



Contact: John Undeland  
Roadway Safety Foundation  
703-785-3461  
Info@RoadwaySafety.org

**EMBARGOED**

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**NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
IS 1 OF JUST 7 WINNERS OF 2021 NATIONAL ROADWAY SAFETY  
AWARD**

***Long-Life Lane Markings Tested by NCDOT Significantly Reduce Lane Departure Crashes***

WASHINGTON, DC – The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) was honored today with a 2021 National Roadway Safety Award for its evaluation and deployment of long-life pavement markings, an initiative that saves lives and prevents injuries by significantly reducing lane departure crashes. The biennial awards program is sponsored jointly by the Federal Highway Administration and the Roadway Safety Foundation.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, speaking about NCDOT and the other award winners, said: “Congratulations to today’s seven honorees for the remarkable work they’ve done to protect the traveling public. They are proof that we have no shortage of willpower or good ideas for improving roadway safety.”

In a state with more than 60,000 miles of two-lane secondary highways, **about 14,000 fatal and serious-injury lane departure crashes occurred between 2015 and 2019**. This comprised **55 percent of all fatal and serious-injury crashes**.

Addressing this enormous safety challenge, NCDOT initiated a comprehensive test program to help drivers more easily see lane markings, especially when driving on curvy roads, during inclement weather and at night. The department tested a host of long-life markings on more than 400 miles of roadway, recording **an overall 13 percent reduction in lane departure crashes**, with the best performance (a 19 percent reduction) coming from wider, 6-inch markings.

The long-life markings also are designed to provide between five years and seven years of adequate retro-reflectivity and pavement delineation, as compared to approximately two years from standard markings. By reducing the frequency of reinstallation (which itself is a hazard and causes travel delays), the long-life markings are more cost efficient over the long run.

The highly successful results of the program have inspired the State to invest millions of dollars to systemically apply long-life markings to thousands of miles of rural two-lane secondary roadways statewide.

“Safety is our top priority, and we are continuously evaluating new initiatives that will result in fewer crashes and traffic deaths,” NCDOT Secretary Eric Boyette said. “I’m proud of my team. It’s quite a distinction for their efforts to be recognized by the Roadway Safety Foundation and the Federal Highway Administration.

Initial data from the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#) and [Federal Highway Administration](#) show that 38,680 people died nationwide in motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2020, despite a 13.2 percent decline in vehicle miles traveled due to the pandemic. Fatalities increased 7.2 percent from 2019 to the highest number since 2007. An estimated one-third of U.S. highway fatalities are related to deficient roadway conditions.

“Last year’s jump in fatalities was alarming and projects like NCDOT’s intensive installation of long-life pavement markings is saving lives by helping guide motorists safely to their destinations,” said Roadway Safety Foundation Executive Director Greg Cohen. “Future travelers in North Carolina, whose lives and limbs will be spared by this initiative, will owe an unknowing debt of gratitude to the State’s traffic engineers. We urge DOTs across the nation to look at NCDOT and other awardees’ innovations and replicate them wherever possible.”

First presented in 1999, the National Roadway Safety Awards recognize roadway safety achievements that move the nation toward zero deaths and serious injuries on U.S. roadways. The program honors outstanding projects involving infrastructure, operational or program-related innovations and projects were evaluated on three criteria: Effectiveness, Innovation, and Efficient Use of Resources. The seven awardees were selected from a nationwide pool of applicants and the other awardees are:

- City of Bellevue, WA for its video analytics traffic safety program;
- Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization for its Complete Streets Master Plan;
- North Carolina Dept. of Transportation for its long-life pavement markings safety effort;
- Village of Whitefish Bay, WI for its community-wide roadway safety improvements;
- California Dept. of Transportation for its 2020-2024 Strategic Highway Safety Plan update;
- Texas Dept. of Transportation’s tool to assess the safety of rural highway design elements; and
- Florida Dept. of Transportation for its use of smart work zone safety technologies.

Winners were selected by an expert panel of judges from a variety of disciplines. For complete details on each of the winners, and for more information on the national awards program, visit <http://www.safety.fhwa.dot.gov/roadwaysafetyawards/>.

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*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 through improvements to roadway systems and their environment.*