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NOTE: Award presentation photo to follow by 3 p.m.

**LOUISIANA'S ACADIANA PLANNING COMMISSION HONORED
FOR REDUCING SEVERE CRASHES AT RURAL "T" INTERSECTIONS**
2023 National Roadway Safety Awards recognize innovations to protect pedestrians, cyclists and motorists as pandemic spike in U.S. road fatalities continues largely unabated

WASHINGTON, DC – The Acadiana (Louisiana) Planning Commission was honored today with a 2023 National Roadway Safety Award for significantly reducing fatal and serious injury crashes at rural "T" intersections by installing larger stop signs and rumble strips to alert distracted drivers.

Collisions at rural "T" intersections are often severe because motorists who fail to stop at the top of the "T" end up driving off the road – and often into a tree, fence, ditch or other hazard. In the Acadiana region, local data indicate that many of these crashes involve driver distraction, including cell phone use.

"It's a huge problem," said Ashley Moran, senior planner for the Acadiana Planning Commission. "We're seeing more and more of this."

In response, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development installed new rumble strips at 18 intersections that were identified by a Commission analysis as being at high risk for these crash types. New flashing beacons, signs warning of "stop ahead," and larger stop signs on both sides of the roadway also serve to alert potentially distracted drivers as they approach the "T" intersection, thus decreasing their stopping distance.

Before the safety improvements, the 18 intersections had a total 89 crashes involving vehicles that ran the stop sign and went off the road. After the improvements, between 2020 and 2022, that number of crashes plummeted to eight, even as collisions across the state increased during the pandemic. Eleven of the 18 intersections had no collisions of that type.

"These are really easy and effective ways to address the problem," Moran said.

The Acadiana Planning Commission serves the Louisiana parishes of Acadia, Evangeline, Iberia, Lafayette, St. Landry, St. Martin and Vermillion.

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. [roadway fatalities rose 7.3 percent in 2020 and a further 10.1 percent in 2021 before holding steady at a high level in 2022 \(-0.3 percent\)](#).

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 Louisiana fell farther: An estimated 375 people died on Louisiana roads, down 12.3 percent from the same time frame last year, according to [NHTSA's preliminary data](#).

The continued high fatality numbers demonstrate the value of safety innovations like the Acadiana Planning Commission's "T" intersection improvements and the 11 other projects from across the nation.

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 Acadiana Planning Commission 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 Louisiana 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:

- **North Carolina:** NCDOT for reducing severe crashes at rural intersections by adding more all-way stops
- **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
- **Texas:** TxDOT for reducing pedestrian fatalities on an Austin highway, particularly among people experiencing homelessness
- **Delaware:** DeIDOT 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.