



Meeting Summary

Traffic Safety and Technology Advisory Committee

September 19, 2006 1:15 p.m.

(Tour for Legislative and Advisory Committee Members Starts at 10:30 a.m.)

Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Vehicle Research Center

Ruckersville, Virginia

Legislative and Advisory Committee Members Only

10:30 a.m.

- **Tour of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) Vehicle Research Center (VRC) and Live Crash Demonstration.**
- **Lunch:** Lunch will be catered by the Blue Ridge Cafe.

Public Meeting

1:15 p.m.

- **Call to order, roll call:** Roll call, chairman's welcome.
- **Staff update:** JCOTS Staff will present a brief update on driver distraction laws in other states.

Patrick Cushing briefly reviewed driver distraction legislation from all 50 states including those bills introduced, active, inactive, failed, and enacted. Mr. Cushing's summary is available on the JCOTS website.

- **IIHS presentation:** Richard Retting, Senior Engineer, IIHS will present research demonstrating the benefits of roundabouts and photo-monitoring of traffic lights.

Richard Retting presented research from the IIHS regarding roundabouts and photo-monitoring of traffic intersections. Mr. Retting reviewed both domestic and international data on the benefits of using roundabouts to control traffic flow at intersections. Not only do roundabouts reduce the average wait time at intersections, they also reduce vehicle emissions by preventing stop and go situations and reduce the number of fatal and non-fatal accidents. While many traffic safety technologies aim at a five to ten percent improvement over existing conditions, roundabouts are proven to reduce congestion and accidents by upwards of 50%. Mike McGurrian discussed the importance of signal timing and asked the advisory committee and Mr. Retting what efforts have been done to improve signal timing consistency. Mr. Retting responded that each state has different standards but solely increasing yellow light timing will only result in a temporary drop in accidents. Mr Retting pointed out that yellow light timing consistency may help achieve a permanent reduction in accidents at lighted intersections. Mr. Retting's presentation is available on the JCOTS website.

Mr. Retting identified Virginia as an early leader among states implementing photo-monitoring systems and explained how other states have moved forward. Mr. Retting reviewed the benefits of using photo-monitoring devices and suggested that Virginia adopt a photo-monitoring policy. In the several localities tested across the United States and internationally, the IIHS reported significant reductions in fatal and near fatal crashes. Mr. Retting's presentation is available on the JCTOS website.

- **Use of photo-monitoring systems to enforce traffic light signals; local ordinances:** Wayne Huggins will present draft legislation granting localities the authority to adopt ordinances providing for use of photo-monitoring systems to enforce traffic light signals.

Following Mr. Retting's presentation, Wayne Huggins introduced legislation that would grant localities in Virginia the authority to implement a photo-monitoring system in up to 25 intersections within that locality. After a brief discussion, Senator Watkins requested that members of the advisory committee review the legislation and make final recommendations at the next advisory committee meeting.

- **Traffic Safety Training Center Research Update:** Rick Dowsett will present legislative recommendations to strengthen Virginia's passenger restraint law.

Trooper Rick Dowsett introduced legislation that would remove the exception to Virginia's child restraint law that allows children to ride unrestrained in the rear cargo area of SUVs. Senator Watkins instructed the members of the advisory committee to review the language and be prepared to make final recommendations at the next meeting. Bob Brietenbach, Director TSTC, next identified two additional recommendations designed to strengthen Virginia's passenger restraint laws: require booster seats for children up to the age of seven and make it illegal to have a rear facing infant seat in the front passenger side of a vehicle equipped with a passenger side airbag that is not deactivated. Mr. Brietenbach and Mr. Dowsett will make final recommendations to the advisory committee at the next meeting as to what legislative changes should be made, if any.

- **Virginia Tech Transportation Institute:** Jon Hankey, Associate Director of VTTI will give a presentation updating the advisory committee on research activities at Virginia Tech and the Smart Road facility.

Jon Hankey gave a presentation on current research at the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute. Mr. Hankey began with a review of the naturalistic study on driver distraction, which included a look at cell phones as a form of driver distraction. Mr. Hankey also revealed a new technology that would record information on cars that pass school buses while stopped and discussed an upcoming study using the technology.

- **Discussion:** This is an opportunity for a "round table" discussion by the members of the advisory committee.
- **Public comment:** Members of the public be given the opportunity to express their views about the advisory committee and its work.

One member of the public requested that tours be opened to the public at future meetings.

- **Actions for next meeting:** The chairman may wish to direct staff and members of the advisory committee to follow up on particular items for the next meeting of the group.
 1. Prepare to make final comments on photo-monitoring legislation.
 2. Prepare to make final comments on passenger restraint legislation.
 3. Bob Brietenbach and Rick Dowsett: Determine if further passenger restraint legislation is needed.