



Safer Roads, **STRONGER** Communities

How Traffic Safety Saves Lives—
and Actually Improves Them



The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) is the world's largest and most influential professional association for police leaders. With more than 30,000 members in over 165 countries, the IACP is a recognized leader in global policing. Since 1893, the association has been speaking out on behalf of law enforcement and advancing leadership and professionalism in policing worldwide.

The IACP is known for its commitment to shaping the future of the police profession. Through timely research, programming, and unparalleled training opportunities, the IACP is preparing current and emerging police leaders—and the agencies and communities they serve—to succeed in addressing the most pressing issues, threats, and challenges of the day.

The IACP is a not-for-profit 501c(3) organization headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia. The IACP is the publisher of *The Police Chief* magazine, the leading periodical for law enforcement executives, and the host of the IACP Annual Conference, the largest police educational and technology exposition in the world. IACP membership is open to law enforcement professionals of all ranks, as well as non-sworn leaders across the criminal justice system. Learn more about the IACP at www.theIACP.org.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

America is a nation in flux. That is evident in transportation. Thanks to increased interest in environmental sustainability and physical fitness, public appetite for mass transit and pedestrianism has grown exponentially in recent decades. More than ever, Americans want walkable communities and clean, reliable public transit.

In cities large and small, buses, trains, bike lanes, and pedestrian trails are symbols of progress, while emerging technologies like air taxis and high-speed trains are exciting signs of future greatness.

And yet, the fact remains: For now, at least, the United States is a nation of cars.

Indeed, there are approximately 276.5 million registered vehicles on American roadways, including more than 253.7 million passenger vehicles.¹ That is nearly two cars per U.S. household. It makes sense. Because for most Americans, driving is still the best and often only way to get to work, to school, to the doctor, to the grocery store, and to countless other places that people need to go to live healthy, happy, and productive lives.

Of course, in a nation where driving is so essential, traffic safety also is paramount. Without it, the cars on which so many rely on would sit idle in garages and in parking spaces, unable to ensure safe passage from point A to point B. In that way, traffic safety is as important as the cars it governs: Like oil in the engine and fuel in the gas tank, it keeps vehicles moving—and along with them, people, cargo, and commerce.

Unfortunately, not everyone sees it that way. Although it is a fundamental and vital part of modern policing, many communities and law enforcement agencies view traffic safety with

neither enthusiasm nor prestige. Individuals often see it as an inconvenience, while law enforcement officers may view it as a lower priority. Upon closer scrutiny, however, traffic safety is a compelling opportunity to create positive and meaningful impact.

It is incumbent on law enforcement leaders to recognize that opportunity and incorporate it within their workforce and their community. To assist police leaders, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) have created this toolkit to illustrate the benefits of traffic safety and to help law enforcement agencies do the same.

Central to the toolkit are three core messages:

1. Traffic safety saves lives.

While Americans drove less in 2020 due to the pandemic, NHTSA has estimated that there were 38,680 people killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes—the largest projected number of fatalities since 2007.² Fatalities included not only drivers and passengers, but also cyclists, pedestrians, and other nonoccupants. In 2020, Passenger fatalities was up 5%, motorcyclists up 9%, and pedalcyclists up 5%.

When one considers their causes and consequences, however, they are impossible to ignore. The former range from speeding and alcohol impairment to aggressive, drowsy, and distracted driving—all of which can be prevented or reduced with traffic safety education and enforcement—while the latter include lost children, friends, teachers, neighbors, family members, and partners. In that light, one cannot help but acknowledge: Traffic safety is a necessary.

2. Traffic safety makes communities more livable.

Traffic safety saves lives. Just as important, however, is the fact that it improves them.

Consider, for example, the economic costs of traffic crashes: In 2010—the last time NHTSA reported on

1 "Number of U.S. Aircraft, Vehicles, Vessels, and Other Conveyances." Bureau of Transportation Statistics. Accessed April 29, 2021. <https://www.bts.gov/content/number-us-aircraft-vehicles-vessels-and-other-conveyances>.

2 "2020 Fatality Data Show Increased Traffic Fatalities During Pandemic." National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. June 2021. [2020 Fatality Data Show Increased Traffic Fatalities During Pandemic | NHTSA](https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/2020-fatality-data-show-increased-traffic-fatalities-during-pandemic).

the subject—motor vehicle crashes cost the United States \$242 billion, or approximately 1.6% of U.S. gross domestic product. That includes \$1 million per nonfatal injury in medical costs and lost productivity, \$76.1 billion in property damage, and \$28 billion in crash-related congestion costs, such as travel delays, fuel consumption, and air pollution.³

And that is just the immediate costs of a crash. Every time a person is killed in a collision, society also loses that person's future economic output, which amounts to an average of \$1.4 million per fatality.⁴

Although private insurers and individual crash victims pay most of the tab, approximately 7% of all crash costs are paid from public funds. Uninvolved motorists who are delayed in traffic, charities, and health care providers shoulder another 16% of the costs. Cumulatively, that is billions of dollars every year—over \$187 billion, to be exact—that society spends on traffic crashes that it might otherwise spend on schools, parks, social services, and other public interests that make communities attractive, comfortable, and prosperous places to live.⁵

However, there are more immediate and tangible benefits, too. For example, traffic enforcement has been shown to be both a specific and general deterrence to crime,⁶ including minor offenses like noise violations, littering, vandalism, public intoxication, and disorderly conduct, as well as more serious offenses like burglary and assault. That is because police officers who make traffic stops are visible to other community members who are driving by—not only is the driver who was pulled over deterred, but so are other potential criminals, who may decide not to commit a crime due to police presence. The result: increased safety and a better quality of life.

3. Traffic safety strengthens police-community relations.

Many people at some point have interactions with police during routine traffic stops. That is of significant public benefit, as law enforcement at

its best is a collaborative partnership between the public and police. When they are done correctly, traffic stops build foundations on which to establish and grow the relationships on which that partnership relies.

Furthermore, traffic safety builds goodwill. In residential communities, for example, police often receive complaints from community members about speeding, reckless driving, and other traffic violations. When police officers take those complaints seriously and organize targeted enforcement actions to address them, individuals take note. Police can subsequently spend the resulting social capital they have earned to further engage community members and establish meaningful dialogue on other law enforcement issues that are important to the community.

Traffic Safety as Strategic Priority

Traffic safety is a worthy mission with strategic value that deserves increased priority within law enforcement agencies of all types and sizes. It saves lives, improves the quality of life in communities, and creates positive relationships by which police officers can engage in the communities they serve.

The rest of the documents in this toolkit will help you emphasize and elevate the issue within your own agency and community. Included are insights on the benefits of collaborative policing, a Community Assessment Tool to help law enforcement agencies engage the community about traffic safety, and templates that law enforcement agencies can use to communicate the importance of traffic safety to the public via local news outlets and social media.

In addition, be sure to review and utilize the following IACP traffic safety resources, all of which are available on [the IACP's website](#):

3 "The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2010 (Revised)." National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. 2015. <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812013>.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Hall, Howard B., and Lowman, Anthony S. "Traffic Enforcement: Calculating the Benefits to the Community." *The Police Chief* (July 2017): 42–47. <https://www.iadlest.org/Portals/0/Files/Documents/DDACTS/Docs/Traffic/Benefits%20of%20Traffic%20Enforcement.pdf>.



Safe, Quick Clearance Toolkit

UN-JAMMING TRAFFIC: Driving Toward Safer, Quicker Clearance of Traffic Incidents

Why Traffic is Treacherous

Practical Considerations for Making Traffic Incidents Safer

Practical Considerations for Making Traffic Incidents Safer

Practical Considerations for Making Traffic Incidents Safer

Traffic Enforcement During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Educate Yourself. Stay Informed. Be Safe.

While COVID-19 cases are steadily increasing within the U.S., law enforcement agencies continue to respond to incidents and enforce traffic laws in their communities, despite the operational challenges they may face on roadways due to the pandemic. Below are considerations to help when making traffic stops or conducting traffic safety activities.

The following recommendations were created in consultation with a panel of experts from across the United States.

Any specific considerations related to impaired driving during the COVID-19 pandemic can be found in the **Impaired Driving** toolkit.

Practical Considerations for Making Traffic Incidents Safer

Police officers responding to traffic incidents should consider the following operational adjustments:

- Avoid a traffic stop if possible, after physically observing the vehicle for a period of time to ensure it is safe to stop. If a stop is necessary, use a safe location and avoid high-traffic areas.
- Minimize contact with the driver, including using a handheld radio or mobile phone.
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Distracted Driving Toolkit

Distracted Driving

Promising Practices and Lessons Learned from the Field

Montgomery County, Maryland, Police Department

Ohio State Highway Patrol

Distracted Driving & Safety

Distracted Driving & Safety

Distracted Driving & Safety

Traffic Safety Resource Guide

TRAFFIC SAFETY RESOURCE GUIDE

TRAFFIC SAFETY RESOURCE GUIDE

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High Visibility Education & Enforcement: A Collaborative Approach to Traffic Safety

HIGH VISIBILITY EDUCATION & ENFORCEMENT (HIVE): A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

DELAWARE

With the intent to engage the community and other stakeholders, a summary of the findings from the HIVE project is provided below.

Emergency & Christina H

DELAWARE

Following the HIVE project, a summary of the findings from the HIVE project is provided below.