

New Orleans Regional Transportation Safety Coalition

quarterly newsletter

May 2015



Be safe while driving through work zones:

- Stay alert and give full attention to the roadway
- Pay close attention to signs and work zone flaggers
- Obey posted speed limits
- Avoid tailgating
- Don't drink and drive
- Wear your seatbelt
- Put down your cell phone

New Orleans Regional Transportation Coalition Co-coordinator Tricia Keffer, at podium, speaks at a press conference held at the Regional Transportation Management Center about the importance of drivers watching out for vulnerable users, including people working in work zones. Also pictured, from left, are Interim LSU Level 1 Trauma Center Program Coordinator Bridget Gardner; Louisiana State Police Troop B Captain Donovan Archote; and DOTD District 02 Administrator Chris Morvant.

Eight people were killed in Louisiana work zones in 2013.

Expect the Unexpected: Promoting Work Zone Safety

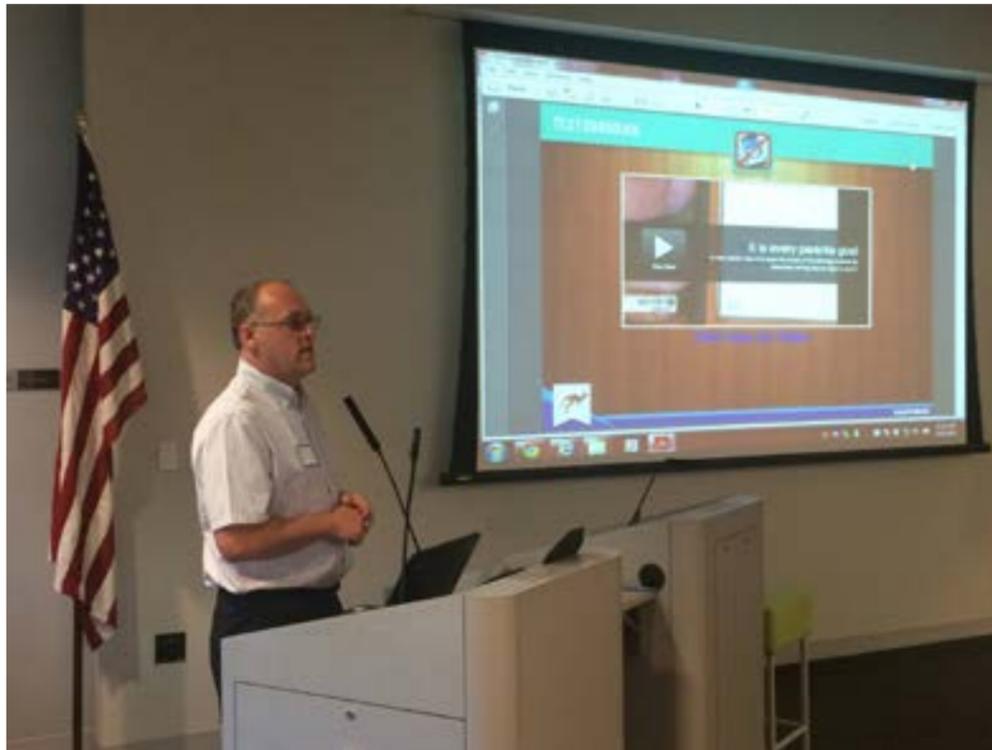
Work Zone Awareness Week was commemorated March 23-27 with events held across the state and country to bring attention to the fatalities and serious injuries that occur in roadway work zones. In 2013, 579 people died in work zone-related crashes across the country. Eight of those fatalities occurred in Louisiana.

At a press conference in Baton Rouge, Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development Secretary Sherri LeBas noted that three DOTD employees were seriously injured on the job in recent months, a prime example of the importance of driving safely and attentively through work zones.

"We are all in this together," Louisiana Highway Safety Commission Deputy Director Ken Trull said. "Everyone is responsible for work zone safety, from engineers and planners to drivers and pedestrians."



LaPlace Bodyshop Owner Unveils App to Prevent Teen Driver Cell Phone Distraction



Mike Watson, developer of the anti-texting-while-driving app Text Guardian, speaks to the New Orleans Regional Transportation Safety Coalition meeting in March.

A new smart phone app geared toward teenage drivers could help to reduce distraction-related crashes and save lives. So hopes its progenitor, LaPlace body shop owner Mike Watson, who developed the app in conjunction with Wayne Vicknair.

Watson, who owns Jim's Body Shop, says he was inspired to do something after seeing too many news reports about the texting-while-driving epidemic and seeing too many customers come into his shop after getting into texting-related crashes.



The result: Text Guardian, an app currently available for free on Android phones that Watson hopes to expand to iPhone soon.

Once installed, Text Guardian makes a cell phone mostly unusable while driving except for making emergency calls. Parents who install the app on their

children's phones can register to be alerted should their child delete the app.

Texting while driving is illegal in 46 states, including Louisiana, yet a troubling number of drivers do it anyway. Thirty-five percent of teen drivers admit to texting while driving, according to AAA.

Uber Arrives in N.O.

Uber is now in business in New Orleans, after the City Council approved legislation in April allowing for similar companies to operate ride-share in city limits. Uber's higher-end service, Uber Black, was green-lighted in September. The City Council's most recent vote allowed for the lower-cost UberX service to operate, despite protest by the taxi industry. Ride-sharing services such as Uber and Lyft link customers with drivers in private vehicles via smart phone app. San Francisco-based Uber is interested in expanding elsewhere in the region. However, a proposal considered by the Jefferson Parish Council in April that would have allowed ride-hailing services to operate there was unsuccessful. Proponents argue that ride-sharing programs offer another safe-ride alternative to the transportation network, particularly for those who have been drinking.

AAA: Teen Driver Distraction Worse Than Previously Thought

Teenagers are much more susceptible to distraction while driving than previously thought, according to a study released in March by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. The study involved an analysis of close to 1,700 in-vehicle camera videos involving moderate-to-severe crashes among drivers 16 to 19 years old. AAA billed the research as "the most comprehensive" of its kind ever conducted. Researchers said the data point to distracted driving being a much more serious problem than previously thought: a factor in nearly 6 in 10 moderate-to-severe teen crashes, four times greater than official estimates based on police reports.

The National Transportation Safety Administration estimates distraction to be a factor in just 14 percent of teen crashes, according to AAA.

The most common forms of distraction uncovered in the analysis? Distraction by passenger and cell phone.

Researchers found that teen drivers talking, texting, or otherwise manipulating their cell phones had their eyes off the road for an average of 4.1 out of the final six seconds leading up to a crash. The researchers also found that teen drivers using a cell phone failed to react by braking or steering more than half of the time before the impact in rear-end crashes.

AAA recommends that state law prohibit cell phone use by teen drivers and that teen drivers be restricted to one non-family member passenger for the first six months of driving.

"Louisiana has addressed one key AAA recommendation by prohibiting cell phone use by teen drivers and making it a primary offense," AAA spokesman Don Redman said. "However, Louisiana's passenger restriction law needs strengthening."

Current state law restricts the number and ages of passengers allowed in vehicles driven by novice drivers under the age of 17, but lacks any provision for novice drivers getting their unrestricted licenses for the first time at age 17. AAA recommends a minimum six-month restriction on teen passengers as a precondition to licensure for all teen drivers.

AAA also notes that parents play a critical role in preventing distracted driving. The organization recommends parents teach teens about the dangers of cell phone use and restrict passengers during the learning-to-drive process.

Teens have the highest crash rate of any group in the United States. About 963,000 drivers age 16-19 were involved in police-reported crashes in 2013. Those crashes resulted in 383,000 injuries and 2,865 deaths.

91 percent of parents who use their cell phones while driving do so when their teenage children are in the car.
--National Safety Council

6 OUT OF 10 teen crashes involve driver distraction.

The most common forms of distraction leading to a teen driver crash include:





Videos Show How to Navigate Bicycles, Cars, Transit Vehicles More Safely

The Regional Planning Commission and Destination Zero Deaths have produced a series of videos aimed at improving public understanding of how to safely navigate bicycles, cars, and transit vehicles in the streets. The videos, available on the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission's YouTube channel at <http://tinyurl.com/pzrdq8p>, educate viewers on the rules of the road for bicyclists, how to drive safely around bicyclists, and how to operate transit and large commercial vehicles around bicyclists. The videos were produced to help to improve safety practices among all road users at a time when the number of people getting around the region by bike is on the rise. New Orleans now ranks fifth among the country's large cities for the rate of people who bicycle commute to work. The New Orleans Regional Transportation Safety Coalition is exploring possible channels for distributing the videos. Have a great idea for where these might be used? Contact Dan Jatres at djatres@norcp.org.

New Orleans participates in U.S. DOT's Mayor's Challenge for Safer Streets

New Orleans has signed on to U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx's challenge to city mayors to do a better job of protecting pedestrians and bicyclists at a time when pedestrian and cyclist deaths account for a growing share of U.S. traffic fatalities and serious injuries. Overall traffic deaths are on a downward trend in the U.S., but the reduction in pedestrian and cyclist fatalities is not keeping pace with improvements for motor-vehicle occupants. Pedestrians and bicyclists now account for 17 percent of all traffic fatalities in the U.S., with most of these deaths in urban areas, according to Foxx. U.S. DOT urges a "complete streets" approach, accounting for users of all modes of transportation, and context-based street design. The Mayor's Challenge is one component of Foxx's overall pedestrian and bicycle safety initiative. In September, he announced the launch of Safer People, Safer Streets, asking USDOT field offices to conduct road safety assessments in every state. Mayor's Challenge participants took part in a Mayoral Summit in March at U.S. Department of Transportation headquarters in Washington, D.C. Over the course of a year, they will be invited to participate in forums, webinars and other educational events to help them accomplish their goals. In March 2016, they will reconvene to share lessons learned and celebrate their successes.

Mayor's Challenge Tenants

- Take a Complete Streets approach
- Identify and address barriers to make streets safe and convenient for all road users
- Gather and track biking and walking data
- Use designs that are appropriate to the context of the street and its uses
- Take advantage of opportunities to create and complete ped-bike networks through maintenance
- Improve walking and biking safety laws and regulations
- Educate and enforce proper road use behavior by all

Coalition Stakeholders Talk Safety at Traffic Engineering Conference



Several people directly engaged in local and statewide highway safety planning efforts spoke at a gathering of the Deep South Institute of Traffic Engineers, held in New Orleans in February. Among them, clockwise from top left, were: 1. DOTD District 02 Administrator Chris Morvant; 2. Betsey Tramonte, safety programs coordinator with the Federal Highway Administration, who with FHWA's John Broemmelsiek (not pictured) gave an overview of the agency's Roadway Lighting Handbook and the importance of roadway lighting to



"If you keep saying 'No, it can't happen,' it'll never get done."
--Chris Morvant, DOTD District 02 Administrator

improving roadway safety; 3. DOTD Highway Safety Engineer April Renard, who outlined the systemic approach to highway safety that Louisiana is employing in certain circumstances. The systemic approach is a proactive strategy that involves identifying risk factors associated with crashes and can help to improve safety even in areas where crashes haven't already been recorded; 4. Jose Rodriguez, also with DOTD, who updated the group on the state's efforts to install cable median barriers, which can significantly reduce the chances of fatalities and serious injuries caused by vehicles crossing over medians on divided highways; and 5. Rox'E Homstad (pictured in the bottom photo at right), a braille teacher and advocate working with Lighthouse Louisiana who encouraged engineers to think about all road users in designing streets and intersections, including people who are blind and deaf.



"I realize that you have a lot of priorities when you design intersections. I hope that I can impress upon you the power that you hold...the power that can mean life or death."

--Rox'E Homstad, Lighthouse Louisiana

AROUND THE COALITION

1. Lafayette City Court **Judge Doug Saloom**, a member of the committee responsible for helping to rewrite the state's Operating While Impaired statute, spoke about the changes and other matters related to reducing impaired vehicle operation across Louisiana at a **Southeast Louisiana DWI Task Force** meeting in Kenner. Among the most important changes: a revamped format that clarifies the rules and penalties; a new penalty for underage impaired drivers; and stiffer penalties for repeat third offenders; 2. **Claude Maher**, left, and other representatives of Operation Lifesaver, distribute information about safety around trains at the Louisiana Police Jury Association's annual meeting in New Orleans. 3. Representatives of several regional transportation safety coalitions gathered at the Louisiana State Capitol in May to call attention to the work these coalitions are doing. 4. Several coalition partners, including **Bike Easy**, **Tulane's Prevention Research Center**, and **New Orleans EMS**, took part in a Walk & Roll To School Festival hosted by Councilmember Latoya Cantrell and others at Wilson School in Broadmoor in May. The event aimed to promote wellness and school transportation safety. 5. **Dan Jatres**, pedestrian and bicycle program manager at the RPC and head of the bike/ped emphasis area for the coalition, conducted a mini workshop on the basics of trail design for designers working on shared-use paths in Jefferson Parish. Jatres noted that some of the standard features of a good shared-use path are separation from motor-vehicle traffic, connectivity to destinations, scenic quality, and well-designed street crossings.



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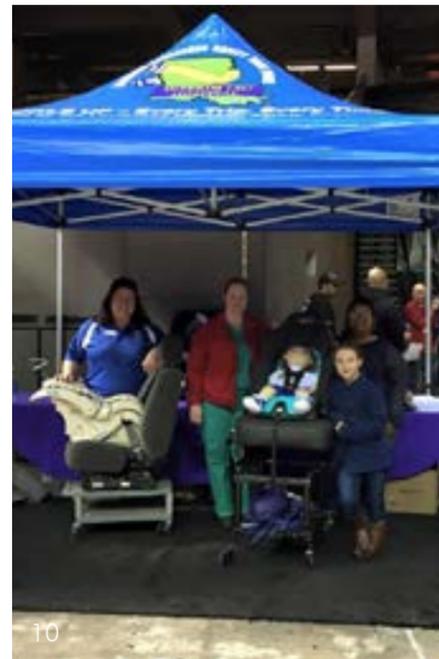
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6. **Carlton Dufrechou**, general manager of the Causeway Commission, spoke to the North Shore Regional Safety Coalition about safety challenges on the well-traveled bridges connecting the North and South shores. 7. Volunteers with **Bike Easy** passed out free bike lights to bicyclists without them as part of NOLA Bike to Work Week festivities. 8. **New Orleans EMS** representatives got much-deserved praise for their work tending to the crowds at Mardi Gras this year. 9. Architect, urban designer, and writer **Ellen Dunham-Jones** spoke at the RPC in March about her ideas for redeveloping declining suburbs. Chief among them: improve walkability, cut vehicle speed, and create attractive places to live, while in the process, reducing crashes. 10. **Patti Clesi, Amanda Theriot and Dinnika Lawrence** pose with a display set up to teach parents about child protection seat safety at one of several similar events sponsored by **Louisiana State Police Troop B** and the **LSU Interim Level 1 Trauma Center**. 11. Students at John Curtis Christian High School watch a mock trial conducted as part of the **Sudden Impact** program. 12. A multidisciplinary group including members of the New Orleans Regional Transportation Safety Coalition gathered in Baton Rouge for a pedestrian- and bicycle-specific road safety assessment along Siegen Lane. The RSA, hosted by the **Federal Highway Administration**, looked at ways to improve the landscape for pedestrians and bicyclists along the high-traffic, high-crash corridor.



Follow the New Orleans Regional Transportation Safety Coalition on Facebook

Seeking nominations for Saved by the Belt

Please be on the look out for possible nominees for the Saved by the Belt Award, an honor bestowed on residents across the state in recognition and promotion of proper seat belt use. To be eligible, the nominee must have been involved in but not at fault for a crash, and prevented from more serious injury because he or she was wearing a seatbelt. If you have an idea, share it with Bridget Gardner at bgardn@lsuhsc.edu.

Volunteer with Operation Lifesaver

Operation Lifesaver is seeking volunteers to promote safety around railroad tracks and crossings. The organization comprises a network of authorized volunteer speakers and trained instructors offering free rail safety education programs in all fifty states. Representatives speak to school groups, driver education classes, community audiences, professional drivers, law enforcement officers, and emergency responders. Programs are co-sponsored by federal, state and local government agencies, highway safety organizations and America's railroads, and aim to promote the three Es: education, enforcement and engineering. If you are interested, contact operationlifesaver@la.gov.



ON THE CALENDAR

- JUNE 17: New Orleans Regional Transportation Safety Coalition meeting, 10 Veterans Blvd., New Orleans
- JULY 2-6: Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over enforcement wave
- JULY 14: Statewide Young Drivers emphasis area meeting in Baton Rouge
- JULY 15: New Orleans Regional Transportation Safety Coalition meeting
- JULY 29: Statewide Occupant Protection emphasis area meeting in Baton Rouge
- AUGUST: Back to School Safety Month
- AUGUST 13: Statewide Impaired Driver emphasis area meeting in Baton Rouge
- AUGUST 19: New Orleans Regional Transportation Safety Coalition meeting
- AUGUST 21-SEPTEMBER 7: National Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over enforcement wave
- SEPTEMBER 13-19: Child Passenger Safety Week
- SEPTEMBER 16: New Orleans Regional Transportation Safety Coalition meeting
- OCTOBER 20-22: 2015 Louisiana Highway Safety Summit, Baton Rouge

Zero: Let's Make It Happen
*Crowne Plaza Hotel
Baton Rouge, Louisiana*
Registration Details to Follow
Sponsored by the Louisiana
Department of Transportation and Development

**DESTINATION
ZERO
DEATHS**

**Save the Date | October 20-22,
2015**

2015 Louisiana Highway Safety Summit

Local Road Safety Program 2015 deadlines

Local Road Safety Program applications are accepted year-round, but priority consideration will be given to proposals submitted according to the schedule below. The remaining quarterly project selection cutoff dates for 2015 are as follows:

- 2nd Quarter June 30, 2015
- 3rd Quarter September 30, 2015
- 4th Quarter December 31, 2015

Visit www.louisianalrsp.org for more information.

The New Orleans Regional Traffic Safety Coalition

The New Orleans Regional Traffic Safety Coalition (NORTSC) is one of nine similar bodies across the state formed to implement and sustain Louisiana's Strategic Highway Safety Plan by bridging gaps between the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, local governments, law enforcement, public health representatives, educational leaders, civic organizations, the general public and other safety stakeholders working in Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, and St. Bernard parishes. For information, contact Tricia Keffer at tkeffer@norpc.org or Emilie Bahr at ebahr@norpc.org or visit www.norpc.org/safety.html.

