

DATE: April 6, 2006

TO: Regional Transportation Commission and Interagency Technical Advisory  
Committee

FROM: Grace Blakeslee, Transportation Planner

RE: California Strategic Highway Safety Plan

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

This item is for information purposes only.

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## **BACKGROUND**

The Federal Transportation Act, SAFETEA-LU, establishes a new core Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) that is structured and funded to make significant progress in reducing transportation-related fatalities. In California, the program aims to increase safety on roadways by almost doubling the funds for infrastructure safety and requiring strategic highway safety planning that is focused on results. Other HSIP programs target specific areas of concern, such as work zones, older drivers, and pedestrians, including children walking to school.

By October 1, 2007, each State must have a Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) ([Attachment 1](#)) that identifies and analyzes safety problems and opportunities in order to use HSIP funds for new eligible activities. The SHSP will include projects or strategies to address these issues and evaluate the accuracy of data and the priority of proposed improvements. The SHSP must be based on accurate and timely safety data, consultation with safety stakeholders, and performance-based goals that address infrastructure and behavioral safety problems on all public roads. States are also required to develop an evaluation process to assess results and use the information to set priorities for highway safety improvements.

## **DISCUSSION**

Caltrans hosted two State Highway Safety Plan Summits in March 2006. The SHSP Summits provided a summary of California Statewide Safety Facts, Infrastructure Challenges and the approach to the SHSP development. RTC staff attended the March 7, 2006 session in Sacramento to learn more about the highway safety issues addressed in California's SHSP and provide input on the development of the SHSP. Ten sessions, each focused on a SHSP emphasis area, were conducted at the summit. The session topics addressed approximately half of the SHSP's twenty-two safety emphasis areas ([Attachment 2](#)). During the sessions attendees were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the SHSP proposed strategies associated with each emphasis area.

Unlike several statewide congestion relief programs which tend to favor the needs of large counties, some of the safety issues addressed by the SHSP show consideration for small and medium county needs. For example, the transportation safety concerns on local two lane county and rural highway roads are two of the program's focuses.

However, small and medium sized counties will need to score competitively at the statewide level using the SHSP adopted statewide performance measures. Scoring competitively on the statewide level may present a challenge for small and medium sized counties depending on the specific performance measures adopted in the SHSP. In many cases, small and medium sized communities do not have the resources available to collect, monitor and model transportation data to produce quantified and continuous safety information.

RTC staff will work with Caltrans, the CHP, local jurisdictions, SHSP stakeholders and the RTC's Interagency Technical Advisory Committee and Safe on 17 Committee, to support reasonable data requirements for small and medium sized counties and to identify if new monitoring systems need to be considered.

The draft California SHSP is available for comment through April 2006. The document is available at <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/survey/SHSP/DRAFT-SHSP.htm>.

## **SUMMARY**

SAFETEA-LU establishes the Highway Safety Improvement Program to reduce transportation related fatalities. Every State must adopt a Strategic Highway Safety Plan to be eligible for federal Highway Safety Improvement Program funding. Caltrans released the draft California Highway Safety Improvement Program in March 2006. Caltrans and the Strategic Highway Safety Plan Steering Committee is receiving comments on the draft document through April 2006. Staff will work with Caltrans and other local committees to ensure that data collection requirements are not too onerous for small and medium sized communities like Santa Cruz County.

### Attachments:

1. Strategic Highway Safety Plan Summary
2. AASHTO Safety Emphasis Areas