Commissioners' SHSP Letter

Dear Minnesotans,

We are pleased to share with you the 2025-2029 Minnesota Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP). The SHSP is a call to action for the state of Minnesota. We are asking our partners and all residents of Minnesota to act now to save lives and prevent serious injuries that result from traffic crashes.

In 2003, Minnesota formalized Toward Zero Deaths (TZD), a program that aims to eliminate traffic-related deaths through a systematic and proactive approach. Toward Zero Death's initial launch was a great success, with Minnesota reducing traffic-related deaths from a total of 657 in 2002 to 368 in 2011. The number of traffic-related deaths held fairly steady over the next eight years, with 2019 seeing a total of 364 roadway deaths.

But the COVID-19 pandemic changed the course of Minnesota's progress toward zero deaths. The number of traffic fatalities rose sharply to peak at 488 deaths in 2021, a 34% increase from the 2019 total. While reductions in 2022 and 2023 gave cautious optimism that the pandemic-related rise in traffic deaths was temporary, a sharp increase in 2024 underscores the persistence of this trend and the renewed determination needed to address it.

Preliminary data show that 478 people were killed in traffic crashes on Minnesota's roadways in 2024. This is the second-highest annual total in 15 years. The new Minnesota SHSP recognizes it's time to be bold and has set the ambitious goal of reducing traffic-related deaths to 225 or fewer by 2030. We all must work together to implement the SHSP strategies, change Minnesota's current trend line, and achieve the 2030 goal.

The 2025-2029 Minnesota SHSP identifies focus areas, strategies, and tactics to reduce the number of traffic-related deaths and serious injuries. It includes countermeasures that Engineers can deploy, programs for Educators and Enforcement to implement, and strategies for the Emergency Medical Service community – all intended to save lives and prevent serious injuries that result from traffic crashes. But that is not all: there is a role for Everyone to help implement this plan. Legislators are encouraged to enact new laws; policymakers and local elected officials are being asked to make safety investments a priority; local safety advocates are encouraged to tailor safety messages to reach communities and groups experiencing disproportionate risks; and each of us can make a difference in our communities by being responsible on our roadways.

Please visit the TZD website (https://www.minnesotatzd.org/) and reach out to your Regional TZD Coordinator and Law Enforcement Liaison to learn how to get involved and make a difference.

By implementing the strategies in this SHSP, we can create a culture in which traffic-related deaths and serious injuries are no longer acceptable.

Sincerely,

Brooke Cunningham, Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Health

Bob Jacobson, Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Public Safety

Nancy Daubenberger, Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Transportation