

## NEW MEXICO Safety Corridors

### ▶ AT-A-GLANCE

#### ▶ Project Characteristics

Innovative  
Collaborative

#### ▶ Program Areas

Law Enforcement and  
Prosecution  
Community/Corridor  
Traffic Safety Programs

#### ▶ Targeted Populations

Private and commercial drivers

#### ▶ Type of Jurisdiction

State

#### ▶ Jurisdiction Size

1.8 million

#### ▶ Funding

Section 402: \$50,000  
State: \$20,000  
Next year: \$600,000

#### ▶ Contact

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## Problem Identification

New Mexico functions as a "bridge" for travelers and freight, because it has three interstates and numerous miles of rural U.S. state highways, and county roadways. Many local roads have become major thoroughfares, but have not been updated beyond repaving to accommodate the higher speeds and volumes.

New Mexico's crash and fatality rates are consistently higher than the national average. Given the rural nature of New Mexico, most of the fatalities occur on rural roads.

## Goals and Objectives

The goal of New Mexico's Safety Corridors program is to identify areas of high crash risk and take steps to correct the problem in order to reduce the number of crashes and fatalities on New Mexico's highways and rural roads. The program's objective is to develop a formula for effectively addressing crash problem areas by using a data-driven and collaborative planning and implementation process.

## Strategies and Activities

New Mexico's Safety Corridors program implemented the following strategies and related activities to achieve its goals and objectives:

- Defined a Safety Corridor as a segment of road that has been designated as such with a sign to clearly identify it as such to motorists.
- Collaborated with the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and with many local agencies to establish Safety Corridors.
- Identified high crash locations, then met to analyze the situation and plan corrective measures. Some engineering countermeasures may become apparent when the multi-agency group meets. When an engineering fix cannot be attended to immediately the Safety Corridor approach may be used as a temporary measure until the engineering deficiency can be addressed.
- Developed and refined the following six-point formula for creating Safety Corridors:
  - Develop a three to five year history on injury and fatal crashes on the identified segment of roadway;

- Form a Collision Investigation unit to review data history and identify contributing factors;
  - Review existing law enforcement initiatives employed at proposed corridor site;
  - Request NM DOT District Engineer to review project;
  - Conduct public awareness campaigns to highlight the need for the safety corridor;
  - Inventory equipment and signage needs to support proposed corridor site.
- Created Safety Corridors in areas based on high collision and fatality rates, whether due to terrain, weather, high volumes or truck traffic, or unlawful driving behaviors such as DWI (Driving While Intoxicated), speeding, aggressive driving, or failure to yield to pedestrians.
  - Ensured success through involvement and cooperation of numerous state and local agencies (such as, the state police, any other law enforcement agency that has jurisdiction over the area, city/county engineers, and emergency responders).
  - Increased enforcement effort through giving grants to law enforcement agencies to do overtime enforcement efforts along the corridor. When motorists see someone pulled over, they realize that there is an enforcement presence.
  - Doubled fines for speeding in Safety Corridors. Other traffic violations are also caught due to increased enforcement along the corridor.
  - Initiated a large local media campaign for each Safety Corridor when established, after all Safety Corridor signs were in place. The multi-agency group publicized the project through all available media resources, including evening TV news, radio, and print. The news also spreads through the visibility of enforcement.

## Results

U.S. Highway 82 was the first designated Safety Corridor in New Mexico. The interagency collaboration and the actions taken on that particularly dangerous portion of highway have worked to reduce crashes. The enforcement effort started in March 2002 yielded the following results:

- 17.1 percent decrease in the total number of collisions.
- 100 percent decrease in fatal collisions.
- 19.2 percent decrease in collisions involving injury and 14.3 percent decrease in collisions involving severe injury.
- 100 percent decrease in collisions involving heavy trucks.

The New Mexico model will be expanded statewide, as needed, to support driver safety at the local level.