

SAFETY PLAN

The Safety Plan identifies safety issues and provides recommendations to improve safety on the regional transportation system to reduce crashes, injuries, and fatalities.



SAFETY

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WAMPO

Wichita Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

Traffic and Safety Data Disclaimer

Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). SAFETEA-LU established safety as a core-funded program and revised the regulations governing metropolitan and state transportation plans. The new planning rule requires MPOs to consider the State's Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) when developing their transportation safety goals and objectives. However, Congress has recognized that even while this document summarizes and presents traffic accident and safety information for the general benefit of the public, pursuant to federal law, some people may attempt to use the information to establish federal, state, or local liability in lawsuits arising from highway accidents. Congress has enacted a law, 23 USC Section 409, which prohibits the discovery or use, in litigation, of highway accident and safety data, developed under federal law to make highway safety improvements. Congress' rationale is obvious: the safety data was compiled and collected at their request, to help prevent future accidents, injuries and death on our nation's highways. If that information can be used in expensive damage suits, then the millions of dollars that litigation may cost the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) and local governments will not be available for their use to make Kansas' highways safer. The collection of this safety data should be encouraged, not discouraged.

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Safety Plan

Table of Contents

	Executive Summary	iii
1.0	Introduction	1
1.1	Planning Process.....	1
1.2	Goals	4
2.0	Crash Data Summary.....	5
2.1	Regional Crash Data Overview.....	5
2.2	Crash Types	6
2.3	Crash Severity	8
2.4	Severity by Crash Type.....	10
2.5	Contributing Circumstances.....	10
2.6	Bicycle and Pedestrian Crashes	12
2.7	Fatal Crashes	14
2.8	Urban and Rural Crashes.....	20
2.9	WAMPO Region and State of Kansas Crashes.....	24
3.0	Stakeholder Identified Safety Concerns.....	26
3.1	Impaired Driving	26
3.2	Driver Behavior.....	26
3.3	Inexperienced, Novice, and Teen Drivers	26
3.4	Occupant Protection.....	27
3.5	Railroad Crossings	27
3.6	Transit.....	28
3.7	Freight and Trucks.....	28
3.8	School Bus Safety.....	29
3.9	Walking and Bicycling to School.....	29
4.0	Recommendations	31
4.1	Engineering.....	31
4.2	Education.....	32
4.3	Enforcement.....	32
4.4	Emergency Response.....	32
4.5	Everyone Else.....	32
4.6	Conclusion	33

Safety Plan

List of Exhibits

Exhibit 1	WAMPO Region	2
Exhibit 2	Do You Feel Safe as a Motorist?	4
Exhibit 3	2004 - 2008 Crashes per Year	6
Exhibit 4	Regional and Statewide Crash Severity Percentages	6
Exhibit 5	Crash Types 2004 - 2008.....	7
Exhibit 6	Crash Severity 2004 - 2008	8
Exhibit 7	Crash Severity 2004 - 2008	9
Exhibit 8	Severity by Crash Types 2004 - 2008.....	10
Exhibit 9	Top 20 Contributing Circumstance 2004 - 2008	11
Exhibit 10	Do You Feel Safe as a Bicyclist/Pedestrian?.....	12
Exhibit 11	Bicycle and Pedestrian Crashes Contributing Circumstances	13
Exhibit 12	Bicycle and Pedestrian Probable Cause of Crashes.....	14
Exhibit 13	Fatal Crashes by Year 2004 - 2008.....	15
Exhibit 14	2004 - 2008 Fatal Crash Locations	16
Exhibit 15	Crash Types Involving a Fatality 2004 - 2008.....	17
Exhibit 16	Fatal Crash Contributing Factors for 25 and Younger	18
Exhibit 17	Fatal Crash Contributing Factors for 26 to 60.....	19
Exhibit 18	Fatal Crash Contributing Factors for 61 and Older	20
Exhibit 19	Total and Fatal Crashes (Urban and Rural).....	21
Exhibit 20	Top Five Fatal Contributing Circumstances Urban and Rural Areas	21
Exhibit 21	Fatal Contributing Circumstances Urban Area	22
Exhibit 22	Fatal Contributing Circumstances Rural Area.....	23
Exhibit 23	WAMPO Region and Statewide Contributing Circumstances	24
Exhibit 24	Regional and Statewide Crash Types (by percent)	25
Exhibit 25	Regional and Statewide Crash Severity Percentages	25
Exhibit 26	Alcohol Related Crashes (percent) by Time of Day.....	26
Exhibit 27	Safety Belt Use of all Vehicle Occupants by Crash Severity.....	27
Exhibit 28	Bicycle and Pedestrian Crashes School 7-8 a.m. and 2-4 p.m.	30

List of Appendices

Appendix A	2010 WAMPO Safety Survey Results
Appendix B	2004 to 2008 Bicycle and Pedestrian Crash Location Maps
Appendix C	Safety Toolbox

Safety Plan

Executive Summary

The Wichita Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (WAMPO) and the community place a high priority on transportation safety in the region. Transportation safety is a shared responsibility between communities, families, individuals, local jurisdictions, agencies, and many other organizations. WAMPO, in cooperation with the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), local jurisdictions, and other regional stakeholders, developed the Safety Plan. Transportation system safety must be a priority to reduce traffic crashes in the region. As part of the Kansas Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP), KDOT has set specific safety goals for the State of Kansas. The WAMPO Safety Plan is intended to address safety issues and concerns in the WAMPO region, and complement the goals of the SHSP.

Between 2004 and 2008 the number of crashes in the region has remained steady near 10,500 per year. Approximately 34% of all crashes result in injury or death. Between 2004 and 2008, approximately 23,820 people were injured and 237 people died in traffic crashes. Nearly one in six total crashes and one in four pedestrian crashes in Kansas occurred within the region.

Plan Goals

The primary goal of this plan is to improve the safety of the transportation system. Working together to improve safety involves several steps, including:

- Collecting and analyzing safety data.
- Identifying regional safety related priorities.
- Developing plans to outline how to address these priorities.
- Implementing programs, policies, and projects.

A comprehensive approach to safety on the region's transportation system can be achieved through the 5 E's of safety: Engineering, Education, Enforcement, Emergency Response, and Everyone Else.

Safety Task Force and Survey

A regional Safety Task Force was created to guide the development of this Safety Plan. The stakeholders involved in the Task Force included representatives from local, county, and state law enforcement, fire, EMS, and emergency preparedness. The Task Force met twice and helped develop a safety survey, provided feedback and comments, and aided in the development of Plan recommendations.

The Safety Survey obtained information on the perceived safety of motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit users. The respondents provided thoughts on specific locations and areas where safety was a concern. The Safety Survey results are located in **Appendix A**. The results of the Safety Survey provided insight into the locations and safety issues that affect regional transportation users every day.

Safety Plan

Plan Intent

The Safety Plan was initiated to identify safety issues on the regional transportation system and recommendations for improvements. The Safety Plan is intended to:

- Collect, analyze, and present regional crash statistics in an accessible manner for regional safety stakeholders, local jurisdictions, agencies, and the public.
- Provide a forum for a multi-jurisdictional discussion of safety issues, concerns, and strategies to improve safety on the regional transportation system.
- Help WAMPO further define specific safety strategies.
- Be a resource for law enforcement agencies, government officials, planners, engineers, and members of the general public wanting to assess, monitor, and improve the safety of the transportation system in the region.

Crash Data Analysis

The crash statistics provide a description of high frequency crash events and locations. This Safety Plan analyzes regional crashes using a variety of characteristics including:

- Crash type.
- Classification (Urban, Rural).
- Severity (Fatal, Injury, PDO).
- Contributing circumstances.
- Mode of transportation (Motor vehicle, Bicycle, Pedestrian).

When officers investigate a crash they commonly attempt to determine what factors lead to the crash. These are called contributing circumstances. A single crash may have more than one. The circumstances contributing to a crash can be related to the driver, environment, or road. Driver related circumstances contributed to 90% of the crashes. In the region, the top five contributing circumstances played a role in over two thirds of the regional crashes. These are:

- Inattention.
- Failure to yield right of way.
- Follow too closely.
- Too fast for conditions.
- Disregarded traffic signs, signals, or markings.

The top two safety concerns according to Safety Survey were inattentive drivers (74% of the respondents) and aggressive driving (56% of the respondents). Poor driving habits were also identified as a concern by bicyclists. Reducing crashes related to driver behaviors in the region can also improve the perceived safety of the transportation system.

Bicycle and Pedestrian

Because bicycle and pedestrian crashes tend to be more severe, pedestrian and bicycle safety is an important concern for the WAMPO region. Safety Survey results indicate that 30% of the pedestrian respondents feel safe and 50% feel somewhat safe. The top pedestrian safety concerns were identified as: the lack of pedestrian facilities; sidewalks; crossings; driving habits; travel speed of motorists; and crime. From 2004 through 2008, there were 1,021 reported crashes involving cyclists and pedestrians within the region;

Safety Plan

20% of these crashes resulted in fatalities. The plan provides detailed maps and analysis on bicycle and pedestrian crashes.

Fatal Crashes

The region has averaged approximately 44 fatal crashes per year; 2006 was the peak year with 58 crashes involving a fatality. Fatalities have declined in each of the past two years. The 28 fatal crashes in 2008 represent a 50% decrease since 2006. The plan provides detailed maps and analysis of fatal crashes.

Urban and Rural Crashes

The region is comprised of urban and rural areas with different types of roadways. For this reason it is important to differentiate between urban and rural crashes. In the region 86% of crashes occurred in urban areas compared to 14% in rural areas. Angle, rear end, and fixed object crashes account for 80% of all urban area crashes. While the same three crash types account for a majority of the rural area crashes (63%), collisions with animals, primarily deer, are also significant (20%).

Stakeholder Safety Concerns

A number of safety concerns were identified as part of the planning process through the Safety Task Force and other stakeholder meetings. These concerns build upon the crash statistic data and may lead to additional regional safety initiatives. Other safety concerns include:

- Impaired driving.
- Driver behavior.
- Inexperienced, novice, and teen drivers.
- Occupant protection.
- Railroad crossings.
- Transit.
- Freight and trucks.
- School bus safety.
- Walking and bicycling to school.

Strategies and Recommendations

There are a variety of strategies to address issues identified through analyzing crash data and stakeholder input that can be implemented across local jurisdictions and agencies to improve safety on the transportation network. WAMPO cannot implement these recommendations alone. It is up to local jurisdictions and agencies in the region to prioritize safety on the transportation system and implement recommendations accordingly. The recommendations identified for improving transportation safety in the region can fall into the 5 E's of safety.

Safety Plan

Engineering

- Expand/improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
- Enhance/install street lighting.
- Improve intersections.
- Construct railroad grade-separations.
- Improve freeway on- and off-ramps.
- Develop access management policies.
- Install signage.
- Improve sight distance.
- Conduct safety audits.

Enforcement

- Reduce speeding.
- Improve intersection safety.
- Increase fines for uninsured motorists.
- Impaired driver check-points.
- Prohibit cell phone use and texting while driving.
- Increase law enforcement visibility, especially in rural areas.
- Improve public perception of law enforcement by being more visible on the streets.

Everyone Else

- Drive safely and follow the rules of the road.
- Maintain the regional safety task force.
- Support seat belts on school buses.
- Encourage vehicle maintenance.
- Benchmark crash data and create performance measures.
- Coordinate with Kansas Turnpike Authority.

Education

- Share the road campaign to increase awareness for bicycles on roads.
- Increase education on the benefits and correct use of safety belts.
- Increase signage for a variety of educational issues, including share the road, merging, using safety belts, and more.
- Educate/train novice and older drivers.
- Emphasize the importance of collecting accurate crash data.
- Educate/train drivers on the proper use of highway merge lanes.

Emergency Response

- Develop an incident response plan/incident management.
- Install dynamic message boards in conjunction with Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS).
- Involve emergency response in planning efforts.
- Move crash vehicles to shoulder when possible.

Conclusion

As safety features are incorporated into the region's transportation infrastructure and jurisdictions and agencies implement recommendations it is anticipated that safety will improve. As demographics, traffic patterns, and other local factors change, new issues will emerge. WAMPO should continue to monitor and update crash data and trends as annual data updates are available from KDOT. The Safety Survey and the Safety Plan should be updated periodically to track safety progress and obtain an updated perspective of public concerns. Through periodic review of crash data, patterns, and rates and by obtaining stakeholder concerns, the region will be able to identify emerging issues in transportation safety.