicuity of pedestrians with bright clothing, reflective elements
- Cross at designated crosswalks
- Design intersections that are elder-friendly
- Change behaviors

Amber is leading a TxDOT-funded project looking at road users' awareness of and compliance with laws pertaining to pedestrians and bicycles. Joel Meyer, CoA commented that a similar project is underway in Austin; he will contact Amber to see how the two projects might line up.

Myung Ko at TTI is leading the second year of a ped/bike project providing safety outreach lessons to elementary school students. The team includes safety and policy experts, as well as a teacher who has developed a curriculum to tie the safety lessons to the TEKS.

Comments from meeting attendees included the following:

- Joel Meyer, City of Austin- need to encourage good pedestrian behaviors with good built environment designs.
- Kay Fitzpatrick, TTI – need to look at sidewalks as part of city policy; are all new developments going to be built with sidewalks, and are sidewalks going to follow the roadway alignments?

## Questions and discussion

Ben Ettelman led a short discussion starting with the question: Do we, as pedestrian safety stakeholders, need to re-focus and prioritize the many perspectives on pedestrian safety to more effectively address the problem? Comments and suggestions included the following:

- It is hard to change ingrained behaviors; may need to focus more efforts on land uses, design with people in mind first.
- Where does the education/outreach effort fit in?
  - Design is critical but can't redesign everything quickly or at once.
  - Outreach toward motorists, particularly younger motorists, to remind them of how they need to behave to protect vulnerable road users.
  - Think about how seatbelt use came about – first seatbelts became a standard part of vehicle equipment, then laws enforced their use, then the behavior changed (to wear seatbelts).
  - Look at smoking campaigns; public health outreach made a difference in the social acceptability of smoking.

- Targeted education efforts, such as bicycle-safety training courses, encourage safe behaviors, but can also encourage increased use of the bicycle as a mode of transportation.
- Currently there is only one page on pedestrian safety and 1.5 pages on bicycle safety in the 90-page driver education manual. These could be expanded, with a paradigm shift to focus more attention on the safety of vulnerable road users.

Mike Manser mentioned that TxDOT has released the Request for Proposals for FY20 402 grant projects, which includes a section for bicycle and pedestrian-focused projects.

The next meeting of the Pedestrian Safety Coalition will be March 7, 2019 and likely will be held in the Houston area. We will be looking for speakers to address the role of media in pedestrian and transportation safety.

*The meeting adjourned at noon.*