

# VT Agency of Transportation: Highway Safety General Update Safe System Approach

House Transportation Committee – January 14, 2026

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# What is a Safe System Approach?

- It recognizes that the transportation network and system is both large and complex.
- It works by building and reinforcing multiple layers of protection to help prevent crashes from happening and minimize harm to those involved when crashes do occur.
- Promotes a safety program with a focus on infrastructure, human behavior, responsible oversight of the vehicle and transportation industry, and emergency response.

# Safe Systems Approach - Principles



1. Death and serious injuries are unacceptable
  - Prioritize the elimination of crashes that result in death and serious injuries.
2. Humans make mistakes
  - Transportation system designed and operated to accommodate certain types and levels of human mistakes.
3. Humans are vulnerable
  - Transportation systems designed and operated to be human centric and accommodate physical human vulnerabilities.
4. Responsibility is shared
5. Safety is proactive
6. Redundancy is crucial
  - Transportation system designed and operated so that if one part fails, the other parts will provide protection.

# Safe System Approach - Objectives

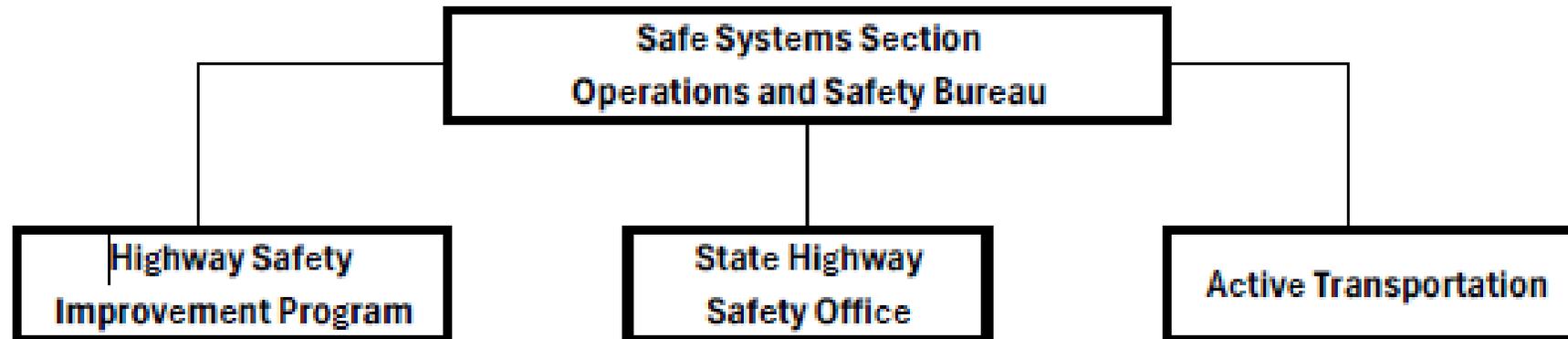


1. Safer people
2. Safer roads
3. Safer speeds
4. Safer vehicles
5. Post-crash care

<https://www.transportation.gov/NRSS/SafeSystem>

# Establishment of a Safe Systems Section

- Data driven approach to reducing fatal and serious injury crashes
- The safe systems approach, with principles focused on shared responsibilities, proactive investments, and redundancy directly relate to many of the challenges we had experienced
- VTrans implemented organizational change, creating a Safe Systems Section to better integrate safety into all planning efforts and projects
  - Located within the Operations and Safety Bureau which includes Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), traffic signals, traffic operations/mobility, and data management
  - Safe Systems Section brings together a traffic safety engineer, State Highway Safety Office, and Active Transportation Unit into one team



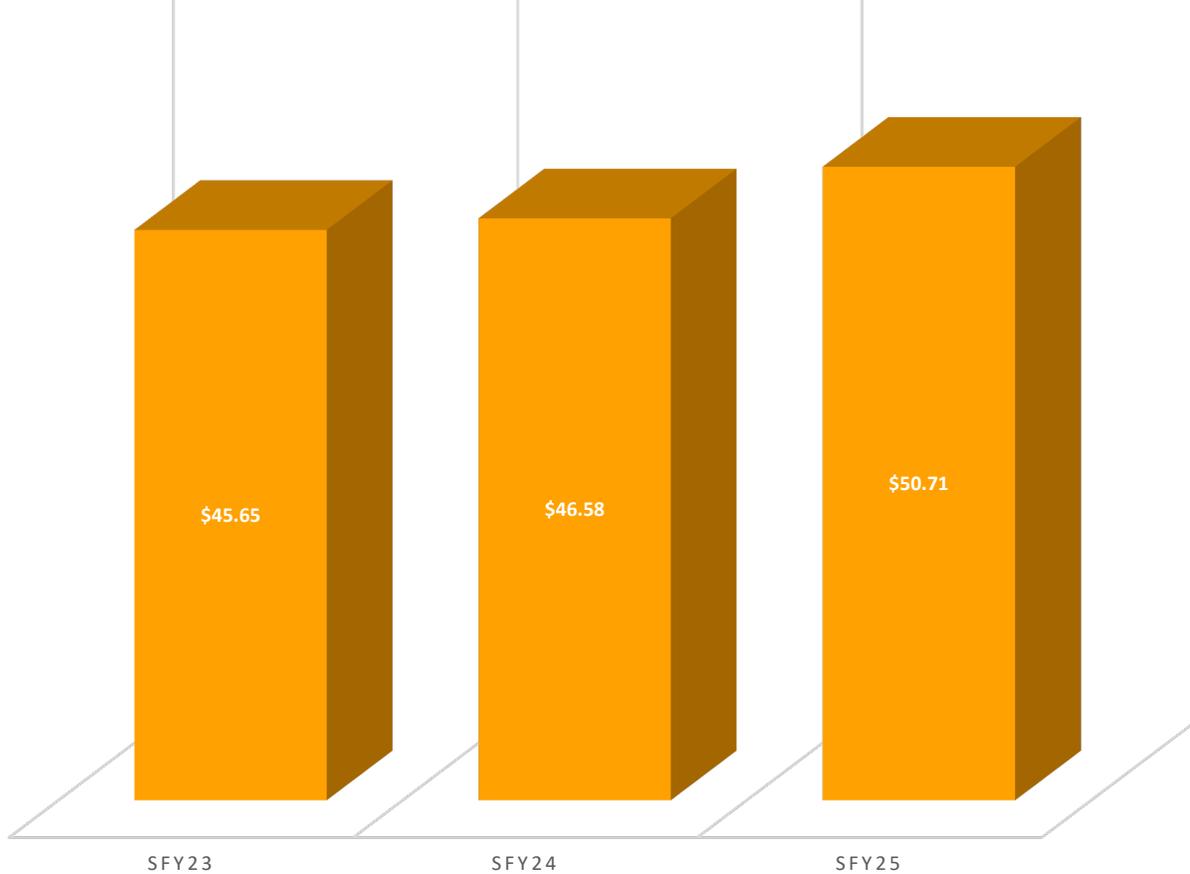
# Safe Systems Section - Goals

- Build and promote a strong safety culture by capitalizing on relationships across Bureaus and Divisions
- Development of processes/tools to better incorporate safety within all phases of project development
- Evaluation of the safety impact of countermeasure and projects
- Active Transportation resource for the Agency
- Alignment of behavioral efforts and infrastructure improvements



# Traffic & Safety Program

TRAFFIC & SAFETY PROGRAM BUDGET



- Projects focused on **safety** and **mobility**
- Includes three primary project phases
  - Preliminary Engineering (design activities)
  - Right-of-Way (acquisition of property and/or easements)
  - Construction
- Typical project types
  - Traffic signals
  - Intersection geometry improvements
  - Roundabouts
  - Signage upgrades
  - Pavement markings

# Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)

- Core Federal-Aid Program working to realize significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries
- Primarily funds infrastructure safety improvements
- Embedded within the Traffic & Safety Program
- Data driven process and decision making
- Review data
  - Crash location
  - Roadway type
  - Crash characteristics
  - Behavioral factors
- Identify trends and select safety countermeasures and projects

# Site Specific Projects



- Projects identified to address a deficiency at a specific location
- Typically selected based on crash history
- Historically the most common project type within the Traffic & Safety Program budget

- Roundabouts
- Traffic signal installation and upgrades
- Geometric improvements (turn lanes, realignment)



# Systemic Projects

Widespread improvements to address crash types, proactive based on Statewide trends and not individual crashes

## Local HSIP Grants

- Safety improvements on the local roadway network
- Focused on lane departure improvements
  - Warning signs (curve, intersection, pedestrian)
  - Clear zone improvements
  - Guardrail modernization
  - Edge line pavement markings
  - Crosswalk markings
  - Centerline rumble stripes



# Systemic Projects - Continued

## High Risk Rural Road Projects (HRRR)

- Identify local roadways based on known data and Regional Planning Commission input that are higher safety risks
- Statewide or regional contracts
- Focus on curve warning and intersection warning, MUTCD compliant signage



# Agency Programs

Safety is a key component of the Vermont Agency of Transportation's Mission and Vision

**Design projects consider safety, and many safety improvements are embedded within Programs**

- Roadside topography
- Pedestrian infrastructure
- Guardrail improvements
- Centerline rumble stripes
- Traffic signal backplates
- Shoulder improvements
- Pavement markings
- Road diets





# State Highway Safety Office

The State Highway Safety Office (SHSO) awards federal highway safety, grant funds to local, state and non-profit agencies for projects to improve highway safety and reduce deaths and serious injuries due to crashes. The SHSO uses data driven decisions and performance-based countermeasures as essential strategies in the approval of behavior change projects.

# Highway Safety Plan and Annual Grant Application to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

[Triennial Highway Safety Plan \(3HSP FFY2024-2026\)](#): Develop a performance plan with countermeasures and funding allocations to address the identified critical areas. Due July 1st, 2026 for FFYs 2027 – 2029, the next 3HSP is currently being drafted.

The [Annual Grant Application](#) is due each year to NHTSA by August 1st. The State's annual grant application provides project level information on the State's highway safety program and demonstrates alignment with the State's most recent 3HSP.

**The Annual Report:** Measure progress towards meeting State annual performance targets from the previous fiscal year's Highway Safety Plan and tracks grant funding. Due January 25th the FFY2025 report is currently being drafted. The FFY2024 report can be found [here](#).



# 2025 Highlights: Younger Drivers

**Vermont Principals Association used grant funds to bring victim testimony, and education on distracted and impaired driving, to high schools and middle schools across the state.**

**The Vermont Highway Safety Alliance engaged families and the community on the important of buckling up at community events, including Lake Monster Games and the Champlain Valley Fair. The SHSO purchased a second Rollover Vehicle (Truck Body) for the Chittenden CSD to use statewide.**

**Driver simulators were funded for Rutland City School District for use by students and instructors to learn about the dangers of distracted driving in the high school and technical center.**





# 2025 Highlights: Distracted Driving

State and local law enforcement agencies, along with their subgrantees, conducted regular patrols and high visibility enforcement of distracted driving laws under grant funds

During NHTSA's "Put the Phone Away or Pay" mobilization from in April, and agencies made contact with over 1,500 vehicles.

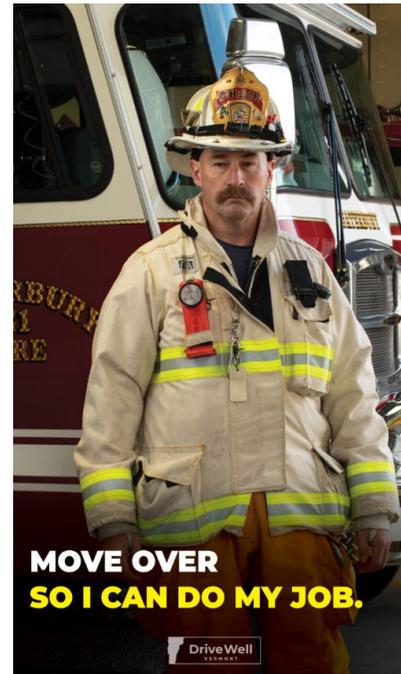
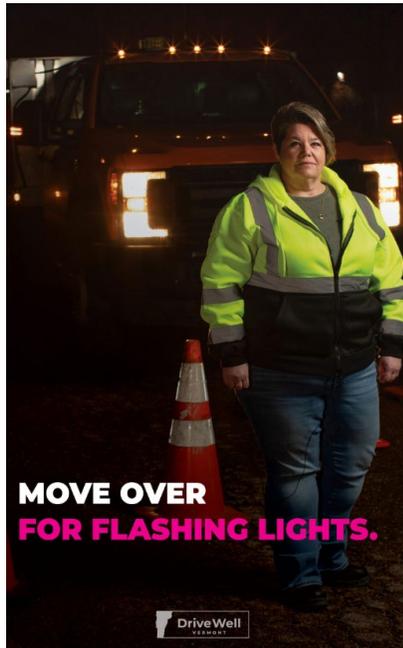
## 2025 Highlights: Impaired Driving

**This past Summer, the State took part in the first DRE/SFST/ARIDE NHTSA Assessment. Currently, recommendations from the assessors are being reviewed and partners are working together to make improvements to the program.**

**VTrans purchased 200 Preliminary Breath Testing Instruments for LE grant partners.**

**The Forensic Lab continued installing new/refurbished Data Master Terminals. Nearly 100 LE officers become DMT certified or DMT Supervisor Certified through trainings conducted by the VFL.**





# 2025 Media Highlights "Drive Well Vermont"

Updated [Drive Well Vermont Media Library](#)

Slow Down Move Over campaign launched

Share The Road campaign launched

Vermont Rider Education Program campaign launched – Instructors and New Riders

Toolkits were created and added to the DWV site for Law Enforcement and Education Partners

The SHSO has a year-round, sustained media buy contract in place that follows the [NHTSA Communications Calendar](#) and VT Data.

# New Activities for FFY2026

VT was designated a Mid-Range Impaired Driving State and implemented a statewide Impaired Driving Task Force

DUI Honor Patrols – VHSA

Employer Driver Impairment Training (EDIT) - DRE Program (VPA)

Green Lab – DRE Program (VPA) funded by the Governors Highway Safety Association

Brattleboro Adult Academy - New grant program

Project Yellow Dot

Digital Alert System Pilot – City of Montpelier Fire Dept.

SHSO Highway Safety Conference – March 24th in Killington

Vermont Highway Safety Alliance to review and expand education outreach opportunities and start workplace safety outreach.

## Media

DWV Work Zone Safety – Releasing April

DRE Recruitment Video

DRE Recruitment Brochure

DWV Distracted Driving Version 2

DWV Red Light Running

Highway Safety Media Survey

New Driver Brochure in 5 languages



# Thank You!

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