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NOTE: Award presentation photo to follow by 1 p.m.

**CALTRANS HONORED FOR ENHANCING PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AND PREVENTING
WRONG-WAY DRIVING AND RUN-OFF-ROAD CRASHES**

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 California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) was honored today with a 2023 National Roadway Safety Award for quickly installing wrong-way driver prevention safety enhancement, high visibility crosswalks, curve warning signs, and other safety enhancements to prevent serious crashes.

As part of a two-year pilot project, Caltrans added \$21.5 million annually to its maintenance budget to install warning signs, roadway markers, high visibility crosswalks, and other small-scale but cost-effective safety projects across entire districts. The projects were designed to protect pedestrians, head off wrong-way drivers, and prevent motorists from driving off roads on curves.

Maintenance projects are typically used to replace and repair existing roadway infrastructure and equipment. However, the Highway Maintenance 4 (HM-4) Safety Program is an innovative project delivery strategy that utilizes the maintenance delivery process to install cost-effective safety enhancements based on proactive safety or safety investigation recommendations.

This approach allows districts to implement stand-alone safety projects more quickly, delivering new signs, crosswalks, and other safety measures within a year. On the other hand, incremental safety improvements that go through capital project delivery may have to wait up to five years to be installed as part of larger road construction projects. With the HM-4 Safety Program, these improvements can be implemented far more quickly, making California's roads safer for everyone.

In the two fiscal years of the HM-4 Safety Pilot Program (Fiscal Year 21/22 and Fiscal Year 22/23), Caltrans completed safety enhancements in 4,540 locations, exceeding the program's goal by almost 1,290 locations. Projects include the installation of High Visibility Crosswalk on Pacific Coast Highway in Orange County, LED-bordered "wrong way" signs on Interstate 5 exit ramps in San Diego County and red reflective "wrong way" markers on Interstate 60 exit ramps in Orange County, as well as upgrading "Do Not Enter" signs at some highway exit ramps.

Caltrans started the program in response to the state falling short of federal safety performance targets. The Federal Highway Administration required Caltrans to do more to protect older drivers and pedestrians, who are among the most vulnerable road users, while also improving high-risk rural roads.

In 2019, collisions in California caused more than 3,900 fatalities and 16,000 severe injuries. A disproportionate percentage of fatal crashes – about 20 percent – on the State Highway System involve pedestrians.

“This program allows us to quickly initiate and complete enhancements that are lower-cost but highly effective in terms of saving lives,” said Rachel Carpenter, chief safety officer for Caltrans. “This is a great example of a proactive, collaborative program that is helping Caltrans to achieve our goal of zero fatal and serious injury crashes on our State Highway System.”

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 California fell further: An estimated 2,061 people died on California roads, down 12 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 California’s work to protect pedestrians and prevent wrong-way driving, as well as 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 Caltrans 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 California 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
- **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
- **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.