

Iowa's SMS: background

In 1991, the federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) mandated that each state develop a safety management plan by October 1994 to address surface modes of transportation. By 1995, representatives from a variety of agencies and organizations across Iowa formed the Iowa Safety Management System (SMS) Coordination Committee to begin developing the Iowa SMS. In 1997, the federal mandate was withdrawn, but Iowa has continued its SMS initiative. •

The Iowa Strategic Highway Safety Plan: an update

ONE OF THE most important components of the Iowa Safety Management System (SMS) (see sidebar) has been the development of a strategic highway safety plan. Representatives from over 20 different agencies and organizations in Iowa have come together to develop a plan that identifies specific highway safety issues, provides collaborative, multidisciplinary strategies for resolving the issues, and evolves as new information and ideas are available. The Iowa Strategic Highway Safety Plan is conceived as a central source of highway safety information, and it is on the road to quickly becoming just that.

Multidisciplinary approach: the 4E's

The Iowa SMS Coordination Committee believes that a comprehensive, integrated approach is needed to most effectively reduce the number and severity of crashes on Iowa's roadways. Thus, it was important for the Iowa Strategic Highway Safety Plan to be a collaboration between various branches of local, state, and federal government, private industry, and the general public. This multidisciplinary approach is illustrated by the concept of "4E's": engineering, enforcement, education, and emergency response. Each of these components is represented in the plan.

Toolbox of strategies

Iowa's plan contains 25 emphasis areas, with a list of strategies (or "tools") for each. The emphasis areas are organized into five main categories:

1. drivers
2. special users
3. highways
4. emergency response
5. management

Task forces and projects have also been established around many specific safety issues (for example, the Red Light Running Task Force and the Older Drivers Task Force).

Iowa SMS continues to be proactive in seeking more ideas and responses to this "toolbox" of potential highway safety solutions. This ongoing input will be considered in shaping the strategies.

The plan will continue to grow and evolve

The Iowa Strategic Highway Safety Plan is intended to be a "living document," one that continually

undergoes change and growth. As such, the draft of the plan, completed in August 1999, was distributed to over 700 entities and individuals involved in transportation safety in Iowa, and public response has been promoted through media coverage (a PDF file of the draft plan is available at www.state.ia.us/government/dot/safetyplan).

Other methods for facilitating ongoing input and evolution to the plan's toolbox of solutions include the following:

- A public opinion survey was conducted by the University of Northern Iowa on behalf of Iowa SMS to help assess Iowans' highway safety priorities and their opinion of the proposed strategies. The results of the survey will soon be released, and the conclusions drawn in the report will be integrated into the plan.
- SMS members continue to visit with a variety of important focus groups, including law enforcement personnel, older drivers, and youth.
- Iowa SMS has partnered with the Federal Highway Administration to host a multistate peer exchange opportunity for highway safety professionals to discuss multidisciplinary ways of addressing traffic safety concerns (Council Bluffs, October 31–November 1). The discussion will be focused on gaining buy-in, funding, implementing strategies, and managing and measuring initiatives.

A central source

Through ongoing multidisciplinary collaboration, feedback, and consideration of proposals, the Iowa Strategic Highway Safety Plan is well on its way to achieving the goal of being the central source for highway safety discussion and strategy development in Iowa.

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