



Contact: Shawn Troy, State Traffic Safety Engineer
North Carolina Department of Transportation
919-814-5010
stroy@ncdot.gov



Contact: John Undeland
Roadway Safety Foundation
703-785-3461
info@roadwaysafety.org

For release: 1:30 p.m., Nov. 29, 2023

NOTE: Award presentation photo to follow by 4 p.m.

**N.C. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION HONORED
FOR REDUCING SEVERE CRASHES**

2023 National Roadway Safety Awards recognize innovations to protect pedestrians, cyclists and motorists as pandemic spike in road fatalities continues mostly unabated

WASHINGTON, DC – The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) was honored today with a 2023 National Roadway Safety Award for significantly reducing the number of fatal and serious injury crashes at rural intersections.

"Safety is our top priority," said NCDOT Secretary Joey Hopkins. "We're always looking for new, cost-effective ways to improve road safety by educating the public and using better engineering and designs where they are needed most."

Officials attribute the decrease in serious crashes statewide is due in part to a number of new road safety features, including NCDOT's decision to increase the number of those rural intersections with all-way stops.

While NCDOT had previously deployed all-way stops, this was the first time it implemented them in a systematic and widespread way. The agency used data analysis to target hundreds of intersections based on traffic volume and the documented number of front-end collisions.

North Carolina added all-way stops at 350 rural intersections after the state, like others, saw an increase in severe crashes during the pandemic. As of fall 2022, those intersections showed a 55 percent reduction in total crashes and a 92 percent drop in crashes with fatalities and severe injuries. They also had 65 percent fewer frontal-impact crashes, such as head-on and T-bone collisions, which are among the deadliest.

Nine of every 10 intersections converted to an all-way stop saw reductions in fatal and injury crashes, according to NCDOT's State Traffic Safety Engineer Shawn Troy.

"With limited safety dollars, we want to invest in what works best, what we can do at a reasonable or low cost, and what we can get on the ground pretty quickly," Troy said. "All-way stops checked all those boxes."

The 10 National Roadway Safety Award winners and two honorable mentions are using proactive, data-driven, collaborative and cost-effective approaches to better protect pedestrians, cyclists and motorists across the country. Much of their work began amid a nationwide spike in vehicular crashes during the pandemic, when U.S. crash [fatalities rose 7.3 percent in 2020 and a further 10.1 percent in 2021 before increasing by just 0.3 percent in 2022.](#)

Early estimates for the first half of 2023 show crash fatalities declined slightly but [remain at levels not seen since the mid-2000s.](#) Between January and June, fatalities nationwide declined by an estimated 3.3 percent, compared with the first six months of 2022, according to the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#) (NHTSA).

First-half 2023 fatalities in North Carolina have declined further. Through June, 799 people died on North Carolina roads, down 7.7 percent from the same time period last year, according to NCDOT data.

The continued high fatality numbers demonstrate the value of safety innovations like the all-way stops put in place in North Carolina and other road safety innovations added in the 11 states that received awards.

The National Roadway Safety Awards, presented biannually since 1999, are sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration and the nonprofit Roadway Safety Foundation. Projects were evaluated on safety effectiveness, innovation and efficient use of resources.

“The problem-solving creativity and dedication shown by the North Carolina Department of Transportation will save countless lives -- using a data driven approach and practices that are proven to reduce crashes,” said Federal Highway Administrator Shailen Bhatt. “It demonstrates a strong commitment to moving North Carolina toward zero deaths and serious injuries on the state’s roadways, and we are proud to applaud their efforts.”

“The stubbornly elevated fatality numbers underscore the urgent need for innovations like the National Roadway Safety Award honorees’ projects,” said Roadway Safety Foundation Executive Director Bruce Hamilton. “With several initiatives already showing major reductions in fatalities, injuries and crashes, today’s honorees are shining a bright light on the path to safer travel.”

Other honorees are:

- **Illinois:** Illinois Tollway for creating an app that shows livestream video of serious crashes to speed up incident response
- **Florida:** FDOT for demonstrating how skid-resistant pavement can shorten stopping distances at high-speed intersections
- **Louisiana:** Acadiana Planning Commission for reducing severe crashes at rural “T” intersections using larger signs and rumble strips to alert distracted drivers
- **Texas:** TxDOT for reducing pedestrian fatalities on an Austin highway, particularly among people experiencing homelessness
- **Delaware:** DelDOT for reducing fatal and serious injury crashes by converting more intersections to all-way stops
- **New Jersey:** South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization for developing a plan to prioritize cyclist and pedestrian safety in rural Cumberland County
- **New Jersey/New York:** The Port Authority of NY & NJ for reducing crashes by using timely data analysis to proactively identify and address safety problems

- **Minnesota:** MnDOT for its widespread use of “J-turn” intersections on high-speed divided highways to reduce the severity of crashes
- **California:** Caltrans for implementing pedestrian protections, signs to prevent wrong-way driving and other cost-effective safety measures more quickly
- **Virginia:** VDOT (Honorable Mention) for funding lower-cost safety projects in a more systemic way aimed at preventing traffic fatalities and serious injuries
- **Nevada:** NDOT (Honorable Mention) for its first comprehensive plan to reduce speeding, a leading cause of fatal and severe crashes

Winners were selected by an expert panel of judges:

- Lori Diaz, The American Traffic Safety Services Foundation
- Jennifer Hall, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
- Adam Kirk, Kentucky Transportation Center
- Stephen Read, Virginia Department of Transportation
- Brian Roberts, Transportation Research Board
- Terecia Wilson, Clemson University

For complete details on each of the winners and for more information on the national awards program, visit: **www.roadwaysafety.org/awards**

The Roadway Safety Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charitable and educational organization. Our mission is to reduce the frequency and severity of motor vehicle crashes, injuries and fatalities by improving roadway systems and their environment.