

The 2011 Southern Connecticut Community Traffic Safety Conference Summary Report



CONFERENCE SESSIONS:

- **Session 1:**
The Traffic Safety Challenge for Southern CT
- **Session 2:**
Traffic Safety Priorities and CT's Performance: Implications for Communities
- **Session 3:**
Traffic Safety Implications for Neighborhoods and Families
- **Session 4:**
Connecting CT Communities to Traffic Safety Resources

The Southern Connecticut Community Traffic Safety Conference was held on March 10, 2011 and brought together a wide range of community focused professionals and citizen advocates who have the potential to create traffic safety outreach programs in the southern part of Connecticut. The conference was the first of its kind and was sponsored by Yale University School of Medicine's Department of Emergency Medicine, Yale-New Haven Hospital's Department of Trauma, and Yale University School of Medicine's Section of Trauma, Surgical Critical Care & Surgical Emergencies.

This conference was a collaborative effort with the following planning partners:

- National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration (NHTSA) Region 1
- Connecticut Department of Transportation-Highway Safety Office
- Connecticut Department of Public Health
- Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles
- Junta for Progress Action, Inc.

The goals of the conference were to:

1. To raise awareness of state traffic safety and highway priorities and their impact on Connecticut communities.
2. To connect communities to traffic and highway safety advocates focused on reducing the societal burden of crash-related injury and death.

Conference Overview

The conference consisted of four sessions that broadly covered the following topics specific to the state and local priorities and considerations:

Session 1: The Traffic Safety Challenge: Connecticut Traffic Safety Landscape, Observational and Attitudinal Data, Medical Perspective of Crash Injury and Mortality, Front-Lines of Traffic Safety Enforcement.

Session 2: Traffic Safety Priorities and Connecticut's Performance - Implications for Communities: Adjudication and Traffic Safety, Distracted Driving, Local Traffic Safety Enforcement.

Session 3: Traffic Safety Implications for Neighborhoods and Families: Pedestrian and Cyclist Safety, Teen Driver Licensure, Motorcycle Rider Safety.

Session 4: Connecting Communities to Traffic Safety Resources: Child Passenger Safety, The Mature Driver, Underage Drinking and Impaired Driving.





Panel I: The Traffic Safety Challenge for Southern Connecticut

1. Traffic Safety Landscape

Dr. Federico Vaca, MD, MPH- Professor, Yale University School of Medicine’s Department of Emergency Medicine

2. Observational and Attitudinal Data- Occupant Protection/Impaired Driving

Tara Casanova- Powell, Preusser Research Group

3. Medical Perspective of Crash Injury and Mortality

Dr. Kevin Schuster, MD, FACS- Assistant Professor, Yale University School of Medicine’s Section of Trauma, Surgical Critical Care, and Surgical Emergencies & Medical Director of Adult Trauma Program, Yale-New Haven Hospital

4. Front-Lines of Traffic Safety Enforcement

Lt. J. Paul Vance, Connecticut State Trooper, Commanding Officer Public Information /Media Relations, Connecticut State Police

This panel session provided an overview of the traffic and highway safety landscape including national and state crash data; observation and attitudinal data as it relates to the southern part of the State; and anecdotal reports from the “front line” state law enforcement community. The expert panel-audience discussions centered on enforcement methods that lead to increased driving infractions. This discussion also focused on younger and inexperienced drivers and CT’s graduated driving licensing (GDL) law. Some panel members felt that while parental involvement is lacking, it is critical in helping to set an example for teen drivers. CT takes the GDL seriously and now requires parents to attend a mandatory two hour class to be given by Commercial Driving Schools. The goal of this class is to assist parents/guardians to coach and mentor their teenagers into safe and skilled drivers. Identifying cars where the driver is inexperienced with a window sticker or card was also discussed. Feedback from parents has been mixed. Many support this idea while others are concerned teens will be targeted by law enforcement or even possibly predators. Compliance in one state where this is mandatory is about 40% and parents cited possible unfair adjudication of fault in the event of a crash as a reason for not displaying the sticker.

Pedestrian safety was also briefly addressed with respect to pedestrian mortality. High speed, four lane, traffic signal controlled highways are the most dangerous and the most amenable to traffic calming engineering solutions. In Connecticut, US Route 1 and US Route 5 in the New Haven to Hartford corridor are not surprisingly areas of high crash-mortality.

“We speak with parents to make them a part of the solution. They need to set the example, explain that consequences are real and final”

*Lt. J. Paul Vance,
CT State Police*

Panel II: Traffic Safety Priorities & Connecticut’s Performance

1. Special Guest Comments

Robbin L. Cabelus, Transportation Planning Director, Bureau of Policy and Planning, Governor’s Highway Safety Representative, Connecticut

2. Adjudication and Traffic Safety: Implications for Communities

Susan Naide, JD, Adjunct Instructor of Criminal Justice, University of New Haven

3. Distracted Driving: Implications for Communities

Edmund Hedge, Law Enforcement Liaison, Connecticut Department of Transportation

4. Local Traffic Safety Enforcement: Implications for Communities

Frank Limon, Chief of Police, City of New Haven, Connecticut





This session provided an overview of Connecticut’s traffic safety priorities and its overall traffic safety performance. The expert panel-audience discussion focused on enforcement of current law with respect to practical definitions of distracted driving and how current enforcement strategies are being undertaken. Specific issues discussed included: What constitutes a “moving vehicle” as it applies to enforcement of CT’s distracted driving laws. Discussion centered on the challenges that law enforcement officials face as technology improves and auto manufacturers equip their cars with in-dash devices that allow for smart phone type activities that encourage distracted driving. Traffic cameras to enforce red-light violations were discussed as being beneficial with respect to motor vehicle crashes and will likely decrease infractions. Legislation to allow these devices in Connecticut has previously failed but there is a relevant bill currently under consideration in the state capitol. There is currently less financial support available from state and federal sources for traffic enforcement. Municipalities therefore need to be flexible in their enforcement. New Haven Police Department conducts weekly analysis of traffic data to identify any areas of increased activity to better deploy personnel and respond to changing conditions such as construction zones. Also discussed was the recidivism of rates of DUI offenders and the need for carefully monitored research and data driven analysis of potentially complex cases and causes to effectively address the prevention of this behavior. This may potentially reveal combinations of neurological development factors, ethnic, cultural, gender-based, societal, and economic disparities. It is also essential to create an effective law enforcement process based on an understanding that this is a complex problem. In order to effectively deal with the recidivistic nature of offender behavior, it is essential to develop a strategic planning initiative to address the issue in an innovative, more constructive, data driven approach.

Panel III Focus: Traffic Safety Implications for Neighborhoods and Families

1. Pedestrian and Cyclist Safety

Colleen Kissane, Transportation Assistant Planning Director, Office of Policy and Strategic Planning, Connecticut Department of Transportation
 Katherine Rattan, Non-Motorized Transportation Coordinator, Connecticut Department of Transportation

2. Teen Driver Licensure

Victor M. Diaz, MBA, Deputy Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles

3. Motorcycle Rider Safety

Adam Landman, MD, MS, MIS, Harvard Medicine School, Department of Emergency Medicine
 Michael Phipps, MD, MHS, Yale University, Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholars Program

This expert panel provided an overview of the traffic safety issues of importance to neighborhoods and families: safe routes to school, pedestrian and bicycle safety, motorcycle rider education, and teen driver licensing. The focus of the expert panel-audience discussion surrounded bicycle and pedestrian safety. Topics included the following issues surrounding infrastructure for biking:

The importance of ongoing training for cyclists and pedestrians. The Department of Transportation will spend two million dollars to address bicycle and pedestrian safety. It will also provide another two million dollars for regional authorities to disburse for the purpose of improving bicycle and pedestrian safety. There are many gaps in bike trail systems throughout the state. Funding will go to close these gaps which require about 1 million dollars per mile. Focus for repairing trail gaps will include those gaps that allow people to reach train stations and other areas of interest to commuters. The Department of Transportation is required to spend a minimum of 2% of its budget on bicycle and pedestrian safety. Last year 5% was spent on bicycle and pedestrian safety. Mobility of individuals with disabilities were also addressed. Whenever a new traffic project is designed, a completion checklist includes considerations for disabled individuals.



Panel IV: Connecting Connecticut Communities to Traffic Safety Resources

1. Child Passenger Safety

Pina Violano, MSPH, RN-BC, CCRN, PhD (c), Injury Prevention Coordinator, Adult and Pediatric Trauma Programs, Yale-New Haven Hospital & Program Coordinator, Injury Free Coalition for Kids of New Haven, Yale-New Haven Children's Hospital

Juliet Little, Connecticut Department of Transportation- Division of Highway Safety

2. The Mature Driver

Lea-Ann Fortin-McCue, Injury Prevention Center, Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Hartford Hospital

3. Underage Drinking and Impaired Driving

Kathryn A. Barnabei, Impaired Driving Initiatives Program Coordinator, Connecticut Department of Transportation- Division of Highway Safety

This expert panel provided an overview of state and local programs available as resources in the community. The final expert panel-audience dialogue covered child passenger safety seats as well as drunk driving recidivism. Focal points included: The pathway to become a child passenger safety seat installation technician including the process, the associated fees, and the maintenance of certification requirements. Initial technician certification includes a 4 day classroom and hands-on experience. Maintenance of certification requires 5 seats installed every 2 years under the supervision of an instructor as well as continuing education. There are many challenges to overcome in sponsoring a child passenger car seat clinic or fitting station. These challenges include both liability and recruiting instructors as well as many other issues. Also discussed was driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs (DUI) which is considered to be a criminal offense and may be prosecuted with or without any direct evidence of a person's BAC. The determining factor is whether the person's ability to operate has been impaired. Driving is considered a privilege and under CT's "Implied Consent Law", any person who operates a motor vehicle is presumed to have given consent for a test to determine BAC.



Summary

The 2011 Southern CT Community Traffic Safety Conference brought together a total of 87 individuals from government and non-government agencies from many southern Connecticut communities. We hope this is the beginning of upcoming opportunities to enhance traffic safety throughout Connecticut and in our local communities.

The conference topic areas selected are established priorities for Connecticut and our communities for traffic and highway safety. The dialogue at this conference was important and served as an opportunity to engage highway safety agencies, local and state traffic safety experts, and community members to focus on the public's health with mobility and transportation in mind.

The 2011 Southern CT Community Traffic Safety Conference should continue to stimulate collaborative work focused on reducing the societal burden of crash related injury and mortality as well as improving the overall health of our communities.

"This conference brought together traffic safety advocates with one common goal...to reduce injuries and reduce fatalities on our roads in Connecticut. As traffic safety advocates, our individual roles and responsibilities in this process vary, but the end result is that we are all looking to make Connecticut roads the safest that they can be"

Robbin L. Cabellus Transportation Planning Director, Bureau of Policy and Planning, Governor's Highway Safety Representative