

New Orleans Regional Traffic Safety Coalition

quarterly newsletter

October 2014



NORTSC convenes discussion of bicycle and big rig safety in light of fatal St. Claude crash

At its August meeting, the New Orleans Traffic Safety Coalition hosted representatives of the trucking industry and the local bicycle advocacy organization to discuss safety for bicyclists, pedestrians and motor vehicles around large commercial trucks.

Wal-Mart trucking representatives Johnnie Long, Donald Glover and Joseph Guidry talked about safe driving, biking and walking practices around large commercial trucks and noted that it is often very difficult for a truck driver to see pedestrians and bicyclists in particular. They recommended operating predictably and with extreme caution around trucks, and to be aware of the blind spots that exist around these very large vehicles. The truckers noted that if you can't see a driver in their rear-view mirror, they can't see you.

Bike Easy Executive Director Naomi Doerner talked about the growth in bicycling and walking in New Orleans in particular in recent years. New Orleans is now 8th in the country among large cities for the rate of people who commute to work by bike and has seen substantial expansion of its bike infrastructure. There are currently more than 100 miles of bikeways in the city, up dramatically from a few years ago. Yet the city still suffers from a disproportionate rate of bicycle and pedestrian fatalities, and the New Orleans Regional Traffic Safety Coalition is one of the few coalitions in the state with a bicycle and pedestrian action plan that aims to address this fact.

Doerner discussed her organization's emphasis on education and advocacy, its interest in exploring a Vision Zero policy, which would be enacted on the city level, and best practices in facility design. She also touched briefly on vulnerable user laws that are being enacted in some other jurisdictions that provide specific legal protections for bicyclists, pedestrians, work crews and other roadway users who don't have the physical protection afforded by an automobile.

The impetus for the discussion was the death in July of a 52-year-old man who was killed while riding his bicycle near the intersection of St. Claude and Elysian Fields avenues in New Orleans July 17th.



Philip Geeck had been riding in the direction of traffic along the St. Claude Avenue bike lane. As he attempted to continue straight through the intersection across Elysian Fields, he was crushed by an 18-wheeler making a right turn. Following an investigation, police declined to pursue charges against the driver of the 18 wheeler.

In 2005, a nearly-identical crash claimed the life of a young doctor.

The crash occurred in a neighborhood that is one of the most-bicycled in New Orleans. St. Claude was the site of New Orleans' first on-street bike lane when it was striped in 2008. Doerner discussed her organization's emphasis on education and advocacy, its interest in exploring a Vision Zero policy, which would be enacted on the city level, and best practices in facility design. She also touched briefly on vulnerable user laws that are being enacted in some other jurisdictions that provide specific legal protections for bicyclists, pedestrians, work crews and other roadway users who don't have the physical protection afforded by an automobile.



Interested in promoting bicycle and pedestrian safety? The RPC has available a variety of safety-promotion materials, from Orleans Parish bicycle maps to brochures outlining the rules of the road for all types of users. Contact Dan Jatres at djatres@norpc.org for more information.



Trucking representatives from Wal-Mart and the head of New Orleans' bicycle advocacy organization spoke to the New Orleans Regional Traffic Safety Coalition in August about bike and truck safety.

Bicycles are traffic. In Louisiana, bicyclists riding on state roadways are granted all rights and subject to all responsibilities of motor-vehicle operators.

The interstate, port and rail systems that characterize the region make Greater New Orleans an important center of commercial trucking activity.



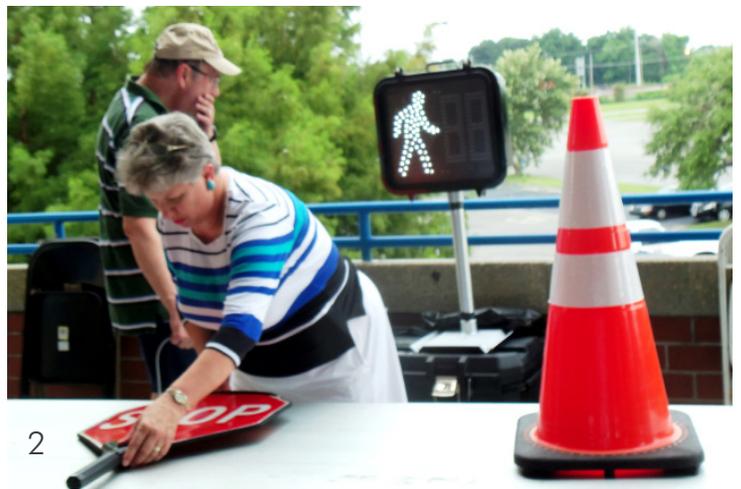
Wal-Mart parked one of its big rigs outside the Regional Transportation Management Center and invited coalition members to climb into the cab to get a sense of what commercial truck drivers can - and cannot - see.

NORTSC Commemorates Traffic Safety Night at Zephyr Field

Members of the New Orleans Regional Traffic Safety Coalition headed to the ball park to promote safety at Zephyr Field in July. Through demonstrations, games, exhibits, giveaways, and the broadcast of safety-related statistics and tips on the big screen, coalition members helped to educate baseball fans who turned out for the Zephyrs-Omaha Storm Chasers game on proper child car restraints, the importance of buckling up, pedestrian and bicycle safety, railroad crossing and motorcycle awareness, and the perils of drinking and driving. Many thanks to all who turned out to assist and to the Zephyrs for giving the coalition a forum to reach so many people.



TOP: Traffic safety advocate Christophe Hannaman, who decades ago was seriously injured in an alcohol-related car crash, throws out the first pitch in the game between the New Orleans Zephyrs and the Omaha Storm Chasers. BOTTOM LEFT: Motorcycle safety was one of the issue areas represented at Traffic Safety Night. RIGHT: A group of kids watches as the State Police rollover truck demonstrates the dangers of driving without a seatbelt.



1. Claude Maher, of Operation Lifesaver, discusses safety around railroad tracks; 2. Steve Strength, of the Louisiana Technical Assistance Program, and his wife, Cathy, prepare an exhibit on pedestrian crossing signals; 3. Emilie Bahr, center, of the Regional Planning Commission for Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Tammany and Tangipahoa parishes, and Isobel Healy, right, of Tulane's KidsWalk Coalition, discuss bicycle and pedestrian safety with interested passersby; 4. Displays advise parents of the proper use of child restraints; 5. A dad checks his son's height, one consideration in determining whether a child needs a booster seat.; 6. Bridget Gardner, right, and Dan Kiff, center, of Interim LSU Level 1 Trauma Center, and Louisiana State Police Major Carl Saizan, left, work a booth focused on the importance of proper child restraints in vehicles.

NORTSC promotes traffic safety in conjunction with July 4th, New Orleans' Essence Festival

A wide-ranging group of safety stakeholders promoted traffic safety at a press conference held in advance of the Fourth of July weekend and Essence Festival and called by the New Orleans Regional Traffic Safety Coalition.

Several members of the coalition spoke about safe driving, bicycling and walking practices in light of the holiday and festival, which together were expected to draw hundreds of thousands of people to downtown New Orleans.

Essence Festival producer Gary Solomon Jr. and traffic-safety advocate Christophe Hannaman were also among the speakers. Solomon told the media representatives gathered that his annual music event would attract some 500,000 people. Hannaman talked about his drunk-driving crash more than two decades ago that left him with severe injuries. Hannaman frequently shares his experience in hopes of deterring others from drinking and driving.

The conference was held at the Regional Traffic Management Center at 10 Veterans Blvd. in New Orleans.



Chris Laborde, at podium, of the Regional Planning Commission for Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Tammany and Tangipahoa parishes, leads the discussion of traffic safety at a July press conference. Also pictured here are: from left, Essence Festival producer Gary Solomon Jr.; traffic safety advocate Christophe Hannaman; Bridget Gardner, of Interim LSU Level 1 Trauma Center; Dr. Norman McSwain, of Interim LSU Level 1 Trauma Center; Brad McGlothren, law enforcement liaison with the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission; NOPD Deputy Chief Daryl Albert; Louisiana State Police Troop B Commander Captain Donovan Archote, Commander; Emilie Bahr, of the RPC; Don Redman, of AAA; and NOFD Superintendent Chief Timothy McConnell.

Stay informed about traffic-safety related events with our new, interactive online calendar

A new, web-based calendar has been created to share information about traffic-safety related events and deadlines among several regional traffic safety coalitions in Southeast Louisiana. Intended as a supplement to the statewide Destination Zero Deaths calendar, the calendar, available at <http://teamup.com/ksfd3fc5a04ba8904d/>, is currently set up for use by the North Shore, New Orleans and South Central traffic safety coalitions. Please email Emilie Bahr at ebahr@norpc.org or Tricia Keffer at tkeffer@norpc.org if you have trouble using the calendar or if you would like to add events or important deadlines of your own.

LHSC: LA seatbelt usage rate reaches all-time high

A new report finds that Louisiana drivers reached an all-time high for front-seat seatbelt usage in 2014. The estimated rate of 84.1 percent for front-seat occupants is a statistically significant increase from the 2013 rate of 82.5 percent, according to research prepared for the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission. The seat belt usage rate for front-seat vehicle occupants has risen 9.6 percentage points since 2009, when it was just 74.5 percent.



Researchers found substantial variation among the 38 parishes in which seat belt compliance was observed. The parish with the highest estimated compliance rate for the New Orleans metro region was St. Tammany, with 88.7 percent front-seat compliance, followed by Washington Parish (82.6 percent), Tangipahoa (82.1 percent), Orleans (81 percent), and Jefferson (80.7 percent).

Statewide, rear seat belt use remains relatively low, at an estimated 58.9 percent, according to researchers. The 2014 rear seat belt usage rate estimate remained flat compared with 2013 un-weighted numbers. In New Orleans, the un-weighted estimated rear seat compliance rate was 54.8 percent. Statistics on rear-seat compliance from other parishes in the metro area were not provided in the report.

Additionally, researchers observed that men were less likely to be buckled up than women, that African Americans were less likely to be buckled up than whites or Hispanics, and that those riding in pickup trucks were less likely than those in other vehicle types to be buckled up. They also found that seat belt usage was highest on interstates and U.S. and state roadways.

The same report also sampled motorcycle helmet usage and found 100 percent compliance among the 247 motorcycles observed. This suggests that mandatory helmet laws may have had a dramatic effect in ensuring helmet usage for motorcycles. In 2004, the year that a statewide mandatory motorcycle helmet law was reinstated, researchers estimated just 57.7 percent of motorcycle riders wore helmets.

Local Road Safety Program accepting project applications

The Local Road Safety Program (LRSP) funds projects aimed at reducing fatal and serious injury crashes on locally-owned and -operated roads.

These projects are typically low-cost safety improvements, including measures like installing signs, pavement markings, guardrail, intersection improvements, safety studies, and curve delineation. A project can receive up to \$500,000 in funding with a local match of 5 percent to 10 percent.

While applications for this program can now be submitted all year, the next quarterly selection of projects will occur in mid-November, and applicants are encouraged to apply by October 10 for priority consideration.

Program application, guidelines, and policies are available at www.ltrc.lsu.edu/lrap/lrsp.html.

Questions can be directed to LRSP Manager Rudynah Capone at (224)767-9718 or Rudynah.Capone@la.gov.

TRAFFIC SAFETY NEWS IN BRIEF

Conditions improving, but safety still lacking near many New Orleans schools, KidsWalk finds

Around New Orleans public schools, many sidewalks and streets have been improved over the past few years, but other schools and their students still face unsafe walking and biking conditions, according to a new report from the Tulane Prevention Research Center's KidsWalk Coalition project, a New Orleans Regional Traffic Safety Coalition partner.

KidsWalk gave a "good" walkability score to 8 percent of city public schools this year, up from 1 percent in 2011. However, it also found that more than 60 percent of school areas were "hazardous."

In assessing school-area safety, KidsWalk examined crosswalks, sidewalks, school zone signage and curb cuts near schools, among other features.

The full report is available at kidswalknola.org.

Uber sets sights on New Orleans

The mobile app-based car service Uber is angling to enter the New Orleans market. The San Francisco-based company, which offers members rides available on-demand through a smart phone application, in July started operating in Baton Rouge, adding to its rapidly-expanding roster of global service markets.

After months of debate - and over the objections of the city's taxi and limousine industries - the New Orleans City Council in September approved new rules for luxury car services that partially clear the way for digital car dispatchers such as Uber to operate in the city.

The changes approved open the door for a premium service called Uber Black to operate luxury vehicles with professional drivers in the city, but not the lower-cost UberX service that relies on individuals driving their own cars.

Very preliminary evidence suggests that Uber and similar car services may help cities reduce rates of drunk driving. Read more about the possible link here: <http://urbanful.org/2014/07/28/the-utterly-obvious-link-between-uber-and-drunk-driving/>.

RPC hosts ADA design workshop

The Regional Planning Commission for Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Tammany and Tangipahoa parishes hosted another round of the Designing Pedestrian Facilities for Accessibility Workshop in July. This one-and-a-half-day professional development workshop teaches participants how to apply the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to pedestrian facilities in the public right-of-way, including sidewalk design, curb ramps and pedestrian signals. The nearly 50 attendees included a broad cross section of private and public sector planners and engineers from across Louisiana.



photo courtesy KidsWalk Coalition

Advocacy group urges rethinking of transit system

In a report titled "The State of Transit in New Orleans," the transit-advocacy group Ride New Orleans outlines several recommendations for changes to the regional transit system that it says will improve social, quality of life and economic metrics across the region. Ride gave an overview of its findings at a briefing in July. The report is available online at <http://rideneworleans.org/state-of-transit/>.



New state law restricts cell phone use in school zones

A new law took effect August 1 that bars drivers from using cell phones or other wireless devices while driving in active school zones. Drivers are now prohibited from using their phones to call, text or surf the internet within school zones, except in case of an emergency. Phone calls using hands-free devices are allowed.

State Trooper Melissa Matey, an active member of the New Orleans Regional Traffic Safety Coalition, spoke with FOX 8 TV about the new law and the dangers of distracted driving. "Studies have shown that 37 percent of your brain power is taken off the road and focused onto whatever distraction that it is, whether it's a cell phone, passenger or conversation you're having in the car," Matey told the television station. First-time violations of the new law can yield a \$175 fine, with additional fines possible for subsequent violations.

Report: Louisiana hwy. fatalities higher than national average, but declining

A report released in July found that Louisiana is improving according to some key indicators of roadway safety even as the state's fatality numbers remain high compared with some other parts of the country.

The report, by Michael Sivak of the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute, looked at roadway fatality data from 2005 and 2012 in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. He analyzed safety according to two primary metrics: fatality rates per distance driven and fatality rates per population.

Per distance driven, Louisiana's fatality rate stood at 15.4 per billion miles in 2012, according to Sivak's analysis of National Highway Traffic Safety Administration data, above the national average of 11.3 fatalities per billion miles. The most dangerous state by this measure was West Virginia, with 17.63 fatalities per billion miles. Faring best in this category was the District of Columbia, which saw just 4.2 fatalities per billion miles driven.

Looking at fatality rates per population, Sivak again found that Louisiana outpaces the nation, with 15.69 fatalities per 100,000 people, compared with the national average of 10.69 fatalities per 100,000 people. The worst state by this measure was North Dakota, which saw 24.3 fatalities per 100,000 people. The District of Columbia was again found to be the safest in the country by this metric, with 2.37 fatalities per 100,000 people.

The report was not all grim for Louisiana. The state's roadway fatalities are on the decline in overall number and accounting for population and distance driven. Between 2005 and 2012, the state saw a 27.5 percent reduction in fatality rate per distance driven, Sivak found, better than the average national reduction of 22.2 percent. The state simultaneously achieved a reduction in fatality rate per population of 25.7, slightly below the national average of 27.1 percent.

Washington, D.C. is tougher than many parts of the country where traffic-safety laws are concerned. This includes stringent penalties for impaired driving; a ban on hand-held cell phones while driving; and a stipulation that it is up to the driver of a vehicle to ensure that everyone is buckled up. Failure to comply with this last provision can get a driver slapped with a fine and 2 points on their driver's license.

You can read the full report here: <http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/108252/103020.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>



New restrictions governing cell phone use in school zones are now in effect statewide.

TRAFFIC SAFETY NEWS IN BRIEF

State Farm's Celebrate My Drive urges teens to drive smart, earn money for their school

Celebrate My Drive is a program sponsored by State Farm with the goal of encouraging safe driving among teens. Each safe driving commitment made on the Celebrate My Drive website by a student or a member of their community (anyone from teachers to parents to bus drivers) increases their school's chance of being one of the 100 schools across the country that will receive a prize, with a grand prize of \$100,000 and a concert performed by The Band Perry. Several schools in Louisiana won prizes last year: Parkway High in Bossier City and West Monroe High in West Monroe each won \$25,000, and Academy of Our Lady in Marrero won the grand prize. Several schools on the North and South shores have registered, and we'd like to encourage more. For more information and to register, visit www.celebratemydrive.com by October 7.

New coordinators named for New Orleans and North Shore traffic safety coalitions

Beginning this month, Tricia Keffer and Emilie Bahr will be handling coordination for the New Orleans and North Shore traffic safety coalitions. Both women have been involved with the safety coalitions for the past few months and are passionate about improving safety for all roadway users. One of their early priorities will be to expand awareness of and participation in the coalitions.

Tricia is a transportation planner at the Regional Planning Commission for Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Tammany and Tangipahoa parishes, where she has used her expertise in GIS mapping and data analysis on projects related to the regional freight network, economic development, and traffic counts. Tricia grew up in Pennsylvania, studying Global Issues and Human Rights at the University of Pittsburgh and working at a charitable foundation before moving to New Orleans. She obtained her master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of New Orleans in 2013.

Emilie is also a transportation planner at the RPC and came to planning and transportation by way of a career in journalism. She grew up in Baton Rouge and lived in Dallas, Austin, Paris, Washington, D.C., and Thibodaux before moving to New Orleans. She loves cities, writing, running and riding her bike.



Tricia Keffer, pictured in the photo at left on a trip to Nova Scotia, and Emilie Bahr, at left in the photo on right at the NORTSC Traffic Safety Summit, this month take over as coordinators of the North Shore and New Orleans Regional traffic safety coalitions.



COMING UP

OCTOBER 7: Celebrate My Drive teen-driving campaign registration deadline. Visit www.celebratemydrive.com for information.

OCTOBER 10: Local Road Safety Program project priority application deadline for November funding awards. Visit www.ltrc.lsu.edu/ltap/lrsp.html for more information.

OCTOBER 15: NORTSC Infrastructure & Operations emphasis area meeting, 10 a.m., 10 Veterans Blvd., New Orleans

OCTOBER 15: NORTSC meeting, 11:30 a.m., 10 Veterans Blvd., New Orleans. Scheduled presenter: Lighthouse Louisiana, an agency that advocates for blind and deaf Louisiana residents.

OCTOBER 15: NORTSC Pedestrian and Bicycle emphasis area meeting, 1:30 p.m., 10 Veterans Blvd.

OCTOBER 19-25: National Teen Driver Safety Week

OCTOBER 20-24: National School Bus Safety Week

OCTOBER 22-25: Child Passenger Safety Technician Course, Mandeville. Contact Bridget Gardner at bgardn@lsuhs.edu or Patty Clesi at pdough@lsuhsc.edu for info.

OCTOBER 25: Family bike ride and transportation safety fair sponsored by Councilwoman LaToya Cantrell and Bike Easy, 2-5 p.m. at Wilson Charter School, 3617 Gen. Pershing St., New Orleans

NOVEMBER 10-12: Louisiana Smart Growth Summit, Baton Rouge, hosted by CPEX. Visit <http://summit.cpep.org/> for more information.

NOVEMBER 15: Kids Safety Fair in Kenner, noon to 3 p.m., Veterans Park

NOVEMBER 19: Occupant Protection emphasis area team meeting (10:30 a.m.) and NORTSC meeting (11:30 a.m.), 10 Veterans Blvd., New Orleans. Highway safety program leaders will provide a brief overview of funding opportunities.

DECEMBER: National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month

DECEMBER 12-JAN. 1: Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over national crackdown

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.

