

# Our Transportation System is in Crisis – 367

Last week I introduced the Toward Zero Deaths (TZD), a US national strategy on road safety, which is a tool for helping to organise and mobilize efforts to reduce fatalities and serious injuries relating to traffic crashes. I recommended visiting the website: ([www.TowardZeroDeaths.org](http://www.TowardZeroDeaths.org)).

Today I continue with some of the primary approaches to improve road safety, as follows:

1. In addition to informing non-motorised road users, such as pedestrians and bicyclists, how to use roads safely, it is necessary to educate drivers on traffic laws and proper behaviours on non-motorised traffic. One specific issue is speeding. Speeding presents significant challenges to unprotected road users as higher speeds escalate the severity of crashes. Pedestrians and cyclists need to make themselves as visible as possible, especially at night-time or in low-light conditions. Information on the benefits of reflective clothing and on using lights can encourage more non-motorized users to increase their visibility. Non-motorised road user distraction, such as cell-phone use can cause tragic incidents.

Another issue pedestrians need to be aware of is impaired walking. We are being made aware about impaired driving, but what about drunk walking?

2. Elements of the roadway environment, including travel lanes for all motorized vehicles, traffic signs and signals, and bus stops and other transit access points, must be designed and managed to balance the safety and mobility of all travel modes expected to use the roads. The report suggests that this balance is challenging because of the different characteristics and needs of each type of road user. Road designers and managers must evaluate the expected effect of infrastructure treatments on all

types of road users in order to make the most appropriate decision for individual situations.

The report advises that motorcyclists represent a unique population of the motoring public—they are the only type of road users who can travel at high speeds and on all road types, without the benefit of a vehicle body surrounding them, leaving riders more susceptible to injury in a crash.

3. There is an urgent need to educate drivers on safer driving practices in roadwork zones. There should be improved speed management and enforcement in work zones to reduce the risk of work zone fatalities. In addition, roadwork zone design and operations should be improved to reduce the risk of work zone fatalities

4. In order to effectively prevent crashes from occurring and to reduce the severity of crashes due to roadway departures and intersection fatalities, the following were recommended as short-term measures:

- Install traffic signing and pavement markings with retro-reflective properties to improve guidance along the roadway, especially in and around bends/curves.
- Use shoulder and centreline rumble strips and stripes to warn drivers they are leaving their travel lane.
- Design roadside to include appropriate hardware (such as cable median barrier, crash cushions, and guardrail end treatments) or manage trees to minimize the severity of crashes that occur.
- Improve driver awareness of intersections by installing or improving signs, pavement markings, and lighting.
- Changing traffic signal timing to provide right-turn only phases, improve clearance intervals (yellow

plus all-red signals), and coordinate signal timing to improve traffic flow.

5. Without knowing how, why, and where crashes occur and what happens to the road users and vehicles during the crashes, it is difficult to determine: (a) What specific safety issues to prioritise; (b) The most appropriate treatments or programmes; (c) The level of success expected from programmes, technologies or countermeasures; and, (d) What additional concerns are developing.

Just as in Trinidad and Tobago, the report points to data-related challenges, which include funding, staff, and tools necessary to collect all the traffic safety data needed, adequately analyse the data, and determine the most appropriate treatments and evaluate treatment effectiveness.

6. There is a need to develop education programmes in primary schools to instil the fundamental values, beliefs, and attitudes that can support developing a positive safety culture as children grow and mature. Building this foundation will increase the positive traffic safety culture as children travel with their family and eventually become independent road users themselves.

To be continued

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