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NOTE: Award presentation photo to follow by 4 p.m.

**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION HONORED FOR MORE SYSTEMIC,
PROACTIVE FUNDING OF SAFETY PROJECTS**

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 Virginia Department of Transportation received an Honorable Mention today from the 2023 National Roadway Safety Awards for funding lower-cost but more widespread safety projects aimed at preventing traffic fatalities and serious injuries.

Traditionally, VDOT, like other transportation agencies, made “spot” safety improvements in response to crashes occurring at a specific site.

Under the new approach started in 2019, VDOT evaluates factors that contribute to crashes, including those with pedestrian and cyclist injuries. Those factors can include a road’s design and traffic patterns, as well as the impact of new development nearby, such as a school or shopping center that draws more walkers and cyclists.

VDOT then applies those findings to the statewide system of roads and intersections to identify those with similar, potentially dangerous conditions that need correcting before a crash occurs.

“The systemic approach is more proactive,” said Tracy Turpin, VDOT’s highway safety improvement program manager. “We don’t have to wait for a crash to happen. We can address it upfront.”

The agency also has focused on funding more projects by prioritizing those that are effective but less expensive. Turpin said VDOT should have enough data by spring 2024 to evaluate the safety impacts of the new funding approach.

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 Virginia fell slightly farther: An estimated 441 people died on Virginia roads, down 5.5 percent from the same time frame last year, according to [NHTSA's preliminary data](#).

The National Roadway Safety Awards, presented biennially 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 Virginia Department of Transportation 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 Virginia 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:** 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
- **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.