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ARIZONA PROGRAM TO COMBAT WRONG-WAY DRIVING CRASHES IN PHOENIX WINS NATIONAL ROADWAY SAFETY AWARD

WASHINGTON, DC -- The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) was honored today in a ceremony on Capitol Hill with a 2019 National Roadway Safety Award for its successful “Wrong Way Driving (WWD) Detection System” to reduce the number of serious and often-fatal WWD crashes.

“Today we honor seven projects with innovative solutions for reducing crashes and saving lives,” said Federal Highway Administration Executive Director Tom Everett. “We commend Arizona and this year’s other winners for their success not only in saving lives on our nation’s roads, but also for maximizing the cost effectiveness of federal, state, and local funds that were used.”

The National Roadway Safety Awards are a biennial awards program sponsored jointly by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Roadway Safety Foundation (RSF). The awards recognize roadway safety achievements that move the United States toward zero deaths and serious injuries on the nation’s roadways.

ADOT’s first-in-the-nation WWD Detection System went into operation in January 2018 on a 15-mile segment of I-17 in Central Phoenix to curtail a growing number of WWD crashes. The system employs 90 thermal cameras to detect and track wrong-way vehicles and instantly alerts both traffic operators and law enforcement while also illuminating warning signs facing wrong-way drivers, who are often alcohol or drug impaired.

A key goal of the system is to reduce police response time to WWD incidents, who previously had to rely on 911 calls from other motorists. To date, the system has detected more than 80 WWD vehicles and most of the drivers detected have turned around on an off-ramp and have not entered the freeway’s mainline lanes. ADOT is completing an evaluation of the system to determine next steps in expanding the technology to other Arizona highways.

Motor Vehicle crashes are among the nation’s leading killers, costing more than 37,000 deaths and nearly 2.7 million injuries in 2017, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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“While our roads and vehicles have gotten safer over the years, clearly motor vehicle crashes still take a tremendous toll,” said Roadway Safety Foundation Executive Director Greg Cohen. “Unfortunately, deficiencies in our roadway environments still contribute to nearly one-third of all crashes, so making improvements to our roadway infrastructure is a critical part of reducing these devastating crashes.

“Our Roadway Safety Awards honor those who successfully identified dangerous issues in their systems, as the ADOT team did, and applied the latest research and technology to implement effective and cost-efficient fixes. We congratulate and salute our winners and urge DOTs across the nation to look at these innovative solutions and replicate them wherever possible.”

The National Roadway Safety Award projects were evaluated on three criteria: Effectiveness, Innovation, and Efficient Use of Resources. The program honors outstanding projects involving infrastructure, operational or program-related innovations. The seven winners were selected from a nationwide pool of applicants.

The other awardees were: Florida for two programs, a pedestrian and bicycle safety initiative and for creating a process that dramatically decreased the time to design and install safety fixes; Missouri for a program to install median U-turns; South Dakota for its high friction surface treatments to address road departure crashes in winter weather; and Virginia for two programs, one to better manage guardrails in critical areas and the other for development of its innovative statewide pedestrian safety plan.

Winners were selected by an expert panel of judges from a variety of disciplines. This year's judges included: Bruce Hamilton, Managing Director, Roadway Safety Foundation; Ivan Horodyskyj, NOVA district engineer, Virginia Department of Transportation; Bernardo Kleiner, senior program officer/transportation safety specialist, Transportation Research Board; Norah Ocel, acting team leader—safety operations, FHWA; Brian Roberts, principal, BCR Consulting, LLC; Dr. Marie B. Walsh, director, Louisiana Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP); and Terecia W. Wilson, Institute for Global Road Safety and Security, Clemson University.

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.

