

A SAFER ROAD TO TOMORROW

January 2011 Newsletter

Safer Roads Releases 2011 Calendar

A Safer Road to Tomorrow released its annual calendar in December. This year's calendar shows New Hampshire's transportation system through pictures that show construction, poor roads, transportation, tolling, and more. This series shows the role infrastructure plays in our everyday lives. Statistics and facts accompanying the photos describe infrastructure's role in more detail.

New Hampshire's roadways are continuing to suffer because of a lack of sustainable highway fund revenue. Every year that the roadways are not adequately maintained and repaired leads to an even greater need in the next year. Continued and increased investment is needed on both the state and federal level. As 2011 begins, there isn't another road and bridge stimulus, but there are still many roads and bridges in need of repair. The state needs to develop a long-term, sustainable funding model in order to maintain and improve mobility in New Hampshire.

The 2011 calendar was sent to Safer Roads Partners, elected officials, state agencies, and municipal road agents. It is the coalition's belief that through education, the driving public can begin to understand how deficient roadways impact each part of their lives, leading them to contribute effective solutions to these problems. For more information, please visit the Safer Roads website at www.saferoadsnh.com.



"Nearly one-third of bridges in NH are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. Deficient and obsolete bridges impact commercial and personal mobility as well as safety." - TRIP Report, June 2010
**Photo taken: Middle Road, Portsmouth*

Promoting A Safer Road to Tomorrow

Launched in February 2004, A Safer Road to Tomorrow is a coalition of organizations dedicated to promoting the importance of adequate roads and bridges to the driving public. New Hampshire's transportation system is critical to its economic success and growth. It is this system that carries goods to customers, makes modern day tourism possible, gives citizens the means to go to work, and more. As the system ages, repairs and a greater need for replacement of the system are required. Lack of funding prohibits the completion of important projects, as well as limiting the amount of routine maintenance the state can perform.

Through this quarterly newsletter, website, calendar, and booklets; the coalition hopes to show how the transportation system affects each citizen in the state. Each piece of information works together to show how increased investment in roads and bridges will benefit the state, and how not taking action will lead to even greater consequences. Visit www.saferoadsnh.com for more information on the coalition, transportation facts, informational booklets, resources, and more.



A SAFER ROAD
TO TOMORROW

Safety · Quality of Life · Economic Development

48 Grandview Road, Bow, NH 03304
Phone: 603.225.2701 Fax: 603.226.3859
Email: info@saferoadsnh.com
Web: www.saferoadsnh.com

Safer Road Partners

Associated General Contractors of NH

The Associated General Contractors is a non-profit trade organization of general contractors, subcontractors, and industry professionals dedicated to improving industry standards.

NH Good Roads Association

NH Good Roads Association is a non-profit trade organization established to encourage the development of a safe, efficient and environmentally sound highway transportation system.

Safety and Health Council of Northern New England

The Council's mission is to educate and promote safety & health policies, practices and procedures that prevent and mitigate human economic losses arising from unintended causes.

NH Association of Chiefs of Police

The Association secures a closer relationship among commanding officers all over the state, to encourage a cooperative relationship among all police officials.

NH Lodging & Restaurant Association

The Association is a non-partisan organization to promote, protect and educate the food service and lodging industries and to ensure positive business growth for our members.

Business & Industry Association

The Association is NH's leading business trade association. It advocates for business interests with state and federal legislators and regulators.

Mandatory Backup Cameras By 2014?

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has proposed new safety regulations to help eliminate blind zones behind vehicles. The proposal expands the required field of view for all passenger cars, pickup trucks, minivans, buses, and low-speed vehicles with a gross vehicle rate weighing of up to 10,000 pounds. The expansion will require that the driver can see directly behind the vehicle when it is in reverse.

The National Highway Safety Traffic Administration (NHTSA), the division of the U.S. DOT that issued the proposal, believes that the majority of automobile manufacturers will install rear mounted video camera and in-vehicle displays to meet the proposed standards. The proposal requires 10% of new vehicles to comply by Sept. 2012, 40% by Sept. 2013, and 100% by Sept. 2014.

The proposed rule comes about after a significant number of pedestrians, mostly children and elderly, are killed or injured due to lack of visibility when a driver is backing up. The NHTSA estimates that 292 fatalities occur each year as a result of back up crashes. Of this, 44% are fatalities involving children under five and 33% are fatalities involving people 70 years of age or older.

Commuting in NH

According to the American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA), the average commute for the New Hampshire driver is about 24 minutes. This commute is made over the 16,005 miles of roadway in the state by its citizens. However, over 20% of the 3,433 miles eligible for federal aid need major repairs or replacements. Additionally, of the 2,403 bridges New Hampshire has, 31.4% are in need of repairs which will cost an estimated \$5.9 billion.

As citizens continue to use the roads for commuting, travel, and other needs, the obligation to maintain the roads becomes greater. After all, there are 416,570 full time jobs in New Hampshire that are dependent on the state's transportation infrastructure network.

NH DOS Promotes Safety With Operation Safe Commute

In early November, the Department of Safety (DOS) and New Hampshire police launched their "Operation Safe Commute." Commencing with a press conference on November 9, the DOS was joined by the Department of Transportation, as well as the Associated General Contractors of NH and the New Hampshire Motor Transport Association. The initiative is aimed at educating drivers to "commute with care," limiting their distractions while driving, and being aware of the other vehicles around them.

The recent surge in accidents as a result of distracted driving and other unsafe driving practices prompted the initiative. Distracted driving, including talking on a cell phone, reading, texting, along with unsafe lane changes, following too closely, failing to use directional signals and more create significant safety hazards for all drivers on the roadways. "Recent crash data has shone a light on the tragic consequences of impaired and distracted driving. Distracted driving has become the number-one cause of non-fatal accidents in the state," said Col. Robert Quinn of the New Hampshire State Police.

State and local police will be saturating the roadways on specific days looking for distracted and unsafe driving. Additionally, signs bearing the phrase "Commute With Care" will soon be posted.

Texting Bans Don't Reduce National Crash Rates

A recent article in Status Report, a publication from the Institute for Highway Safety, showed that while nearly all states ban texting to some degree, this ban is not helping to reduce crash rates. Banning texting either for all drivers, or a certain group, was meant to reduce the crash rates caused by distracted driving. However, research has shown that these laws have done little to reduce the crash rate, and in some instances that rate has increased.



The Highway Loss Data Institute (HLDI) conducted a study of four states that enacted laws banning texting for all drivers. They calculated rates of insurance claims under collision coverage for vehicles up to 9 years old during the months before and after texting laws were put in place. Using this information from California, Louisiana, Minnesota, and Washington the researchers concluded that in the time before and after the laws were enacted, the crash rates varied very little. The study also looked at nearby states that had no law on texting. The crash data in those states mirrored the data in the states that have texting laws.

Adrian Lund, president of the Highway Loss Data Institute, said that the ban on texting is having little effect because, "They're focusing on a single manifestation of distracted driving and banning it. This ignores the endless sources of distraction and relies on a ban on one source or another to solve the whole problem."

The reason states have not seen a decrease in crashes is likely due to noncompliance. The largest percentage of crashes caused by texting is by drivers under the age of 25; this is the same age range that has the largest percentage of motorists who text while driving in the states with a ban. Lack of apparent enforcement of the law was given as a reason for continuing to text while driving. The researchers noted that in some states, the crash rates actually increased after the ban was enacted. They said that if drivers are disregarding the ban, then the crash rates should have remained steady. They concluded that drivers could be hiding their cell phones below the steering wheel, thus acknowledging that what they are doing is illegal. However, if drivers are putting their phones out of sight, this poses another problem as their eyes are off the road longer, leading to an increase in crashes.

Texting is increasing; it went up by approximately 60% in just one year from 2008-2009. New Hampshire bans texting for all drivers, and if caught the driver could face a fine of \$100.

New Hampshire Has Lowest Alcohol Related Driving Deaths in the Nation



According to national 2009 fatal crash statistics, New Hampshire has the lowest rate of fatalities from alcohol related crashes. Standing at 21%, this is far below Hawaii who ranks the highest at 68%. Alcohol-related fatal crashes is just one area that the U.S. Department of Transportation's Fatality Analysis Reporting System looks at. In 2009, there were 30,797 fatal motor vehicle crashes, which resulted in 33,808 deaths.

Types of fatal crashes varied across the nation, and some states experienced highs in one category and lows in another. New Hampshire was also noted because all of the passenger occupant deaths occurred

on rural roads, compared to just 10% in Massachusetts. The chart below compares New Hampshire with the other New England states in fatal accidents.

State	Passenger Car Occupants		Pickup & SUV Occupants		Large Truck Occupants		Motorcyclists		Pedestrians		Bicyclists		Total
	Num	%	Num	%	Num	%	Num	%	Num	%	Num	%	
Maine	76	48	38	24	1	1	23	14	11	7	0	0	159
Vermont	43	58	11	15	2	3	8	11	5	7	0	0	74
N. Hampshire	43	39	36	33	0	0	21	19	8	7	1	1	110
Massachusetts	157	47	56	17	3	1	51	15	48	14	6	2	334
Connecticut	107	48	40	18	1	0	43	19	26	12	1	0	223
Rhode Island	32	39	13	16	0	0	18	22	16	19	0	0	83

To see more fatal crash statistics, visit www.ihs.org/research/fatality_facts_2009/statebystate.html.

Transportation Commission Promotes Sustainable Funding

New Hampshire's Commission to Study Future Sustainable Revenue Sources for Funding Improvements to State and Municipal Highways and Bridges released its final report in November. The Commission was charged with studying the current state of highway funding and making recommendations for future sustainable funding. New Hampshire's highway fund has witnessed declining revenue because of several reasons. More fuel efficient cars have reduced the amount of revenue collected by the gas tax. Additionally, there has been little growth in miles driven over the past few years because of the economic recession. As revenue continues to decline, the state will not be able to cover the growing cost of construction, which is necessary to maintain the system.



The Commission found that in the short-term the highway-fund faces a \$1.2 billion cumulative deficit in ten years. That deficit will grow if a sustainable source of revenue is not found. The increasing deficit is not cyclical, and the Commission states that the longer the Legislature waits to take action, the more difficult it will be to solve the problem. In the immediate time frame, the highway fund could lose over \$80 million in the next biennium. The immediate loss will come from the sunset of the registration surcharge. A surcharge to the motor vehicle registration fee was added in 2009 to offset a deficit for two years. Now as the surcharge comes to an end in 2011, the revenue will need to be made up in one way or another.

The Commission looked at several types of funding methods including bonding, vehicle miles travelled, and public-private partnerships. Through their research they concluded that these ideas are not suitable for New Hampshire because they are not sustainable, or have not been fully developed (vehicle miles travelled). The Commission found that the road toll and registration fees are the only sustainable sources of funding New Hampshire has at this time.

From this conclusion, the Commission has proposed three recommendations:

- 1) to raise the additional revenue from permanent registration fee increases,
- 2) to raise the additional revenue, or
- 3) some combination of 1 and 2.

Now that the Commission has concluded its work, these recommendations may be used as a basis for future legislation.



A Safer Road to Tomorrow
48 Grandview Road
Bow, NH 03304

Paying For Accidents Caused By Others

Traffic accidents take a toll on the victims, and victims' families, but they also cost the general population a significant amount. Estimates show that crashes amount to \$500 per driver per year. The total cost of crashes reaches \$99 billion a year. The \$99 billion dollars is paid in part by the government, taking an economic toll on the nation. Statistics from a 2005 Center for Disease Control report show:

- \$28 billion was spent on hospital stays, and \$14 billion was spent on emergency room visits for survivors of traffic accidents
- Injuries involving people in cars, pick up trucks, vans, SUVs, heavy trucks and buses accounted for 71% of total medical care and productivity losses
- 1/3 of the costs can be attributed to young drivers and motorcyclists
- Men were twice as likely to die in crashes compared with women

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