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Making roadways safer for all Oregonians

Starting a Traffic Safety Commission

How do we get started?

A commission/committee/group can be initiated by citizens, elected officials, or local government staff. However, to increase its effectiveness, the commission should be authorized through an ordinance, resolution, or executive order of the local government.

Who should be on the commission?

The makeup of the commission should fit the needs of the community.

In a small community, the commission might consist of key officials/staff with traffic safety responsibilities, who meet to discuss problems and plan a coordinated program of traffic safety activities. However, whenever possible, citizens should be included to build public support and acceptance of programs. Another approach smaller communities may want to consider is adding traffic safety responsibilities to the mission of an existing commission or committee (i.e., planning)

In a larger community, the commission would ideally consist of volunteer citizens, and have funding and sufficient staff to conduct an ongoing program.

The commission's membership will be decided by the local government's council or commission. The Chairperson might be selected by its members or appointed by the mayor or by the Chairperson of the County Commission. If the commission does not have staff, one of the members should serve as the secretary and keep the official minutes of all meetings.

The following agencies and organizations should be considered for representation on a city or county traffic safety commission.

- law enforcement agency
- local school or board of education
- planning commission
- local newspaper

- health care providers (doctors, nurses, hospitals)
- local emergency medical services (paramedics, ambulance drivers)
- the public safety/engineering department
- civic groups (MADD, Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions, PTA, etc.)
- student safety organizations (OSSOM/SADD)
- fire department
- public utilities
- auto insurance companies
- business organizations
- cities officials (for county traffic safety commissions only)

What can a traffic safety commission do?

The activities of the commission will depend upon its structure and the needs of the community.

A careful analysis of traffic safety needs and problems should be made by the commission to determine the proper focus for the commission's activities.

Based on a review of local crash/collision data and safety needs, the traffic safety commission should decide to focus on specific segments of the population. For example: youth and/or seniors. The commission may also decide that their efforts need to focus on specific areas of traffic safety. For example, pedestrians, bicycles, drunk driving, speed, traffic engineering, etc.

The purpose of the commission needs to be specified in the resolution or ordinance establishing the commission.

The following list identifies possible projects for a traffic safety commission:

1. Conducting an ongoing public information campaign designed to call public attention to traffic safety problems in the community. Examples include; explaining how to use pedestrian lights/signs, describing dangerous intersections in the local newspaper.
2. Conducting an ongoing public information campaign to educate people about driving laws, DUII, safety belts, etc. This might include safety messages on business signs or local radio/tv or development of a student safety program in the local schools.
3. Conducting a speed watch program where volunteers use radar guns to identify speeding vehicles. Information can be used to plan enforcement efforts or to send letters requesting drivers to slow down.
4. Organizing bike rodeos and bike helmet distribution projects.

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