

# *2012 Tribal Transportation Safety Summit Summary*

**June 5, 2012**

**Gateway Center  
Helena, Montana**



Held in cooperation with: Blackfeet Nation, Confederate Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Crow Nation, Chippewa Cree-Rocky Boy's, Fort Belknap Tribes, Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes, Northern Cheyenne Tribes, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of Indian Health Services, Department of Health and Human Services, Montana Highway Patrol, and the Montana Department of Transportation, among others.

## 2012 TRIBAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY SUMMIT June 5, 2012

The 2012 Tribal Transportation Safety Summit was held at the Gateway Center in Helena on June 5 with nearly 50 attendees. Participants represented seven of the federally recognized tribes in Montana as well as the Shoshone & Arapahoe Tribes of Wyoming. Safety partners represented a wide variety of organizations and agencies addressing the four E's of transportation safety (Education, Enforcement, Engineering, and Emergency Response) included Indian Health Services; tribal, county, and BIA law enforcement; BIA Transportation and Engineering staff and Montana Department of Transportation staff, among others. This is the third time since implementation of Montana's Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan (CHSP) in 2006 that a Tribal Safety Summit has been held. As discussed at the 2011 Summit, a Montana Tribal Transportation Safety Summit will now be held annually. This Summit provides an opportunity for tribal agencies and local, state, federal, individual stakeholders and organizations to discuss and work together to improve transportation safety.

### Welcome and Summit Purpose – Dony White, Blackfoot Transportation Planner and Facilitator of the MT CHSP Native American Emphasis Area

Dony White began the Summit by welcoming attendees, thanking them for coming to discuss safety issues and concerns and helping to determine recommendations and solutions. Following introductions, Tim Real Bird, Transportation Planner with the Crow Nation opened with a prayer. Dony began the Summit dialog by asking the question "What's happening on our tribal roads?" He pointed out that fatalities on Montana reservations occur at a rate four times higher than outside the reservations and that the purpose of the summit was to find ways to reduce these fatalities. By working together transportation safety can be addressed through the "4 E's" – Education, Enforcement, Engineering, and Emergency Services.



Participants used i-Clickers polling system to register their opinions regarding:

- Disciplines of the 4 E's of transportation safety represented by attendees. The leading discipline represented was Enforcement, followed closely by Engineering and Planning.
- Opinions on the most critical Native American Transportation Safety Problem were polled and were found to be, in order of significance:
  - Roadway departures
  - Impaired driving
  - Seat belt use/ child safety seats
  - Speeding
  - Pedestrian crashes

- Attendees were asked about their familiarity with local Tribal Transportation Safety plans. “Somewhat familiar” was the leading response of participants.

**Engineering and Planning – Craig Genzlinger, FHWA Federal Lands; Sam Windy Boy, BIA Project Engineer; Dan Lozar, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes Dams and Roads Program; and Kraig McLeod, MDT Traffic and Safety Management**



This session provided an overview of various programs and activities being conducted by tribes and the state to address safety issues on Native American reservations. Safety is a major aspect of the Indian Reservation Roads (IRR) Program, jointly administered by the BIA and FHWA. IRR safety efforts focus on pedestrian safety and the use of transit. FHWA Federal Lands supports transportation safety on the reservations through road maintenance, the development of Tribal Transportation Safety Plans, the use and sharing of crash data, and road safety audits.

The concept of Tribal Transportation Safety Plans began in Montana and FHWA continues to work with a number of tribes to develop comprehensive safety plans for their communities. A National Tribal Safety Summit is scheduled to be held this summer in Minnesota to continue collaboration, focusing on the safety disciplines of transportation safety.



BIA’s tribal transportation safety planning efforts includes development of a Long Range Transportation Plan that serves as a 20-year planning document involving the community, the Tribal Council, local, and state governments. A Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that programs specific projects that can be completed, with justification based on Tribal transportation needs and funding availability is included in the Long Range Transportation Plan. The BIA is also supporting a 15-month pilot project to conduct road safety audits. The TIP prioritizes project for funding. Various engineering factors affect transportation safety, including rural and residential road design, bridge design, safety projects and enhancements, rehabilitation and restoration projects, and transit system projects.

MDT manages the state’s road safety audit program. High Crash Corridors/High Crash Locations is an Emphasis Area of the state’s Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan (CHSP) and Road Safety Audits (RSAs) are conducted as a strategy within this Emphasis Area. A Road Safety Audit is a comprehensive review of the corridor involving broad participation of the affected community. It involves data collection, field review, and the preparation of short-, mid-,

and long-term recommendations. An audit of MT16/200 in Glendive examined both behavioral and engineering solutions for the corridor. Tribal involvement in the RSA process is essential when audits are being conducted on or near reservations to assure that all affected interests are represented. MDT manages the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) which programs specific safety projects for funding. MDT determines which projects are eligible for safety project funding by identifying a trend that can be addressed through engineering mitigation, and then conducting a benefit/cost analysis. Other government agencies, including tribal governments, can submit up to five locations annually for consideration for funding. However, it should be noted that the process is competitive and funds are limited. The HSIP Application is on MDT's website:

[http://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/forms/hsip\\_application.pdf](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/forms/hsip_application.pdf).

**Education and Safety Programs – Avis Spencer, Fort Belknap Tribes Injury Prevention Specialist and SOAR Coordinator; Amelia Adams, SOAR Coordinator for Salish Kootenai, Lavonne King, Northern Cheyenne Tribe SOAR Coordinator; and Priscilla Sinclair, MDT State Highway Traffic Safety Office**

Education activities conducted at Fort Belknap are closely coordinated with law enforcement. Programs include seat belt surveys, child safety seat clinics, safety presentations to schools and the community, and public service announcements. Similar programs are conducted on other reservations.

The SOAR (Safe on All Roads) program is being reactivated across the state through MDT. The new program manager for the SOAR program is Sheila Cozzie. MDT is currently working on contracts with the Blackfeet and Northern Cheyenne to establish the SOAR program on their reservations. A contract is in place with the Confederate Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

Poverty creates a particular challenge in getting the safety message across, often requiring direct contact and in-home visits. Males, age 18 to 34, have been the primary target of the education program at Northern Cheyenne but this target group has been resistant. As a result, their program is now working with the children of this target group as an alternate approach. Seat belt use appears to be declining on Northern Cheyenne and there have been various community events to try to increase awareness of occupant protection. For example, a "In Remembrance" parade float was used in the local community parade. Northern Cheyenne has a primary seat belt law but, lately, law enforcement has not been as active in enforcing the law so there has been less compliance.



**EMS and Injury Prevention – Darcy Merchant, Billings Area Indian Health Services (IHS) Environmental Health Specialist, and Adrian Spotted Bird, Fort Peck Tribal Health and Injury Prevention**



IHS has conducted site identification projects on the Crow, Fort Belknap, Fort Peck, and Wind River Reservations over the past 15 years. These projects are intended to identify crash cluster sites and factors contributing to the crashes. This data is then used to develop interactive GIS digital mapping of crash rates and severity. MDT and tribal data is used in this analysis although this requires a tribal resolution to authorize tribal participation in the project. Some of the challenges of data collection are unknown BIA road locations due to lack of reference markers. Also, BIA does not GPS crash locations.

Some recommendations from participants for improved data included:

- Improve upkeep of traffic signs and mile markers
- Put GPS units in police vehicles to plot crash locations
- Establish agreements between tribes and MDT to share annual crash data
- Conduct collaborative engineering analyses with tribal and MDT participation

Fort Peck has had a primary seat belt law since March, 2009. However this law needs to be reintroduced regularly to the Tribal Council due to turnover. As a result, this requires ongoing education and a collaborative effort involving a variety of players.

**Law Enforcement – Officer Josh Bird, Blackfeet Law Enforcement Services; Sheriff Vernon Billedeaux, Glacier County; Special Agent Kyle Sinclair, BIA Blackfeet; Robert Ironmaker, Fort Belknap Tribal Law Enforcement Criminal Investigator; Officer Kenda Stuehm, Highway Safety, Fort Peck Law and Justice Department; Deputy Avis Ball, Roosevelt County; Major Kenton Hicketier, Montana Highway Patrol (MHP); and Sergeant Cal Schock, MHP**

This session involved presentations by various law enforcement representatives who partner in tribal law enforcement and who are responsible for the initial gathering of crash data. “Click-it or ticket” and the BATmobile (Blood Alcohol Testing) are used on the Blackfeet as checkpoints to observe for DUI and seat belt use. Presentations are also given in schools on traffic safety which includes Montana Highway Patrol (MHP)



and Glacier County Sheriff Office participation. Data is regarded as the most challenging issue and a better way of reporting is needed for reporting. Data is essential for all safety efforts undertaken by law enforcement.

There is frustration over the timeliness of response to requests to close and provide notice of road closures. The local tribal and county law enforcement officers will request closures which are then fed through a chain of contacts before a closure is actually done. White out conditions are a common occurrence and if a roadway remains open it means limited resources are needed to remain on the roadway to keep drivers from traveling. This poses dangerous situation for the officers from both exposure and possibility of being hit due to poor visibility of drivers. Law enforcement would like to see a review of road closure procedures.

Glacier County is working on the development of a cross-jurisdiction agreement with the Blackfeet Nation Police Department. One of the biggest challenges in the county is keeping stray cattle off of the road. Law enforcement works with the Glacier County DUI Task Force and is trying to improve local laws. When drivers are pulled over by Blackfeet law enforcement under suspicion of DUI they are also checked for seat belt use. If a DUI needs to be issued, the county or MHP is called in. However, there are not enough officers on the reservation and personnel are stretched thin given that they cover 1.5 million acres. Also, there is a lot of turnover with officers staying on the job on the average of only two years. The Blackfeet Nation has adopted the Montana Code Annotated (MCA) and has an ATV ordinance.

Tribes are encouraged to establish cross-jurisdictional arrangements. However Fort Belknap does not have a cross-deputization agreement and is not optimistic that it ever will. On the other hand, they conduct sobriety checkpoints, checkpoints at proms, click-it or ticket campaigns, and also provide safety education presentations in the schools. A major problem is speeding on the two major highways through Fort Belknap, particularly when non-Indian speeders need to be cited. Due to jurisdiction issues, non-Indian speeders can only be cited under civil code.

Fort Peck is using new crash reconstruction software (ARIS 360) and has a new data clerk who is compiling their crash data. Fort Peck Tribes leads the state in having a primary seat belt law which can be used to pull people over on suspicion of DUI. Fort Peck also has a cross-jurisdictional partnership with the local counties and is going through older crash data to identify problem locations. They have replaced missing traffic signs and are working towards erecting mile markers to enhance response time and help pinpoint crash locations.



There has been an increase in transportation safety issues and crashes in northeast Montana due to the Bakken oil boom, wind farm development, various construction projects, and the port project in Shelby. In particular, there has been an increase in heavy truck traffic now in Roosevelt County as a result of the oil boom. Many of the areas employees are from out-of-state and unfamiliar with local roads and traffic ordinances, resulting in a many large truck speed limit tickets being written. There is also a serious DUI issue. Roosevelt County has received an underage drinking laws



grant to fund an officer to work specifically with youth on education and prevention issues. They have also collaborated efforts with the Fort Peck Tribes. Just a police presence alone is felt to be an effective deterrent.

The Montana Crash Data Acquisition Project continues to progress. Data being analyzed through the project enables planners and law enforcement to look at the data “behind the dots” (the location of a crash) and to analyze the actual causal factors of the crash – behavior, roadway, environment and mechanical - in order to be proactive and make substantive safety improvements. A web-based Montana crash data portal has nearly been finalized, consolidating a number of different crash databases. Now the challenge will be to refine the quality of the data to ensure continued accurate crash data. The benefit of a web-based tool is that there is no cost associated with software, training will be available and GIS is used to identify hot spots. During the discussion, Craig Genzlinger offered FHWA’s assistance to tribes in working with MHP for crash reporting to purchase any hardware that might be needed to support data collection. MDT can provide technical assistance in the analysis of the crash data.

### **Data Issues and Needs – Dennis Trusty, Northern Plains Tribal Technical Assistance Program (TTAC)**

Crash reporting, data collection and use issues, along with other transportation safety issues will all be discussed at the TTAP Annual Meeting in September, the National Tribal Transportation Safety Summit scheduled in August, and the National Tribal Transportation Conference in November. Urban data needs to be viewed separately from rural data to avoid distortion of findings. Rural crashes typically involve a single vehicle and urban crashes are more likely to involve multiple vehicles but are less likely to result in a fatality. A study funded by a grant from the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) has recently begun to examine best practices for rural emergency response. Distracted driving is increasingly becoming a more significant issue on reservations and needs to be better accounted for in the data.



In review of issues discussed and data relevant to Native Americans and tribal lands, the key safety problems appear to be related to:

- Impaired driving
- Distracted driving
- Lack of safety belt use
- Weather conditions and travel during poor weather

### **Summary of Tribal Safety Needs and Solutions – Dony White, Blackfoot Transportation Planning Director and Facilitator of the MT CHSP Native American Emphasis Area, Safety Workgroup**

Dony led a discussion with participants to summarize ideas presented throughout the day to address tribal transportation safety needs. The following list summarizes the ideas based on the “4 E’s” (Education, Enforcement, Emergency Response, and Engineering):

### ***Education***

- Enhance community awareness and education
- Reinvigorate and enhance SOAR
- Develop and utilize more tribal-specific materials and outreach and utilize safety messaging that involves local kids (also recognize the cultural differences between the various tribes and the need to develop unique messages for each tribe)
- Identify existing educational efforts and opportunities to collaborate at both the individual and community levels – identify potential partners and work together
- Use variable message signs to convey safety messages

### ***Enforcement***

- DUI “Blitz Campaigns”
- Radar-controlled speed indicator signs in conjunction with enforcement
- Increase enforcement (and increase number of officers in the field)
- Utilize “movie star” (charismatic) officers to speak to kids and the public
- Establish a task force to target DUI enforcement
- Expand DUI courts
- Establish a 24/7 sobriety program

### ***Emergency Response/EMS***

- Support the NCHRP research project on Best Practices in Rural Emergency Response
- Improve retention of EMS personnel
- Provide better training for EMS personnel
- Provide competitive wages and insurance for EMS personnel
- Protect EMS personnel from liability

### ***Engineering***

- Implement roadway changes to reduce run-off-the-road crashes
- Streamline coordination and process for road closures during inclement weather

### **HIGHEST Priorities**

- Continue to enhance coordination between tribal organizations, counties, and state agencies
- Work together to improve crash data collection and sharing of data between agencies (tribal, county, and state)
- Increase law enforcement

An i-Clicker polling survey provided an immediate response for a Summit Evaluation. Participants responded that the most important topic for them at the conference was the overview of existing safety programs, initiatives, and ordinances. This was closely followed by an even response to crash data and shared experiences. Improved crash data collection and sharing was voted as the top priority for the Tribal Safety Workgroup to focus on in the coming year. Ground transportation and lack of proper medical facilities were the biggest issues regarding emergency response, followed by lack of qualified people and equipment. Participants responded that continued collaboration was the most helpful activity in moving tribal transportation safety forward.



### **Next Steps/Conclusion – John Healy, Sr., Fort Belknap Tribal Transportation Planner and Transit Director**

As next steps, the Tribal Safety Work Group (Emphasis Area Team) will discuss strategies suggested at the 2012 Tribal Safety Summit at their monthly meetings. An overview of the 2011 Summit will be provided at the upcoming quarterly Tribal Transportation Planners meeting. Planning will also get underway for the 2013 Tribal Transportation Safety Summit. John Healy has volunteered to host next year's Summit on behalf of the Fort Belknap Tribes and suggested that a location other than Helena be considered. He noted that a June date conflicts with various roadway construction programs and thought that April might be better timing. Alternatively, the Summit could be held in conjunction with other Tribal transportation conferences to allow a broader audience to participate and to promote transportation safety awareness. John then thanked all participants for attending and said he looked forward to next year's Summit and gave a closing invocation asking for safe travel for attendees.

## 2012 Tribal Safety Summit Attendance List

Name	Title	Agency
Amelia Adams	SOAR Coordinator	Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
Marcee Allen	Safety/Traffic/Design Engineer	FHWA
Deputy Avis Ball	Deputy	Roosevelt County
Vernon "Napi" Billedeaux	Sheriff	Glacier County
Josh Bird	Officer	Blackfeet Law Enforcement Services
Mike Brown	Safety of Dams Coordinator/ Roads Program Manager	Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
Pam Buckman	Occupant Protection Program Manager	MDT – State Highway Traffic Safety Office
Sheila Cozzie	Cultural Liaison	MDT – State Highway Traffic Safety Office
Lorelle Demont	Impaired Driving Prevention Programs	MDT – State Highway Traffic Safety Office
Rhonda Fenner	Administrative Officer	Office of the Governor
Donna Fisher	Tribal Council	Northern Cheyenne Tribe
Courdell French	Assistant Tribal Safety Officer, Transportation	Crow Nation
Craig Genzlinger	Federal Lands	FHWA
Gerald Gilbert	Engineer	BIA – Transportation and Planning
Albert Gros Ventre	Tribal Safety Officer, Transportation	Crow Nation
Deborah Haines	Sanitarian	Crow IHS, Division of Environmental Health Services
John Healy, Sr.	Tribal Transportation Planner/ Transit Director	Fort Belknap Tribes
Ronnie Joe Henry	Transportation Planner	Chippewa Cree Tribe – Rocky Boy's
Major Kenton Hickethier		Montana Highway Patrol
Robert Ironmaker	Tribal Law Enforcement Criminal Investigator	Fort Belknap Tribe/Indian Health Service Clinic
Lavonne King	SOAR Program Coordinator	Northern Cheyenne Tribe
Pam Langve-Davis	CHSP Program Coordinator	MDT- Rail, Transit and Planning
Sam Lawton	Principal	Cambridge Systematics, Inc.

Name	Title	Agency
Dan Lozar	Safety of Dams and Roads Program	Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
Kraig McLeod	Traffic and Safety Management	MDT- Engineering Division
Darcy Merchant	Environmental Health Specialist	Billings Area Indian Health Service
Danielle Murphy	Operations Research Analyst	MDT – State Highway Traffic Safety Office
Bobbi Perkins	Injury Prevention Coordinator	DPHHS
Cameron Russell	SOAR Program Coordinator	Northern Cheyenne Tribe
SGT Cal Schock		Montana Highway Patrol
Kyle Sinclair	Blackfeet Special Agent	BIA – Law Enforcement
Priscilla Sinclair	Supervisor	MDT – State Highway Traffic Safety Office
Frank Smith		Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes
John Smith	Transportation Director	Shoshone and Arapaho Tribes- Wyoming
Janis Spear	Transportation Planning	Northern Cheyenne Tribe
Avis Spencer	Injury Prevention Specialist – SOAR Program Coordinator	Fort Belknap Tribes
Adrian Spotted Bird	Injury Prevention	Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes
Carol Strizich	CHSP Program Manager	MDT- Rail, Transit and Planning
Kenda Stuehm	Highway Safety Officer	Fort Peck Law and Justice Dept
Connie Thompson-Gourneau	Assistant Transportation Planner	Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes
Dennis Trusty	Transportation Specialist	Northern Plains Tribal Technical Assistance Program
Brianna Whitaker	Programs and Project Analysis	MDT – Rail, Transit, and Planning
Don White	Transportation Planner	Blackfeet Nation
Sam Windy Boy	Project Engineer	BIA – Transportation and Planning
Lynn Zanto	Administrator	MDT – Rail, Transit, and Planning