



NJ 2020 SHSP

Equity Emphasis Area

Completed Priority Action 9

Advancing **SAFETY** and **PARTNERSHIP** Through Stakeholder Engagement



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Advancing **SAFETY and PARTNERSHIP** Through **Stakeholder Engagement**

A White Paper developed by NJ 2020 SHSP Equity Team
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Introduction

New Jersey 2020 Strategic Highway Safety Plan (NJ 2020 SHSP) is a comprehensive five-year plan to reduce fatalities and serious injuries on all of New Jersey's public roads, with an emphasis on those areas that provide the greatest opportunity for a positive impact on safety. The SHSP establishes goals, objectives, and strategies that consider Education and public awareness, Enforcement, Emergency response, as well as Engineering, often referred to as the 4 "E's." The NJ 2020 SHSP will also place an emphasis on a fifth "E" for all its safety investments - Equity. An emphasis on Equity ensures that the NJ 2020 SHSP considers the needs of vulnerable members of our communities, including low-income residents, minorities, those with limited English proficiency, persons with disabilities, children, and older adults. The NJ 2020 SHSP will continue to build on a foundation of the best data available and will make every effort to ensure a safe highway network for all users. There are seven Emphasis Areas defined as part of NJ 2020 SHSP – Data, Driver Behavior, Equity, Intersections, Lane Departure, Other Vulnerable Road Users (OVRU), and Pedestrians & Bicyclists.

The NJ 2020 SHSP places special focus on creating equitable safety investment, which more deliberately considers traditionally underserved populations. Equity is a cross-cutting consideration that relates to all safety investment measures. The Equity approach includes an independent team providing oversight and guidance to the other investment measures to ensure equity is given full consideration in strategy development and implementation. To that end, an Equity Team, comprised of representatives of government, regional planning organizations, academic institutions, and advocacy groups representing the public interest was established. Equity Team members serve as liaisons to the other Emphasis Area Teams to ensure that there is clear coordination between teams. The Equity Team identifies priority strategies to improve infrastructure, facilitate education and awareness, and opportunities to provide reliable emergency response in addition to enforcement to underserved communities. This document summarizes all the Priority Actions, initiatives and accomplishments in the NJ 2020 SHSP that involve an emphasis on Equity.

Effective SHSP implementation leverages the resources of other transportation planning documents to align high-level goals, performance measures, and strategies. The advancement of the NJ 2020 SHSP is being coordinated with its partners - including the NJ Division of Highway Traffic Safety, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), Transportation Management Associations (TMAs), University Transportation Research Centers (i.e. Rutgers Voorhees Transportation Center, housing the Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center, and Rutgers Center for Advanced Infrastructure and Transportation (CAIT), housing the NJ Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP)), and many advocacy organizations/non-profits across the state of New Jersey. Through NJ 2020 SHSP, multiple successful safety stakeholders' collaboration opportunities have been organized. This document also lists those initiatives.



Equity Initiatives

With multi-disciplinary insight, a five-year action plan (including over 75 strategies and hundreds of actions) to reduce fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads, a goal of zero deaths and, an interim data-driven goal of a 3% per year reduction, was instituted. The SHSP development process established goals and performance objectives for each of the Emphasis Areas. The goal for the Equity Emphasis Area was defined as “ensuring highway safety investment is inclusive of the interests of traditionally underserved populations and considered more deliberately”. Several strategies and Actions were developed to achieve this goal. A summary of those actions is as follows:

1. Identify overrepresentation of driver behavior related fatalities and serious injuries in underserved communities and develop a strategy for enhanced traffic safety messaging for residents in the underserved communities.
2. Incorporating equity considerations in providing grant assistance.
3. Overlay equity considerations with the project development process to give considerations to bicycle and pedestrians in underserved communities.
4. Develop a standard approach for identifying and considering underserved populations across all other emphasis areas.
5. Develop an engagement and implementation strategy in underserved communities with a focus on reducing fatalities and serious injuries through potential grant opportunities. For one county or municipality, establish a demonstration pilot project to enhance safety culture in underserved communities, collaborating with local champions as the change catalyst.
6. Review current pedestrian/bicycle network screening lists for the 55 top ranked underserved municipalities in New Jersey (up to 3 underserved municipalities per county), to align locations for upgrading pedestrian and bicycle safety needs.

Stakeholder Engagement

The NJ 2020 SHSP update process included several opportunities to engage a broad group of over 300 New Jersey safety stakeholders throughout New Jersey. Safety stakeholders have an opportunity to engage in the safety investment discussion at varying levels. The Executive and Steering Committees are by invitation only, as the formal approval and advisory bodies. However, stakeholders also have an opportunity to offer insight through several other forums.

Stakeholders can join their choice of Emphasis Areas and assist on various actions as a workgroup member or an action lead. Emphasis Area Teams meet once every four months to discuss progress on each action that is being advanced. Action groups meet more often to make progress on their respective actions. In addition to these Emphasis Area Team meetings and workgroup meetings, an annual Safety Summit is held to gather the broad group of safety stakeholders and share the progress of NJ 2020 SHSP. Leveraging on the experience and expertise of many safety stakeholders, Safety Summit is a great opportunity for them to collaborate. Summary of all the safety summits conducted as of February 2024, is as below:



1. Safety Summit #1 was an introductory summit to acquaint stakeholders with the NJ 2020 SHSP, share data, and to obtain initial input on important roadway safety issues. This information was used in the selection of Emphasis Areas.
2. Safety Summit #2 was a full-day workshop that included two (2) breakout sessions for each Emphasis Area. During these sessions, stakeholders were given an opportunity to share their ideas on strategies that could be employed to reduce fatalities and serious injuries for a specific Emphasis Area. Stakeholders also had an opportunity to vote on strategies they believed to be the most effective.
3. Safety Summit #3 was deployed in a webinar format due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The presentation included a high-level summary of the goals, objectives, and strategies developed for each Emphasis Area and outlined the approach for plan implementation over the next five years.
4. Safety Summit #4 was a virtual collaborative event. The presentations included summary of progress made by each Emphasis Area and gave a brief about overall safety initiatives within New Jersey. Attendees utilized the collaborative platform to ask their questions and provide feedback.
5. Safety Summit #5 (2023) was an in-person event held on October 24, 2023 at The College of New Jersey (Ewing, NJ). It was attended by 249 safety stakeholders from across the state. The event celebrated progress to date and shared best practices for roadway safety. The program included presentation highlighting the deliverables of NJ 2020 SHSP Priority Actions, panel discussions, and insights from Traffic Safety Officers – centered around the theme of Practical Collaboration: Uniting Efforts for Tangible Results. The event was a testament to how meaningful engagement of safety stakeholders can lead to tangible outcomes results in reducing FSIs on New Jersey roadways.

Several other opportunities like action workshops, peer exchanges, etc. are also conducted as part of the NJ 2020 SHSP to further provide a platform for the safety stakeholders to learn about safety best practices and provide their input. In addition to the Safety Summits, other public outreach strategies included the creation of a website, www.SafeRoadsForAllNJ.com, to share action deliverables and provide a forum for stakeholders to submit questions and comments. Safety Summit proceedings are recorded and posted on the website for public viewing. Currently under development is a Safety Resource Center. The Safety Resource Center will evolve into the primary public-facing website for safety investment information, resources, and activities. Items available with the Safety Resource Center will include access to tools such as SHSP crash data viewer, funding opportunities, technical assistance, grant program descriptions, dashboards for status updates of the Emphasis Areas, points of contact, partner information and other resources.

Another such initiative is the Safety and Equity Council. Equity in transportation seeks to ensure fairness in mobility and accessibility to meet the needs of all community members. An equitable transportation plan considers the circumstances impacting a community's mobility and



connectivity needs and this information is used to determine the measures needed to develop a fair and equitable transportation network. (Source: USDOT/FHWA)

“For the first time, NJDOT is recognizing equity as a priority in highway safety as part of our Strategic Highway Safety Plan,” NJDOT Commissioner Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti said. “NJDOT is working diligently to ensure that all strategies and activities emanating from the plan fairly consider the needs of all users and all communities – particularly minority populations, economically depressed communities, and those that are differently-abled.”

To address these priorities, NJDOT is establishing a Safety and Equity Council. The purpose of the Council is to engage trusted local jurisdictions and advocates on getting the message out to underserved communities about how to gain technical assistance, learn about different safety strategies, and leverage the support of such a broad group of safety stakeholders to build a safer transportation system. The Council’s charge is to inform safety practices to reduce fatalities and serious injuries in underserved communities.

While the goals and objectives of the Safety and Equity Council will continue to be developed and defined, an overview of its activities are as follows:

- Maintain a Safety and Equity Stakeholders list (Contacts from MPOs, health coalitions, local jurisdictions, advocacy organizations and other relevant partners)
- Convene a community advisory group on a quarterly basis
- Participate in existing community-based forums (i.e., Environmental Justice Advisory Council (EJAC), Urban Mayor’s Association, Central Jersey Transportation Forum, County Engineers, local groups, and other associations)
- Notify underserved communities of grant and technical assistance opportunities
- Share the safety related best practices and guidance documents developed as part of the NJ 2020 SHSP

This Stakeholder Engagement Document will be updated annually to include all activities and initiatives advanced as part of the year.