

South Dakota Tribal Traffic

Safety Summit

Summit Report



October 26-27, 2010

**Golden Buffalo Convention Center
Lower Brule, South Dakota**

Prepared by Cambridge Systematics, Inc.



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16. Abstract <p>This report documents the South Dakota Tribal Traffic Safety Summit held October 26-27, 2010, in Lower Brule, South Dakota. The Summit brought together the full range of interested parties to discuss transportation safety issues and to begin developing coordinated strategies toward the ultimate goal of reducing crash-related injuries and deaths within Native American communities. The Summit pursued that goal by identifying key tribal safety challenges and the resources (human, technical, material, and financial) available to address them, and by stimulating multidisciplinary collaboration among safety stakeholders. Specifically, the objectives of the Summit were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the leading transportation safety problems facing Native Americans; 2. Discuss experiences, successes, and challenges to transportation safety efforts; and 3. Explore potential approaches, tools, and resources for improving safety. <p>The following report includes background information, themes discussed by Summit speakers and participants, Summit results, and next steps for moving forward.</p>			
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Background

The Nine Tribes in South Dakota

- Cheyenne River Sioux
- Crow Creek Sioux
- Flandreau-Santee Sioux
- Lower Brule Sioux
- Oglala Sioux
- Rosebud Sioux
- Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate
- Standing Rock Sioux
- Yankton Sioux

Every year, more than 30,000 motorists die and almost 3,000,000 are injured on our Nation's roadways. For ages 4 to 34, motor vehicle-related injuries are the leading cause of death in the United States, and Native Americans are at particularly high risk.¹ Among the Native American population, motor vehicle-related injuries are the leading cause of death up to age 44.² Between 1975 and 2002, the number of fatal crashes on Indian reservations increased more than 50 percent; while nationally, the number of fatal crashes declined two percent.³

South Dakota is no exception to the trend. The motor vehicle fatality rate among Native Americans in South Dakota is more than three times the rate of others in South Dakota. The real figure is likely worse given that researchers and traffic safety experts agree tribal roadway crash data is under reported.

The South Dakota Tribal Traffic Safety Summit held October 26-27, 2010 was an important step toward reducing traffic fatalities and injuries among tribal members. This document describes the Summit, focusing on the insights gained, lessons learned, and ideas for moving forward.

The Summit was carried out through the collaborative efforts of Tribal representatives from Lower Brule Sioux and Standing Rock Sioux, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Federal Lands Highway and South Dakota Division Offices, South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT), South Dakota Department of Public Safety (SDDPS), and the Northern Plains Tribal Technical Assistance Program (NPTTAP) at the United Tribes Technical College.

¹Subramanian R., Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes as a Leading Cause of Death in the United States, 2005, DOT HS 810 936. April 2008. U.S. DOT, National Center for Statistics and Analysis.

²Hilton J., Race and Ethnicity in Fatal Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes 1999-2004, DOT HS 809 956. May 2006. U.S. DOT, NHTSA.

³Poindexter K., Fatal Motor Vehicle Crashes on Indian Reservations 1975-2002, DOT HS 809 727. U.S. DOT, NHTSA, May 2004.



■ Purpose of the Summit

The South Dakota Tribal Traffic Safety Summit brought together the full range of interested parties to discuss transportation safety issues and to begin developing coordinated strategies toward the ultimate goal of reducing crash-related injuries and deaths within Native American communities. The Summit pursued that goal by identifying key tribal safety challenges and the resources (human, technical, material, and financial) available to address them, and by stimulating multidisciplinary collaboration among safety stakeholders. A detailed Summit agenda is included in Appendix A.

Specifically, the objectives of the Summit were:

1. Review the leading transportation safety problems facing Native Americans,
2. Discuss experiences, successes, and challenges to transportation safety efforts, and
3. Explore potential approaches, tools, and resources for improving safety.

The Summit began with stories from the tribes in South Dakota, introducing examples of the issues they face and actions they have taken to improve safety on their roadways. Additional presentations provided participants with detailed examples of data driven tribal planning for transportation safety and efforts from the 4Es of safety – engineering, enforcement, education, and emergency response.

Facilitated discussion provided participants the opportunity to share their own experiences, to identify challenges and available resources, and to begin developing recommended actions for improving tribal transportation safety.

The Summit is a first step. Follow-up within and among South Dakota’s tribes in collaboration with state and Federal partners, as well as other tribal safety stakeholders, is required for further progress.

Themes



James Two Bulls, Superintendent of the Lower Brule Agency of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), kicked off the Summit applauding partners for coming together and recognizing the group is smarter collectively than as individuals. Reflecting on his 16 years in law enforcement working with a number of different tribes, he emphasized improving safety has always been a priority. Toward that end, several key themes emerged from the Summit as recurring emphasis areas in presentations and discussions: *collaboration, action, and data driven decision-making.*

■ Collaboration

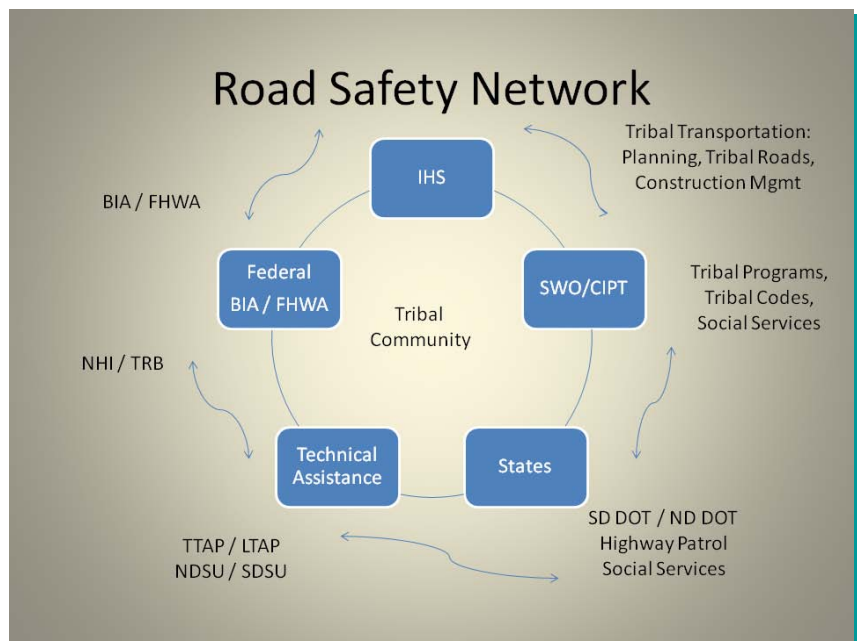
SDDOT Secretary Darin Bergquist reiterated the emphasis on working together. He noted summit participants are passionate about safety and collectively have the range of expertise necessary to tackle the issues facing tribal communities. Toward that end, he encouraged partners to share experiences and challenges, celebrate successes, and learn from failures.

Carol Robertson, Resource Coordinator for the Flandreau-Santee Sioux Transportation Department pointed to a robust cross jurisdictional safety system with local and state law enforcement, and examples of working with FEMA on two recent disasters.

Toni Rouillard, from Lower Brule Sioux, highlighted a recently completed bike bath through the reservation, which has long been a priority for tribal members. She expressed gratitude for the coordination and funding from state and Federal partners who helped get the job done, which included assistance from FHWA to conduct road safety audits (RSA).

Tonia Ecoffey, GIS/GPS Analyst for Oglala Sioux, indicated the tribe has been working with DPS on a considerable number of signage and striping projects to improve safety. The Oglala Sioux also have been working closely with Law Enforcement Liaisons (LEL) from DPS and entered a data sharing agreement supporting crash reporting and technical assistance.

Charnel Hill-George, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Transportation Planner described the extensive network (see figure below) the tribe has tapped into to identify and address transportation safety as public health priority. Collaborative efforts also include air support agreements with different hospitals and mutual care agreements with surrounding areas using proximity as the determining factor for the time it takes someone to get care.



Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Road Safety Network

These are just some of the examples of successful collaboration between tribes and local, state, and Federal partners to improve safety. However, several participants also pointed to challenges and barriers to coordination. Some expressed difficulty establishing memorandum of understanding (MOU) or memorandum of agreement (MOA) with local counterparts. Some tribes do not know about or have trouble accessing the appropriate resources. Even when resources are available, jurisdictional issues have at times kept tribes from implementing safety improvement projects. Disagreements over maintenance responsibilities have resulted in poor road conditions. Another participant pointed to the effects of changes in leadership and competing priorities.

SDDOT holds a meeting every year with the tribes to discuss the statewide transportation improvement program (STIP) and to explore different opportunities to work together on roadway projects. Tribes also are able to apply Federal funds as local matches, which opens opportunities to work with counties and cities on transportation projects. Summit participants

emphasized the key to any successful collaboration between tribes and local, state, and Federal partners is building and maintaining relationships based on trust and actively engaging partners.

■ Action

Ms. Hill-George stressed the importance of building a robust collaborative network and strong relationships so the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate tribe is able to determine for themselves what actions need to be taken on their lands. Pete Red Tomahawk pointed to the overrepresentation among tribal communities in crash-related fatalities and stressed action must be taken, even if it saves just one life. Examples of safety initiatives by the tribes in South Dakota vary in size and complexity. But all share the common element of *proactively* addressing tribal transportation safety issues.



Mr. Red Tomahawk spoke of the surge of police officers for heightened enforcement coming from urban areas to support Standing Rock Sioux safety initiatives and described ceremonies to thank and honor the service and courage of those sworn to protect the communities.

Wesley Alan Hare, Jr., Transportation Planner and grant writer for Yankton Sioux echoed the call to action pointing out those being hurt and killed on the roadways are our relatives. He stressed safety is a priority and gave an example of accessing American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to improve a seriously damaged road used by everyone on the reservation. He offered another example where cars regularly sped through a school zone, but speeding dropped significantly following focused BIA law enforcement efforts.

Carol Robertson, Resource Coordinator for the Flandreau-Santee Sioux suggested simply, including a message in the tribal newsletter about the cost of replacement may have helped significantly reduce the amount of sign destruction, which saves resources for other initiatives and also can have direct implications for safety.

Ethyl Morgan, Cheyenne River Sioux Environmental Health Technician, described how the tribe has been working very hard to fill potholes and make other improvements to BIA and local roads to enhance safety. While fairly new to safety, she has taken it upon herself to get certified as a national car seat inspector and



is working with the police department and anyone else she can pull in to try to get all children into car seats.

Ken McLaughlin, Director of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Roads Department, and Dustin Murphy, Acting SD Roads Supervisor/Heavy Equipment Operator presented efforts to implement safety edge improvement projects as well as the results from several tribal RSAs.

For Summit participants, taking action is a means for tribes to take ownership and responsibility for improving safety on tribal roadways. Ideally, tribes and partners proactively engage each other, but there also are initiatives each of the tribes can implement on their own to help reduce fatalities and serious injuries. Participants highlighted how several tribes have instituted primary safety belt laws, while the State of South Dakota only has a secondary law. It was suggested if all the tribes enacted primary laws, they may be able to influence a state primary law.

■ Data Driven Decision-Making

Providing a detailed description of Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate planning for transportation safety, Ms. Hill-George emphasized the need to educate people of the importance of good data. For example, she promotes TRaCS and talks to relevant organizations so they understand if an area shows up in the data, she is able to program appropriate resources in into the long-range plan as the transportation planner.

Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate entered a MOU with South Dakota State University (SDSU) on transportation collaboratively defining what each part is responsible for and what can do together. Adam Wellner and Jason Adamson of SDSU Graduate Programs presented on efforts to adopt the Interactive Highway Safety Design Model (IHSDM) suite of software analysis tools for evaluating safety and operational effects of geometric design decisions on highways.

The tribe is actively pursuing a combination of TRaCS reporting, IHSDM safety modeling, active Road Inventory Field Data System (RIFDS) updating, and GIS-based Transportation Asset Management System to enhance its data driven decision-making capabilities to improve safety.

Resources are available from both SDDOT and SDDPS to support tribes in improving crash data collection and analysis. DPS has

four LELs prepared to provide tribes training and technical assistance. They also are available to help with grant writing. Invitations have been sent to tribes to participate in the statewide Traffic Records Coordinating Committee (TRCC), however, there has not yet been any response. Participants indicated a lack of awareness of these resources and trust issues continue to hinder efforts to collaborate on data improvement efforts.

Just as important as using the safety data is using the resources developed based on research and data analysis. Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate transportation planning has built of the research driven resources such as the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) 500 Series Guides to assist state and local agencies in reducing injuries and fatalities in targeted areas and the SHSP Implementation Process Model (IPM) recently developed by FHWA.

John Baxter, Associate Administrator for FHWA Office of Federal Lands Highway, echoed the importance of data for making good decisions and for setting goals, and encouraged participants to take advantage of available resources and collaborative partnerships to improve data collection and analysis.

Summit Results



A primary Summit objective was to develop coordinated approaches to help reduce fatalities and serious injuries on tribal roadways. To achieve this, Summit participants discussed their experiences and offered potential opportunities to collaborate and implement approaches for improving tribal traffic safety. The following recommendations were developed during facilitated discussion.

- Conduct working meetings with tribes, DOT, DPS, BIA, FHWA, TTAP, and partners to advance safety strategies.
- Take advantage of DPS LELs for crash reporting technical assistance.
- Explore potential sources, such as Federal Section 402 and 408 grants and state funds, for tribal crash records positions.
- Document and share Oglala Sioux approach to funding and coordinating with DPS to address traffic records.
- Provide model approaches to developing MOUs/MOAs between tribes and state and local partners (with sensitivity to tribal sovereignty).
- Include tribal representation on the TRCC.
- Elevate tribal interests in the pending update of the Statewide Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP).
- Catalogue tribal safety equipment issues to have a clear understanding of needs.
- Reeducate adults as safety role models, in addition to educating children about safe driving behaviors.
- Coordinate with DPS and Volunteers of America, Dakotas, to tailor existing safety messages and public service announcements (PSA) to each individual tribe.
- Engage tribal radio station DJs to broadcast and promote safety messages.
- Coordinate with South Dakota Highway Patrol to plan and conduct rollover simulator and fatal vision goggles events with each of the tribes every year (look at possibility of pooling funds for tribes to purchase and share equipment).

Moving Forward

South Dakota is committed to take the next steps in the pursuit of safer tribal transportation. As emphasized at the beginning of the Summit and throughout, an important component of any future direction should be to continue to foster partnerships and multi-disciplinary collaboration.

Tribes, along with Federal, state, and county partners, are encouraged to begin implementing applicable recommendations immediately. Participants will inform the tribal elders, leaders, and other safety stakeholders in their communities about the Summit results and recommendations.

The Sixth Annual South Dakota Transportation Safety Conference, being held February 23 and 24 in Ft. Pierre is one occasion to further pursue recommendations developed during the Tribal Traffic Safety Summit. Other such opportunities at the state and local level, such as tribal pow wows, provide ideal forums for continuing to raise awareness of the safety issues facing Native American communities and the resources and strategies available for reducing fatalities and serious injuries on tribal roadways.

More information about resources available from state, regional, and Federal partners involved in the Summit can be found at:

Northern Plains TTAP:

<http://www.uttc.edu/forum/ttap/ttap.asp>

SDDOT: <http://www.sddot.com>

SDDPS: <http://www.dps.sd.gov>

FHWA Office of Federal Lands Highway:

<http://flh.fhwa.dot.gov/programs/irr/safety>

FHWA Office of Safety: <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov>

BIA: <http://www.bia.gov/>

NHTSA: <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov>

Appendix A: Agenda

OCTOBER 26-27, 2010

SOUTH DAKOTA TRIBAL TRAFFIC SAFETY SUMMIT AGENDA

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 26TH

- 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Registration
- 1:00 p.m. to 1:15 p.m. **Opening Prayer**
Welcome and Introductions
James Two Bulls, Superintendent, Lower Brule Agency, BIA
- 1:15 p.m. to 2:45 p.m. **Stories from the Tribes**
Moderator: Darin Bergquist, Secretary, South Dakota DOT
- | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Cheyenne River Sioux | Lower Brule Sioux | Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate |
| Crow Creek Sioux | Oglala Sioux | Standing Rock Sioux |
| Flandreau-Santee Sioux | Rosebud Sioux | Yankton Sioux |
- 2:45 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Break
- 3:00 p.m. to 5:15 p.m. **Presentations and Facilitated Discussion**
- Tribal Planning for Transportation Safety – Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate**
Charnel Hill-George, SWO Transportation Planner
Dr. Xiao Qin, Assistant Professor, South Dakota State University
(represented by *Adam Wellner* and *Jason Adamson*)
- The 4Es of Safety – Standing Rock Sioux**
Pete Red Tomahawk, Director of Transportation Programs
Ken McLaughlin, Director, Tribal Roads Department
Dustin Murphy, Acting SD Rds. Supervisor/Heavy Equipment Operator
- 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. **Meal Blessing/Honor Song**
Dinner – Hosted by Lower Brule Sioux Chairman, Michael Jandreau

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 27TH

- 8:00 a.m. to 8:15 a.m. **Reflecting on Day One**
John Baxter, Associate Administrator, FHWA Office of Federal Lands Highway
- 8:15 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. **Facilitated Discussion: Solutions and Recommendation**
- 11:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. **Closing Thoughts**
Pete Red Tomahawk, Director of Transportation Programs, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe

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SouthDakota Tribal Traffic Safety Summit

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