

Strategy – DMV Drivers Handbook Revisions; Sharing the Road with Bicyclists and Pedestrians

General Description

Pedestrian and bicyclist crashes and fatalities are a serious traffic safety problem in North Carolina. Between 2000 and 2004, an annual average of 1,867 pedestrian / motor vehicle crashes were reported to the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV); 160 of these crashes were fatal. These pedestrian fatalities account for 11% of all fatal crashes on North Carolina's streets and highways each year. In a recent study, the Federal Highway Administration identified North Carolina as one of the states with the highest pedestrian crash rates. An effort is underway to develop strategies to mitigate this problem.

The number of bicycle crashes and fatalities reported to DMV is significantly lower than pedestrian crash totals. Between 2000 and 2004, an average of 672 bicycle crashes annually, with 18 fatalities. A study of NC hospital emergency room data showed, however, that reported crashes only account for 20% of all bicycle crashes. While not all of the additional crashes involve collisions with motor vehicles, driver behavior can still be a factor. Reports of harassment and "near misses" suggest that conflicts between bicyclists and motorists have increased in recent years.

Bicycling and walking are becoming more prevalent modes of transportation in cities and towns across North Carolina. Many motorists are not aware of the laws that govern interactions with bicyclists and pedestrians nor are they familiar with the rights and responsibilities of these modes. Bicyclists and pedestrians also need to be more familiar with their legal rights and duties and to obey traffic laws.

One of the easier ways to make this information available to North Carolina's drivers is through the Division of Motor Vehicle's *Drivers Handbook*. This is a publication that is provided free of charge to individuals who typically request it prior to being tested or re-tested in order to receive/renew their learner's permit or driver's license. The *Handbook* is also available on-line. Unfortunately, in the current edition of this book, there is little information on the laws that impact bicycle / pedestrian / motor vehicle interactions and the proper way all users should operate to "Share the Road" safely and effectively.

This strategy focuses on making revisions to the present Driver's Handbook to include additional, specific information on laws, when to yield right of way, how to respect other road users' rights, and tips on the proper way for each mode to operate. As a part of this inclusion, test questions should also be added to the pool of potential question about these issues.

Technical Attributes

Target	All motorists in North Carolina and, to the extent possible, bicyclists and pedestrians who are also drivers. In particular, prospective motorists would be taught these principles in standardized Driver Education courses. In addition, motorists who become aware of the laws may transmit that information to young children who walk and bicycle but would not otherwise be exposed to this information.
Expected Effectiveness	This strategy has the potential to expose a significant number of drivers to bicycle and pedestrian laws and legal issues over a period of 5-8 years, depending on license expiration dates, etc. In particular, drivers applying for a license the first time would become aware of this information.
Keys to Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include appropriate language in the Driver's Handbook about applicable bicycle, pedestrian and motor vehicle laws.• Include questions on the subject in the general pool of potential questions on the written test to reinforce the principles being conveyed.• Develop an awareness campaign that targets motorists as well as bicyclists and pedestrians, including children.
Potential Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Obtaining agreement from the Division of Motor Vehicles to make the necessary additions to the next revision of the Driver's Handbook and test questions.• Obtaining agreement on exactly what information should be included in the Handbook, especially with regard to actions drivers can take to avoid crashes with bicyclists and pedestrians.
Appropriate Measures and Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct before and after surveys to assess driver knowledge and awareness of bicycle and pedestrian laws and their rights and responsibilities, possibly targeting newly-licensed drivers.• Conduct an analysis of bicycle and pedestrian crashes with motor vehicles before and after the DMV Handbook revisions.• Assess the quality of material included in the Driver Handbook, possibly based on an analysis of percentage correct responses to the added test questions.
Associated Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Printing costs of new DMV manuals, the repositioning of information that might affect pagination of the manual; printing/preparation of new tests to include questions on bicycle and pedestrian laws• Decisions about what material should be included in the Handbook are made by the DMV. Liability issues may be a concern.
Organizational, Institutional, and Policy Issues	Approval from DMV to modify the handbook; concurrent educational information for DOE for their Driver Education curricula, installation of the information in all new driver education courses taught by independent contractors.
Issues Affecting Implementation Time	The necessary additions would not be made until the next time the Driver's Handbook is revised. This may not happen in the immediate future since the handbook was recently revised.
Costs	Cost for this strategy should be minimal.
Training	Training needs exist primarily in providing the updated information to Driver Education teachers so that new drivers become familiarized with distracted and drowsy driving issues.
Legislative Needs	None