

REPORT

ON

SAFE CORRIDORS



Prepared by the New Jersey
Department of Transportation
2008

Report on Safe Corridors

Executive Summary

This report details the New Jersey Department of Transportation's (Department) "Safe Corridor Program" – as established by P.L. 2003, c 131.

Under this law, a "Safe Corridor" or "Safe Corridor area" is a segment of highway under the jurisdiction of the Department of Transportation which, due to crash rates, fatalities, traffic volume and other highway traffic safety criteria, is considered a high risk area for motorists. Within such designated "Safe Corridors", fines for select motor vehicle offenses such as speeding, reckless driving, and failure to stop at a stop sign are doubled. The monies collected from these fines are deposited into the Highway Safety Fund and disbursed, through a grant program, to those municipalities with a Safe Corridor within their jurisdiction.

The establishment of safe corridors within the state became effective February 15, 2004, with the designation of ten corridors throughout the state. At that time, the doubling of fines for motor vehicle offenses established in P.L. 2003, c 131 also became effective. Since then, the Department has added one Safe Corridor to the program.

While injury and fatality crash data in these corridors has not been consistent, the number of crashes overall have shown an encouraging downward trend.

The report highlights improvements which have been made in some corridors based on Safety Impact Team reviews. It also announces the designation of a Safe Corridor Coordinator who will act as a liaison between those municipalities with a Safe Corridor designation and the Department.

Finally the report recommends the Safe Corridor Program continue as an element in the efforts to reduce crashes statewide. Continued monitoring during times of consistent enforcement must take place for the Department to assess the program's effect on injury and fatal crashes.

Report on Safe Corridors

Introduction

In 2006, 772 people lost their lives in traffic and pedestrian crashes in New Jersey. The impact of traffic crashes, injuries, and death is felt by everyone. National studies have indicated that by raising fines in high-risk travel corridors, the number of crashes and fatalities tends to decrease. When the Safety First legislation was introduced, New Jersey had already instituted a doubling of fines for select motor vehicle offenses committed in construction zones. This legislation (P.L. 2003, c.131) provided a comprehensive initiative to address highway safety in New Jersey. In addition to the establishment of "Safe Corridors", this law increased fines for certain commercial motor vehicle equipment violations, required the completion of a commercial driver improvement program to restore a suspended Commercial Driver's License, made fines for overweight trucks consistent, and dedicated 50 percent of all safe corridor fines to a new Highway Safety Fund to be used for highway safety projects and programs. In July 2003, this legislation was signed into law. The establishment of safe corridors within the state became effective February 15, 2004, as did the doubling of fines for motor vehicle offenses established in the public law.

A "Safe Corridor" or "Safe Corridor area" is defined as a segment of highway, under the jurisdiction of the New Jersey Department of Transportation (Department) which, based upon crash rates, fatalities, traffic volume and other highway traffic safety criteria, is identified by the Commissioner of Transportation as a segment warranting designation as a "Safe Corridor". Within such designated "Safe Corridors" there is a doubling of fines for select motor vehicle offenses such as speeding, reckless driving, and failure to stop at a stop sign. The monies collected from this doubling of fines are deposited into the Highway Safety Fund and disbursed, through a grant program, to those municipalities with a Safe Corridor within their jurisdiction, for education, enforcement, capital undertakings and other related measures that foster highway safety.

When the Safe Corridors program became effective in 2004, the following Safe Corridor locations were established:

- Rt. 1 between Lawrence and South Brunswick (Milepost 0.6 to 10), Mercer County
- Rt. 1 between South Brunswick and Edison (Milepost 20 to 30), Middlesex County
- Rt. 9 from Lakewood to Sayreville (Milepost 100 to 130), Ocean, Monmouth, and Middlesex Counties

- Rt. 22 between Branchburg and Greenbrook (Milepost 30 to 40), Somerset County
- Rt. 22 between Mountainside and Newark (Milepost 50 to 60), Union and Essex Counties
- Rt. 40 between Hamilton and Egg Harbor (Milepost 50 to 60), Atlantic County
- Rt. 46 between Netcong and Rockaway Borough (Milepost 30 to 40), Morris County
- Rt. 46 between Parsippany Troy Hills and West Paterson (Milepost 50 to 60), Morris, Essex, and Passaic Counties
- Rt. 47 between Millville City and Vineland City (Milepost 40 to 50), Cumberland County
- Rt. 73 between Voorhees and Maple Shade (Milepost 20 to 30), Camden and Burlington Counties
- Rt. 206 between Montgomery and Hillsborough (Milepost 60 to 70), Somerset County

Subsequently, in 2007 one more Safe Corridor location was added:

- Rt. 1 between Woodbridge Township and Elizabeth City (Milepost 35 to 45), Middlesex and Union Counties

See Appendix for a map of the current Safe Corridors.

Crash Data for Safe Corridors

In 2003, prior to the start of the Safe Corridors Program, the stretches of state highway that would be designated Safe Corridors saw a total of 8,202 crashes, 21 of them involving fatalities and 2,543 involving injuries. In fact, these numbers had been on the rise, at a rate of about 2 percent per year, in the previous two years. In 2001 the designated Safe Corridors areas saw a total of 7,855 crashes and in 2002 that number rose to 8,021. By comparison, statewide, overall crashes were at 312,697 in 2001, rose to 320,000 in 2002, but dropped to 308,168 in 2003.

With the establishment of the Safe Corridors Program in 2003, the Department began closely monitoring the crash statistics for the areas so designated. Of particular interest was whether or not there would be a change in the upward trend for overall crashes within these designated areas, and changes in fatal crash and injury crash numbers. Keeping in mind that changes in driver patterns do not occur quickly, that there is a

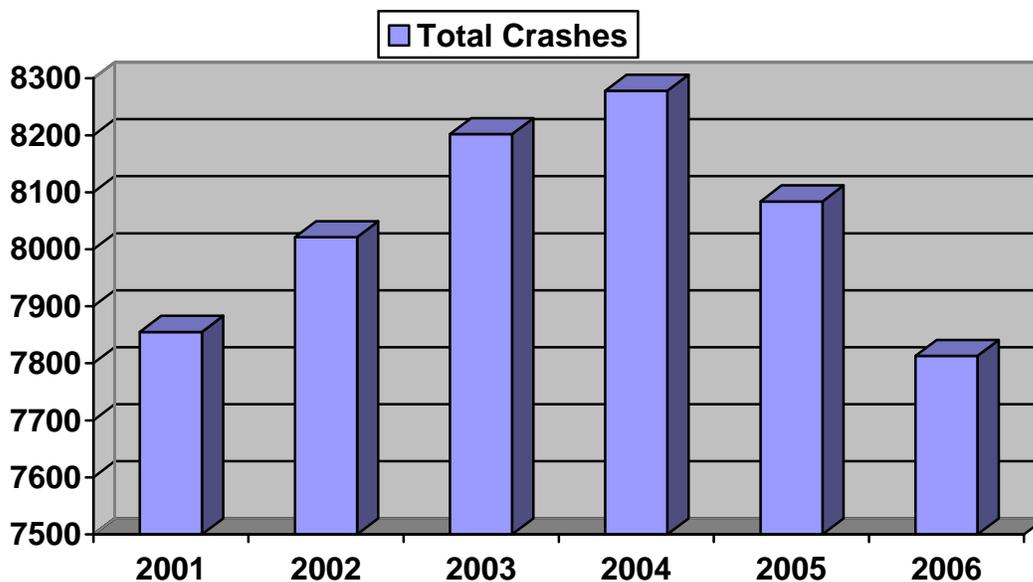
“learning curve” for the driving public regarding what a “Safe Corridor” designation means, and how that relates to the enforcement of stricter penalties associated with the various traffic violations, the Department has monitored crash statistics for the last three years within these designated corridors. The following presents a summary of that data analysis.

Total Crashes

Table 1 – Total Crashes

	Before Safe Corridors Program			During Safe Corridors Program		
Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Total Crashes	7855	8021	8202	8278	8084	7813
Increase/Decrease from Previous		2.1% Increase	2.2% Increase	0.9 % Increase	2.3% Decrease	3.3% Decrease

Chart 1 – Total Crashes



Overall Crashes - Analysis

- Table 1 shows the yearly total crash figures for the areas designated in the Safe Corridors Program;
- A comparison of total crashes on all corridors in 2003 against 2006 shows a decrease by 389 crashes, from 8,202 in 2003 to 7,813 in 2006;
- The 2 percent per year increase in overall crashes during the three year period prior to establishment of the Safe Corridors Program, ended during the first year of the Program and showed a 2 percent decrease in 2005 and a 3 percent decrease in 2006;

- As shown in Chart 1, total crashes in 2006 are below the figure for total crashes in 2001.

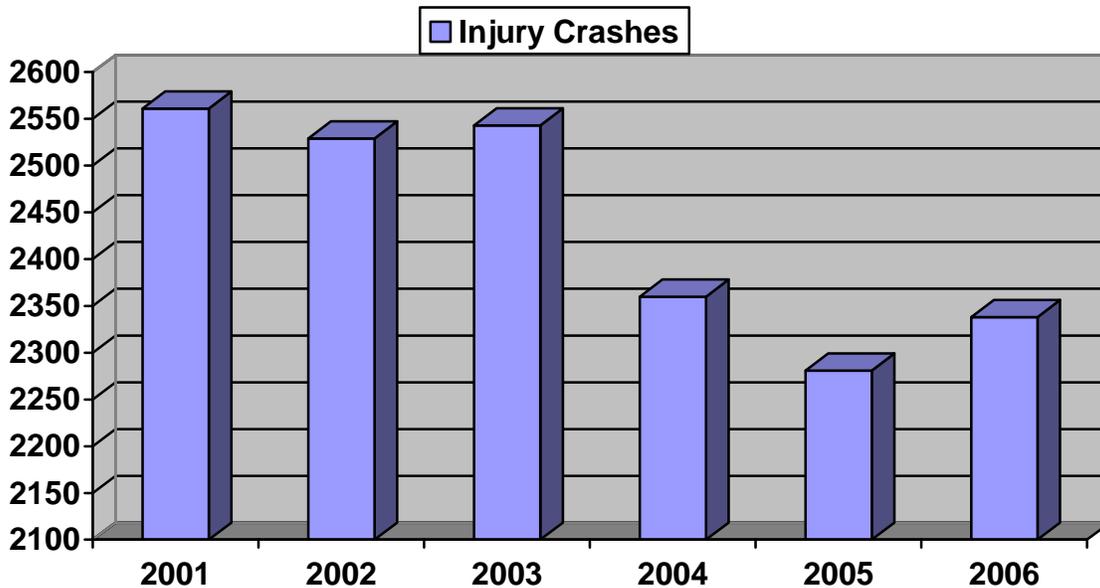
Additionally statewide, total crashes have also seen a downward trend of approximately 3 percent per year over the three year period that the Safe Corridors Program has been in place.

Injury Crashes

Table 2 - Injury Crash Analysis

Year	Before Safe Corridors Program			During Safe Corridors Program		
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Injury Crashes	2,561	2,529	2,543	2,360	2,281	2,338
Total Crashes during Period	7,633			6,979		
Average Number of Crashes during Period	2,544			2,326		

Chart 2 – Injury Crash Analysis



Injury Crashes Analysis

- As shown in Table 2, the average number of injury crashes in the three-year period prior to the implementation of the Safe Corridors Program was 2,544. The three-year period after implementation of the Safe Corridors Program

saw a reduction of that average by 218 to 2,326 which represents a 8.6 percent decrease;

- As shown in Chart 2, injury crashes have been declining since implementation of the Safe Corridors Program;
- The total number of injury crashes in 2006 is 223 less than the number of injury crashes in 2001.

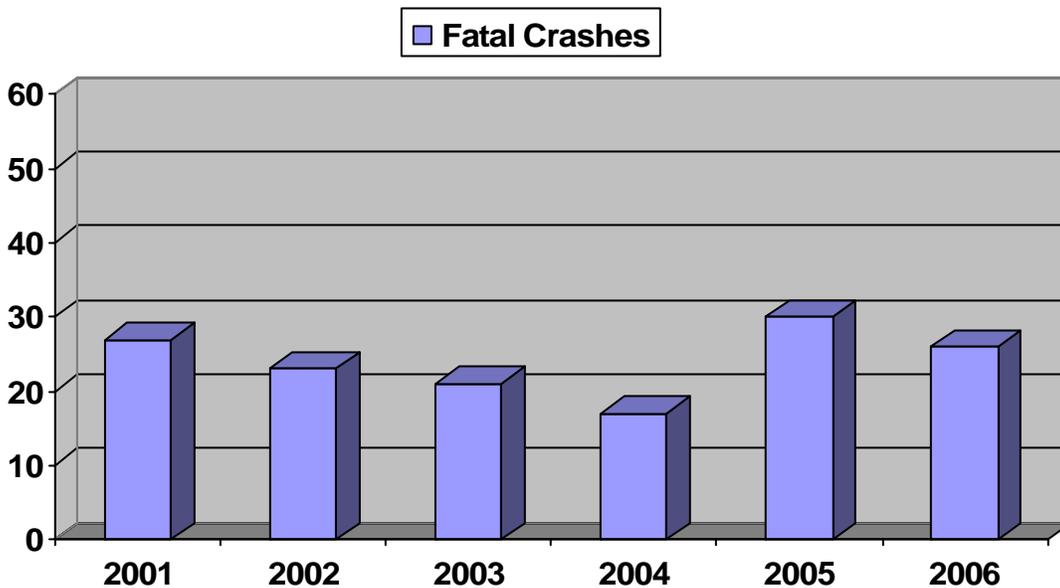
Additionally, statewide injury crashes have also seen a downward trend of approximately 5 percent per year over the three year period that the Safe Corridors Program has been in place.

Fatal Crashes

Table 3

Year	Before Safe Corridors Program			During Safe Corridors Program		
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Fatal Crashes	27	23	21	17	30	26
Total During Period	71			71		
Average Number of Crashes during Period	23.6			24.3		

Chart 3



Fatal Crash Analysis

- A three-year comparison between fatal crash data before and after establishment of the Safe Corridors Program indicates that fatal crash numbers have remained mostly constant;
- Although these numbers vary year to year, statistically the numbers are too small to make a meaningful year to year comparison;

The numbers of fatal crashes within the designated Safe Corridor areas have remained mostly constant, as have fatal crashes statewide.

Citations

With the implementation of the Safe Corridors program came the need to track the number and type of citations written within these corridors and to provide for the identification of fines collected for dedication to the Highway Safety Fund. The Department worked very closely with the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) and the NJ Motor Vehicle Commission to modify the Uniform Traffic Ticket and the AOC's traffic violation tracking programs to develop this tracking system.

The AOC has provided data regarding the number of citations that were written for the first and second years of implementation of the Safety First Legislation. A review of that data can be summarized as follows:

Chart 4 Citations Written in Safe Corridors

	2004	2005	2006
Total Number of Citations Written	14,243	12,256	13,210
Violations Cited within Safe Corridors			
Speeding	36.6%	36.0%	36.4%
Careless Driving	17.5%	17.4%	15.1%
Observing Traffic Signals	8.9%	6.3%	6.7%
Passing	8.1%	9.2%	8.6%

As shown in the chart above, after a drop-off in citations written during the time between June 2005 and June 2006, the corridors experienced over a 7 percent increase in the number of citations written by law enforcement.

During the 2006 reporting period, 36.4 percent of those citations were for speeding, 15.1 percent were for careless driving, 6.7 percent were for observance of traffic signals, and 8.6 percent were for passing violations.

Highway Safety Fund

Purpose of Fund:

It is recognized that significant resources are expended to provide enforcement activities in the Safe Corridor locations. The purpose of the fund is to assist local law enforcement with the activities associated with providing that enforcement.

Establishment of Fund:

The Safety First Legislation established the "Highway Safety Fund" in which monies collected from enforcement activities within Safe Corridors is deposited in an account established by the Department. The Department has developed a grant program, consistent with the requirements of the Safety First Legislation, to fund local law enforcement agencies having a Safe Corridor within their municipal boundaries, for enforcement efforts within these corridors. This grant program identifies the following eligible uses for which these local law enforcement agencies may apply:

Eligible Items

- Procurement of radar units
- Procurement of crash data collection systems (hardware and software)
- Procurement of Global Positioning System (GPS) units
- Procurement of surveillance devices such as cameras and video equipment
- Procurement of protective vests
- Procurement of communications equipment
- Salaries and overtime directly attributed to the enforcement activities of Safe Corridor locations
- Programs, projects, or initiatives that support one or more of the "8 Emphasis Areas" outlined in the NJ Comprehensive Strategic Highway Safety Plan (CSHSP) as outlined below:
 - Aggressive Driving
 - Impaired Driving
 - Young Drivers
 - Older Drivers
 - Intersection Improvement
 - Roadway Departure
 - Driver Safety Awareness
 - Pedestrian, Bicycles, Rail, and Vehicular Conflicts

The grant program further identifies the following uses for which the Highway Safety Funds may not be utilized:

Non-eligible Items

- Maintenance of vehicles
- Weapons
- Clothing and personal equipment
- Overhead items such as office supplies

Current Fund Distribution Process:

Annually, or as determined by the Department, the Department announces the distribution of Highway Safety Fund grants to all municipalities responsible for enforcement of the designated safe corridors. The funds are made available in equal portions to each eligible municipality.

The Department provides a letter to each municipality notifying them of the available grant funds and includes an application/agreement with an accompanying payment voucher for their use in requesting grant funds. The municipality prepares a standard Local Aid Application/Agreement, outlining the intended use of the funds and attaches a completed invoice/payment voucher for the stated amount of funds. Upon review and approval of the application/agreement by the Department's Division of Local Aid and Economic Development, the invoice/payment voucher is processed and payment is made to the municipality for the grant amount. A percentage of the municipalities are audited in any given year to ensure that funds were used as stated in the agreement. Should additional items be deemed eligible in the future, the Department will notify the municipalities when a new grant distribution announcement is made.

For the first year of the program, each grant was a maximum of \$25,000. The second round grants were increased to a maximum of \$73,000 at the end of 2006. In 2008, the maximum grants available for qualifying municipalities are \$47,000.

Safety Impact Team Reviews

Along with the enhanced enforcement activities in the corridors, each corridor receives a Safety Impact Team review. This process examines each Safe Corridor segment and develops comprehensive solutions to significantly reduce crashes and fatalities utilizing engineering, education, and enforcement. The team looks for immediate short-term solutions that would be considered "quick fixes", as well as identifying intermediate and long-term solutions. These solutions range from upgrading existing signage, pavement markings, and traffic signals to developing educational materials, alternative travel modes, proposed alternative access.

Improvements that have been made to date include:

- Installation of a flashing "Signal Ahead" sign at Rt. 1 and Ridge Road to prevent rear-end crashes;
- Removal of the traffic signal at Rt. 1 and Nassau Park Blvd;
- Upgraded pedestrian signal indications and pavement markings, and signal phasing improvements at Rt. 1 and Old Post Road;

- Upgraded pedestrian signal indications and signal phasing improvements at Rt. 9 and Fairway Lane;
- Upgraded signal equipment for increased visibility and flashing “Signal Ahead” sign, and pedestrian signal indications and pavement markings at Rt. 9 and Robertsville Road;
- Pedestrian signal improvements and pavement markings at Rt. 1 & 9 at E. Jersey, E. Grand, Bond, Anna, Flora, and North Avenues.

After the improvements have been in place over a one year period, evaluation of the effectiveness of the improvement will be made. To date, the Rt. 1 and Ridge Road improvement showed a 23 percent reduction in rear-end crashes indicating that this countermeasure has been effective.

Safe Corridor Coordinator

In September 2007, a Safe Corridor Coordinator position was created. The purpose of the coordinator position is to be a liaison between those municipalities with a Safe Corridor designation and the Department. The responsibilities of the coordinator will be to enhance and improve law enforcement activities within the corridors, as well as participate in safety reviews of the roadway segments, making recommendations for safety improvements in engineering, education, and enforcement. The position has been filled by a member of the New Jersey State Police.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The data for the first year of Safe Corridor implementation, with a 14.3 percent reduction in fatal crashes, was encouraging. The second year’s data showed an increase in fatal crashes, but the total number of reported crashes and the continued decrease in injury crashes shows a positive trend. Although there was a slight increase in injury crashes over the year before, the third year data showed a decrease in fatal crashes from the previous year as well as a continuing decrease in total crashes. Again, it is an encouraging trend with the continued reduction of total crashes over the first three years of the program as compared to the years before the program began.

While the injury and fatal crash data has fluctuated, the overall crash reductions points to improvements being made in these corridors. With the targeted safety improvements related to engineering and the establishment of the Safe Corridor Coordinator position to enhance enforcement activities, the Safe Corridor program will remain a key element in the effort to reduce crashes and save lives on New Jersey’s roadways.

Appendix

Safe Corridors

