

Changing the Culture of Speed

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Overview

- The problem
- What's been done
- A solution
- Concluding thoughts
- For more information

What is speeding?

- Exceeding the posted speed limit
- Driving too fast for conditions

The problem: crash data

- 30% of fatal crashes (13,113 fatalities in 2005);
\$40 billion annual costs
- Half of speeding fatalities: 50 mph or less roads
one-quarter: 35 mph or less roads
- No changes over last 15 years

The problem: drivers

- 80% speed on all road types in last month
- One-third speed on day of interview
- One-third drive at least 10 mph faster than other vehicles “sometimes or often”
- Most think no ticket until 7-8 mph over limit
- Two-thirds think other speeding drivers are a threat

The problem: speed culture

- Cars are built for speed
 - speedometers reach 120, 150, or 200 mph
 - ride is smooth, comfortable at high speeds
- Roads are built for speed
 - wide, straight, smooth
- Media advertises speed
 - movies, television, video games
- Lifestyle encourages speed
 - overscheduled lives

The problem in a nutshell

- Everybody speeds: but “the other guy” is the problem, not me
- Vehicles, roads, media, lifestyles encourage speed
- So speed kills at least 13,000 annually (probably many more)
- And speed hasn't been a national priority

If speeds were reduced

- 1% slower travel speeds decreases crashes by 2%, injury crashes by 3%, fatal crashes by 4%
- Example: 35 mph speed limit road, average speed 40 mph: 2 mph reduction to 38 mph would produce about:
 - 10% fewer crashes
 - 14% fewer serious injury crashes
 - 19% fewer fatal crashes

What's been done

- GHSA Survey of the States: Speeding (2005)
- U.S. Department of Transportation Speed Management Strategic Initiative (2005)
- National Forum on Speeding (2005)

A solution

- Changing the Culture of Speed
 - B. Harsha and J. Hedlund, AAAFTS 2007
- Local
- State
- Federal
- Private sector
- Roadway

A solution: local actions

- Targeted speeding control programs
 - choose targets carefully: aggressive drivers, school zones, neighborhood streets, high crash locations
 - publicize extensively
 - work with law enforcement throughout
 - use automated enforcement as appropriate
 - evaluate the results
 - DON'T use broad, unfocused speed enforcement programs

A solution: state actions

- Improve setting of speed limits – not just 85%
- Improve data collection
- Work with communities on speed control
- Evaluate speed control program results

A solution: federal actions

- Make speed control a national priority
- Encourage states to use automated enforcement
- Request funding in next reauthorization for state programs, federal research
- Conduct research and collect data especially travel speed data
- Develop effective communications
- Encourage private sector to change values, actions, communications regarding speed

A solution: private sector actions

- Discourage speeding and encourage reasonable speeds through policies, incentives, communications
- Applies to:
 - auto industry, broadly defined
 - television, movies, other media
 - insurance companies
 - companies with vehicle fleets
 - ...

A solution: roadway actions

- In the long run: design and build roads with self-enforcing speed limits
- In the short run:
 - speed humps, roundabouts on local streets
 - transitional signing at speed zone boundaries
 - visual cues to encourage slower speeds – pavement markings, roadside elements
 - better signal timing (helps with congestion, too)

Concluding thoughts

Tough to reduce speeding

- We all speed – no bad guys
- Speed control requires continual judgments
- Many speed limits aren't reasonable
- Speed sells
- Hurry-up society

What's Needed

- High priority, in traffic safety and in society overall; federal, state, local
- Leadership
- Reasonable speed limits
- Automated enforcement

For more information

- NHTSA survey: Speeding and Unsafe Driving Attitudes and Behavior DOT HS 809 730
- GHSA survey: www.statehighwaysafety.org
- DOT initiative:
www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/enforce/DOTSpeedManagementStrategicInitiative.pdf
- Forum report: National Forum on Speeding DOT HS 809 963
www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/enforce/NatForumSpeeding/

For more information

- Harsha and Hedlund: Changing America's Culture of Speed on the Roads, in AAAFTS "Improving Traffic Safety Culture in the United States"
www.aaafoundation.org/pdf/HarshaHedlund.pdf
- Jim Hedlund: jhedlund@sprynet.com