



## POLICY GUIDE

# Improving transportation safety

Injuries and fatalities due to motor vehicle crashes are a major public health issue. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for 15 to 20 year olds in the United States. In 2000, crash-related costs—including property damage, lost productivity, and medical expenses—totaled more than \$230 billion.<sup>1</sup> Although significant improvements have been made in the last few decades, much work is left to be done.

### Opportunities to Improve Transportation Safety

- » Encourage implementing Complete Streets for all road users.
- » Increase use of traffic calming measures.
- » Improve road and sidewalk lighting and road signage.
- » Increase number of sobriety check points.
- » Support bicycle infrastructure and increase safe bicycling facilities.
- » Support distracted driving/cell phone laws.
- » Improve safety education for drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians.
- » Support seat belt laws.
- » Support helmet laws for cyclists and motorcyclists.
- » Support child safety seat laws.
- » Increase funding for repaving, resurfacing, restoring, and rehabilitating to extend the life of existing roadways.
- » Promote license evaluation to identify cognitive deficits in elderly drivers.
- » Promote the use of automated speed enforcement cameras.

### Opportunities to Reduce Speeding<sup>1</sup>

- » Employ automated speed enforcement cameras.
- » Change road designs to slow traffic.
- » Use traffic calming measures to reduce speeds, such as:
  - Medians.
  - Forced turn islands.
  - Speed bumps.
  - Roundabouts.
  - Curb extensions.
  - Raised crosswalks.

### Opportunities to Decrease Distracted Driving

- » Provide incentive grants to states that address distracted driving.
- » Fund distracted driver education programs.
- » Fund enforcement programs for cell phone and other distracted driving violations.

*Turn for more »*

## Evaluating the Safety Effects of Bicycle Lanes in New York City<sup>3</sup>

In a peer-reviewed study published in the *American Journal of Public Health* in June 2012, a group of researchers evaluated the effects of on-street bicycle lanes installed prior to 2007 on different categories of crashes (total crashes, bicyclist crashes, pedestrian crashes, multiple-vehicle crashes, and injurious or fatal crashes) occurring on roadway segments and at intersections in New York City.

Researchers used generalized estimating methodology to compare changes in police-reported crashes in a treatment group and a comparison group before and after installation of bicycle lanes.

The study found that installation of bicycle lanes did not lead to an increase in crashes, despite the probable increase in the number of bicyclists.

The results indicate that characteristics of the built environment have a direct impact on crashes and should thus be controlled in studies evaluating traffic countermeasures such as bicycle lanes. To prevent crashes at intersections, the authors recommend installation of “bike boxes” and markings that indicate the path of bicycle lanes across intersections.

## New Law Prohibits Cell Phone Use for Many Teen Drivers<sup>2</sup>

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that 11 percent of all drivers under the age of 20 involved in fatal crashes were distracted at the time of the crash.

In Wisconsin, a new state law took effect on Nov. 1, 2012, that prohibits drivers with an instruction permit or probationary license—which includes many teenagers—from “using a cellular or other wireless telephone except to report an emergency” while driving.

Violators are subject to a fine of \$20 to \$40 for a first offense and \$50 to \$100 for a subsequent offense within a year.

Wisconsin law also prohibits texting while driving for all motorists.

To prevent distractions from cell phone use and texting while driving, the Wisconsin State Patrol advises all drivers to:

- » Turn off their phones or switch to a silent mode.
- » Use voicemail to tell callers that they’re driving and will return the call.
- » Pull over to a safe area if they must use their cell phones to call or text.
- » Ask a passenger to call or text for them.

1. Partnership for Prevention. “Transportation & Health: Policy Interventions for Safer, Healthier People and Communities.” July 2011. Available at [www.prevent.org/data/files/transportation/transportationandhealthpolicycomplete.pdf](http://www.prevent.org/data/files/transportation/transportationandhealthpolicycomplete.pdf).
2. WI Department of Transportation. “New law that prohibits cell phone use for many teen drivers takes effect on November 1.” October 2012. Available at [www.dot.wi.gov/opencms/export/nr/modules/news/news\\_3671.html\\_786229440.html](http://www.dot.wi.gov/opencms/export/nr/modules/news/news_3671.html_786229440.html).
3. Chen L, Chen C, Srinivasan R, McKnight CE, Ewing R, Roe, M. “Evaluating the Safety Effects of Bicycle Lanes in New York City.” *American Journal of Public Health*. 2012. 102 (6): 1120-1127. Available at [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22095351](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22095351).

*The development of this resource was supported by the Cooperative Agreement Number EH11-1110 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

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