**NH Traffic Safety Commission**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting Date: December 18, 2018**

**In attendance:** Captain William Haynes (OHS), John Clegg (OHS), Mike Dugas (DOT), Marilyn Costa (NH Driver Education Association), Howard Hedegard (IPC-CHAD), Pat Sullivan (NH Police Chiefs Association), Mark Raposo (NH School Transportation Association), Gary Abbott (Associated General Contractors NH), Dan Bennett (NH Auto Dealers Association), Joanne Miles-Holmes (DHHS), Brittany Shute (DMV), Paula Bedard (Bike-Walk Alliance), Dan Goodman (AAA of NNE), Vera Tucker (NH Motor Transport Association), Patricia Conway ( Rockingham County Attorney), Michael Milligan (NH Liquor Commissioner), Margaret Byrnes (NH Municipal Association), Glen Wilder (Presenter - DOS), Roberta Witham (Presenter - DOS)

**Meeting Agenda Items Discussed**

Captain Haynes and John Clegg made opening comments and welcomed all who were present. Captain Haynes made the group aware that the governor has appointed Pat Conway, Rockingham County Attorney, as the new chair of the traffic safety commission.

John Clegg discussed the Monarch’s second annual highway safety games to be held on January 5, 2019. The Monarch’s will sponsor 3 games before they play the Reading Royals. These games will include the Manchester Police Department against the Boston Police Department, the NH State Police against the Massachusetts State Police and then a playoff game between the winners of these two games.

Other items referenced included NHTSA’s recent impaired driving assessment, the impaired driving conference held on December 10, the hiring of Jennifer Tramp as public information officer and the hiring of Kimberly Roberts as a field rep for the office of highway safety and the hiring of Benjamin Maki as the Traffic safety resource prosecutor for the office of the attorney general.

Roberta Witham, Department of Safety Business Systems Analyst, provided an in-depth report on crashes resulting in serious bodily injury from 2007 through 2018 year to date. Using NHTSA’s definition for serious bodily injuries, Roberta’s data shows that only about 500 incapacitating “A” injuries occur each year.

Roberta began her presentation by encouraging us to use the word crashes for those “accidents” that are preventable and to only use the word accident for those that are truly accidental. According to NHTSA, about 94% of all crashes are preventable.

Roberta’s data, from 2007 through 2018 YTD, showed that the yearly number of non-fatal crashes in New Hampshire ranged from 28,395 in 2014 to 37,376 in 2007. In 2017, there were 36,681 non-fatal crashes. The final numbers for 2018 will not be available until the spring of 2019.

**Traffic Safety Commission Meeting Minutes, December 18, 2018 - Page 2**

Roberta’s serious bodily injury crash report included the number of crashes per year, month and day from Jan 1, 2017 through 2018 YTD, data by counties, by number of vehicles involved in each crash, by type of vehicle, contributing factors, and which vehicle occupant received the injury.

This presentation was well received by the traffic safety commission members present and resulted in specific questions and conversation about the topic.

Glen Wilder, Department of Safety FARS Supervisor, provided an in-depth analysis on fatal crashes including a 10-year trend analysis. FARS is fatal analysis reporting system.

Glen began his presentation showing a 10-year timeline of fatal crashes that showed a trend of declines in fatal crashes followed by a spike every other or every 3rd year. The lowest fatality rate was 84 in 2011 and the highest is the current year with 142 fatalities as of December 24.

Glen’s data also showed a similar trend in fatal crashes involving excessive speed, overall causes of fatal crashes from 2014 to 2018 YTD, and fatal crashes by county, by month, by day of week and by time of day for the same 5-year period.

In that motorcycle crashes represent about 20% of all fatalities in New Hampshire and occupant protection is routinely lower in New Hampshire than in any other state, Glen discussed these areas in detail.

Glen’s presentation resulted in further discussion by the commission members with an emphasis on the year to year trends. Captain Haynes and others are not certain that there is any single reason for the increase in fatalities during 2018.

Howard emphasized the need to somehow educate drivers about the true impact of their attitudes on roadway risk. Captain Haynes discussed his concerns about giving people warnings instead of tickets and the problems that result by department’s not consistently tracking the issuance of warnings. Captain Haynes also made the commission aware of the fact that increased funds have been made available to Merrimack, Rockingham and Hillsborough counties because of their high fatality rates. The OHS will be closely tracking crash results in those 3 counties to measure the impact of the increased enforcement programs planned through this increased funding.

Captain Haynes also pointed out that the 2018 seat belt observational survey showed a 76.4% belt usage rate. This compares to 70.2% in 2016 and 68% in 2017. The increase in observed belt usage during 2018 is most likely the result of a change in where the survey was conducted. This most recent survey was conducted along the southern portion of the state as opposed to a more statewide survey.

Pat Conway asked about the number of crashes that are caused by reckless conduct. Glen Wilder agreed to provide that information at the next meeting.

Roberta Witham stated a concern about medical events becoming an increasing cause of fatal crashes as our population ages. She believes that we need to become more aware and proactive and that our

**Traffic Safety Commission Meeting Minutes, December 18, 2018 – Page 3**

efforts should somehow be tied to the current DMV red card process, a process that allows DMV officials to determine if someone is safe to continue to drive.

Captain Haynes discussed NHTSA’s Impaired Driving Assessment and the related report of outcomes and recommendations. This is the first time that NHTSA has conducted such an assessment in New Hampshire. The report will be available for distribution after it is formally approved by the DOS Commissioner. The biggest challenge in implementing the report findings is that there is no additional funding so any changes in one area will require adjustments in other areas.

Mike Dugas, DOT, discussed the recently finalized Strategic Highway Safety Plan for 2017 – 2021.

In that Ben Maki, the new traffic safety resource prosecutor, could not be available, Captain Haynes provided a brief overview of his position.

Jennifer Tramp, the new OHS public information officer, discussed her goals to use social media to increase highway safety education and to promote NHTSA and OHS messaging. She is currently updating the NH OHS web site to provide increased information to the public. She will be tackling the drug driving issue and showed some NHTSA impaired driving public service announcements that she will use. A primary focus during this year will be on the youth with the goal of pushing programs out to the schools statewide. She is interested in working closely with New Hampshire’s teen driver program.

Howard made the members aware of the newer teen driving web toolbox (nhteendrivers.com) which is designed as a resource for the high schools and others who want to educate teens about highway safety and the parents of teen driver’s resource (nhparentsofteendrivers.com).

The meeting was adjourned by Captain Haynes thanking everyone for being in attendance and stressing their commitment to do everything possible to improve highway safety within New Hampshire.