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‘National Roadway Safety Award’ Winners Announced

FHWA, Roadway Safety Foundation Honor Seven Outstanding Road Safety Projects

WASHINGTON – Seven outstanding highway safety projects, representing some of the nation’s best examples of successful and innovative practices in roadway safety, were honored today with National Roadway Safety Awards in a ceremony on Capitol Hill. The presentations were made by officials from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Roadway Safety Foundation (RSF) which jointly sponsor the biennial program.

The competition, which began in 1999, honors highly successful approaches to improving roadway safety at the state and local level, officials said.

“Today we honor seven projects with innovative solutions for reducing crashes and saving lives,” said Federal Highway Administration Executive Director Tom Everett. “We commend this year’s 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.”

According to the National Highway Safety Administration, motor vehicle crashes cost over 37,000 lives in 2017 and 2.7 million injuries.

“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 improving our roadway infrastructure is a critical part of reducing these devastating crashes.

“These awards honor those who successfully identified dangerous deficiencies in their systems and applied our latest research and technology to implement effective and cost-efficient fixes,” Cohen continued. “We salute these winners—the unsung heroes who planned, engineered and implemented these innovative solutions-- and urge DOT’s across the nation to consider these projects and apply them wherever possible.”

Applicants were encouraged to nominate successful programs that are innovative, cost-effective able to be replicated elsewhere. In addition, the awards included two categories: Infrastructure and Operational Improvements, and Program Planning, Development and Evaluation. From the applications received this year, seven winners and one honorable mention were selected:

Arizona – for its installation of a first-in-the-nation **Wrong-Way Driving (WWD) Alert System** to combat serious WWD crashes through the use of thermal camera technology. Installed on a 15-mile segment of Interstate 17 in central Phoenix, the system uses illuminated wrong-way signs along exit ramps and immediately alerts law enforcement as well as traffic operators who use available freeway message signs to post WWD warnings for other drivers. Previously, authorities had to rely on others reporting WWD’s via the 911 system. The thermal cameras have proven reliable in detecting WWD incidents.

Florida – Earned two awards:

First, for its creation of the “**Alert Today Florida**” program to address the state’s very high fatality rate among its pedestrians and bicyclists. The program included engineering projects, educational outreach events, paid advertising and high visibility enforcement activities. Analysis indicates that 18 lives have been saved, 324 injuries and 338 bicycle and pedestrian crashes avoided since its initiation.

Second, for initiating its “**Design-Build Push-Button Contract**” which has had great success at getting safety improvements quickly from “concept to concrete.” This has resulted in safety improvements being constructed with as much as a 75% reduction in the concept-to-completion period, with many projects installed in just a few months, rather than taking three or more years.

Missouri – For its “**Median U-Turn**” program to reduce the severe and fatal-injury crashes along a stretch of roadway in central Missouri. Following a roadway safety assessment and extensive public outreach, three “median U-Turn intersections” were installed which virtually eliminated the dangerous right-angle collisions that had caused many serious and fatal crashes. The median U-turn installations reduced the overall crash rate by 50 percent, and ended the serious-injury and fatal crashes at those locations.

South Dakota – For its “**High Friction Surface Treatment Project (HFST)**” which resulted in HFST installations in 15 areas in the Blacks Hills area where road departure crashes in winter weather account for 57% of fatal crashes. In the two winters following the installations, there was a total crash reduction of 78%.

Virginia – Also earned two awards:

First, for its “**Strategic Guardrail Management Program**” which improved the state’s investment on its guardrails by improving hundreds of the lowest functioning guardrail terminals at the highest risk locations across the state, thus maximizing their safety investment and better protecting the safety of motorists in Virginia.

Second, for its statewide “**Pedestrian Safety Action Plan**” which provides a successful strategy for identifying high risk areas for pedestrians and then quickly funding and installing safety improvements at those locations.

Also recognized this year with an Honorable Mention was Garfield County in Washington State for the development of its Garfield County Road Improvement Safety Plan, which provides the cornerstone of a long-term, comprehensive, data-driven safety program for the County’s rural roadway system.

Winners were selected by an expert panel of judges from a variety of disciplines. This year’s judges included:

- Bruce Hamilton, managing director of safety and research programs, 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)
- 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.