U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

TRAFFIC TECH
Technology Transfer Series

NHTSA

DOT HS 812 338

October 2016

More Cops More Stops: Evaluation of a Combined HVE Program in Oklahoma and Tennessee

Introduction

More Cops More Stops (MCMS) was a high-visibility enforcement (HVE) program designed to address multiple traffic safety issues with one message and programmatic effort. Law enforcement agencies (LEAs) in Oklahoma and Tennessee conducted heightened alcohol-impaired driving, seat belt, and speeding enforcement, which was advertised using the MCMS combined message.

Highway safety researchers have previously tested the combined approach. Jones, Joksch, Lacey, Wiliszowski, and Marchetti (1995) evaluated a combined speeding, alcohol-impaired driving, and seat belt program. While the study did not reach definitive conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the combined approach, the study found combined enforcement to be taxing on law enforcement because it required heightened enforcement of multiple traffic laws at the same time. Also, the study suggested that the combined message was too complex and diluted the salience of each specific issue.

The current research set out to test the MCMS combined concept using a controlled pre-post design, which allowed for identifying added benefits of a combined program over those associated with single-issue programs (i.e., *Click It or Ticket* (CIOT) and *Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over* [DSOGPO]). Over a two-year period, LEAs in Oklahoma and Tennessee engaged in intensive enforcement for four waves of MCMS, two waves of CIOT and two waves of DSOGPO. The program and control areas in each State were exposed to CIOT and DSOGPO activities, but by design only the program areas were exposed to MCMS. Examining differences between the program and control areas allowed for isolating the effect of MCMS separate from the effects of CIOT and DSOGPO.

Results

Reported media and enforcement for MCMS were relatively strong compared to the statewide single-issue campaigns. Awareness surveys found MCMS waves were generally associated with increases in awareness of the MCMS slogan. Other than some significant increases in awareness of general traffic enforcement associated with MCMS in Tennessee, other indices in the survey were less consistent and displayed similar trends in the program and control areas. There were no overall significant pre-to-post program increases in perceived risk of a ticket or an arrest. There were increases in perceived risk for some enforcement types during some waves, but the pattern was inconsistent. The results suggest that MCMS did not clearly increase awareness of enforcement activities or the perceived risk of getting a ticket or of being arrested.

One measure of program outcome was observed change in seat belt use during the day and at night. As seen in Table 1, observed seat belt use increased in almost all of the program and control areas. The increases were generally larger in the control than in the program areas, suggesting MCMS did not increase belt use beyond the effect of the annual statewide campaigns.

Table 1. Net Program Change in Observed Belt Use

	Program	Control
Daytime		
OK	+2.4*	+9.1*
TN	+5.2*	+6.2*
Nighttime		
OK	-0.9	+8.9*
TN	+8.3*	+6.3*

*Statistically significant at .05 level

An additional measure of program outcome was breath alcohol concentration (BrAC) surveys conducted in Tennessee. While BrAC surveys conducted in the program area suggested a downward trend in positive BrACs among drivers, it is unknown whether this decline can be attributed to MCMS because there was no control area.

Limitations

All large program efforts experience limitations because they are conducted in the real world where it is difficult to control the environment. For example, limited control area options

in Oklahoma led to selecting an area with low seat belt use baselines, which were 8 and 10 percentage points lower in the control area than in the program area for daytime and nighttime seat belt observations, respectively. These lower baselines may have contributed to the large gains in seat belt use observed in the Oklahoma control area when compared to the program area.

MCMS was designed to tackle alcohol-impaired driving, seat belt use, and speeding. Ideally, this program evaluation would have been equipped to determine the effect of MCMS on all of these behaviors. However, it was not feasible or cost-effective to measure speeding behavior, and alcohol-impaired driving could only be measured for some waves and did not include a control. Tennessee also included distracted driving in its paid media message. This component was not captured through the evaluation because it was added after the evaluation was designed.

Discussion

This research involved an extensive effort by the Oklahoma and Tennessee Highway Safety Offices and associated LEAs to demonstrate the MCMS combined program concept. Strong media and enforcement efforts provided an opportunity to determine the relationship between the MCMS combined program and changes in observed seat belt use and positive BrACs. Regarding seat belt use, the evidence suggests MCMS did not have an added benefit beyond that associated with the single-issue statewide campaigns as evidenced by often greater increases in control areas than in program areas. Tennessee did experience a significant decrease in positive BrACs; however, the link between this change and MCMS is less clear without control area observations.

A large part of testing a new program concept is seeing how it works in action, and program tests are often full of discoveries regarding what works and what does not. For MCMS, a primary implementation finding was that the program's complex focus and proximity to the statewide campaigns contributed to enforcement fatigue. In practice, it appears to be a large effort for any LEA to simultaneously conduct multiple types of high intensity enforcement, immediately followed by CIOT and DSOGPO activities. This research appears to have confirmed the findings of Jones, Joksch, Lacey, Wiliszowski, and Marchetti (1995), providing further evidence that combined enforcement programs can be taxing on law enforcement.

Core to the combined messaging concept, this research helped test the influence of an overarching combined message on awareness of enforcement and on changes in behaviors. The awareness survey found inconsistent results regarding awareness of specific types of enforcement, which suggests that the MCMS combined message may have been less successful at communicating that specific types of enforcement were taking place. When coupled with not finding improvement in observed seat belt use associated with the MCMS program, this research provides evidence to support the theory put forward by the Jones team (1995) that combined messaging dilutes each individual message component.

Conclusions

With great appreciation of the many individuals in Oklahoma and Tennessee who worked hard to test MCMS, this research places the traffic safety community in a better position to make informed programming decisions. This evaluation provides little evidence to support the continued use of MCMS to enhance the effect of CIOT and DSOGPO. Further, the MCMS combined concept appears to be taxing on law enforcement and to have limits in communicating specific traffic safety messages.

Reference

Jones, R., Joksch, H., Lacey, J., Wiliszowski, C., & Marchetti, L. (1995, March). *Combined speed, alcohol, and safety belt enforcement strategies*. (Report No. DOT HS 808 242). Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Available at http://ntl.bts.gov/lib/25000/25900/25919/DOT-HS-808-242.pdf.

Report Access

For a copy of the research report *More Cops More Stops: Evaluation of a combined HVE program in Oklahoma and Tennessee* (DOT HS 812 337), visit www.nhtsa.gov. Mary T. Byrd was the NHTSA Project Manager for this project.

Suggested APA format citation for this document:

Preusser Research Group, Inc. (2016, October). *More Cops More Stops: Evaluation of a combined HVE program in Oklahoma and Tennessee* (Traffic Safety Facts Traffic Tech. Report No. DOT HS 812 338). Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., NPD-310
Washington, DC 20590

TRAFFIC TECH is a publication to disseminate information about traffic safety programs, including evaluations, innovative programs, and new publications. Feel free to copy it as you wish. If you would like to to be added to an e-mail list, contact TrafficTech@dot.gov.

12616-102016-v2