

Pinellas County Community Traffic Safety Team Minutes from Meeting 12/4/03

The meeting was called to order by Chair Dave Fechter at 10:08 am, followed by introductions. Minutes from the previous meeting were moved for approval and unanimously accepted by CTST members present with no corrections or amendments.

Committee reports were presented as follows:

Engineering - Marc Hanger of Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization, Chair

- Four railroad crossings in the county will be undergoing repair work between now and March 1, 2004. Locations in order of work are
 - 1 62nd Avenue North west of 49th Street
 - 2 Old Coachman and North East Coachman
 - 3 Starkey Rd (688) and County Road 296
 - 4 Enterprise Road east of McMullen Booth Road
- The proposed WFLA-TV media safety campaigns for Bike and Pedestrian safety did not appear to indicate a target audience. The Engineering group recommended that school-aged children be a primary target audience.
- FL DOT current accident reports indicate that fatalities in Pinellas County are down 18% from the same time last year.
- Studies are continuing at the intersection of Tampa Road & US 19. Law enforcement representative Officer Bordner indicated that based on the previous crash data analysis, enforcement activities have been heavily coordinated in the area. Kristy Patterson, Palm Harbor Fire and Rescue staff and CTST member, works a short distance from the intersection. She noted that the eastbound green light appears to be shorter than the westbound light and cars often tend to run the light. CTST members suggested that the light be modified to run for the same length of time as the westbound light in an attempt to reduce red light running and the long traffic back ups which occur because of the short green light. It was also reported that the northbound left turn light was not working a few days ago. Steve Yeatman from Pinellas County's signal shop will look into correction or modification of the two signal issues.
- Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization provided five reports from this past month to FDOT representative Peter Hsu to assist the on-going evaluation of the right turn lanes recently added to US 19 north of SR 580. All five accidents were related to the intersection of Tampa Road and US 19, an intersection recently ranked as a significant concern for crashes by the CTST and MPO. Three of the accidents were directly related to a left turning vehicle that properly cleared three lanes, but was struck by a vehicle in the right turn lane. One was a rear-end collision, and the fourth was a vehicle lane change incident. CTST members conducted a lengthy discussion about the right turn lanes to determine what is happening and what steps may help correct the situation. The initial development of the right turn lane was intended to increase capacity as a standard through lane. The US 19 task force opposed the suggestion of creating the lanes as right turn lanes. For apparent political reasons, the measure was passed. The lanes are sometimes standard through-lanes but then convert to right turn only. This flow pattern is reportedly confusing to motorist. Others use the lane as a method to by-pass long lines

of stopped traffic and then jump in the front of the line. Law enforcement officials stated that people who use the right turn lane as a through lane to by-pass traffic and then get back into the left travel lanes are technically not violating the law. Offenders who are stopped or ticketed for various reasons often respond that they didn't know it was a right-only turn lane. Overhead signage is reportedly present, but no right turn markings are reportedly on the roadway. Law enforcement requested the addition of double white lines to help with enforcement, but not "turtles" since they hinder emergency situations and are difficult for motorcycles to safely navigate. CTST members also suggested that the lane be reverted back to its originally planned purpose strictly as a through-lane to help improve traffic flow and eliminate the issue. FDOT safety engineer Peter Hsu will follow up with management to coordinate an operational study of the area. No right turn lanes are present or planned for the area south of SR 580.

- US 19 sidewalk completion connecting SR 580 and Tarpon Avenue is in the final stages.

Education, Kristy Patterson of Palm Harbor Fire Rescue, Chair

- The mock DUI crash planned for Palm Harbor University High School is stalled until school administration provides an answer to agree to the event and an acceptable date. With the likely date in March, if an answer is not received soon, the event may not happen. Alison Weber agreed to contact the school administration to facilitate the process.
- Jeannette Rouse from FLDOT stated that the 20+ billboards with the YOU DRINK YOU DRIVE YOU LOSE/BUCKLE UP logos are currently at the printer and will be up throughout Pinellas, Pasco and Hillsboro from 12/14 through the end of the holidays. A press conference and unveiling will be held on 12/15 to get media attention. The location and time will be announced when determined. CTST members are encouraged to attend the unveiling as a show of support. Jeannette will advise members of the time and final location.
- The idea of "Recipes 4 the Road" was accepted as a project for next year. Beginning in February, efforts will begin to create a similar booklet of non-alcoholic holiday beverages for distribution during the holiday season of 2004.
- The appearance of Lee Brown, Kristy Patterson and Jean Hatten on FLA Law was postponed with a reschedule date pending
- On 12/15/03 Lee Brown and Jean Hatten will be taping an interview for the Pinellas County cable access channel with educational information to help prevent DUI
- There are plans to try to get grant money for a DUI educational/prevention campaign to be held between next Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve. Information is planned for billboards, radio and TV public service announcements.
- At last month's meeting several copies of the video entitled "Young Drivers at Risk" were distributed. Alison Weber acquired two beta versions so that it could be run on the school system's cable channel. Officer Steve Burch said he could use the second copy to broadcast on their cable access channel. Kristy Patterson of Palm Harbor Fire & Rescue said a she could also use a beta copy for broadcasts. Officer Burch agreed to send one to Kristy.

Enforcement, Pinellas County Sheriff's Officer Jim Bordner

- A sobriety checkpoint was held on Keystone Road at Old East Lake Road on Friday 11/21/03 from 8:00 pm to 11:00 pm. 30 Pinellas County Sheriff's Officers with equipment were present, along with 3 DOC Officers (Probation/Parole). RID graciously provided refreshments and served the officers at the event. A total of 780 vehicles passed through the checkpoint with 356 diverted for assessment. All drivers' D/L and warrant status were checked. The average intrusion time was 2 minutes 13 seconds. There were 8 arrests (3 DUI, 2 Drug, 2 Probation violations, 1 suspended driver's license), 21 traffic citations, 4 vehicles towed and 1 private tow.
- A sobriety checkpoint was held on 11/21/03 from 12:30 am to 3:30 am at 3655 Tampa Road near the Lockheed-Martin Complex. 30 Pinellas County Sheriff's Officers with equipment were present, along with 3 DOC officers (Probation/Parole). RID graciously provided refreshments and served the officers at the event. A total of 730 vehicles passed through the checkpoint with 146 diverted for assessment. All drivers' D/L and warrant status were checked. The average intrusion time was 1 minute 39 seconds. There were 11 arrests (9 DUI, 4 Drug, 1 suspended driver's license), 28 traffic citations and 8 vehicles impounded.
- Combined totals for both checkpoints: 1510 vehicles, 502 diverted for assessment, 12 impounded. Arrests: 12 DUI, 6 Drug, 2 suspended licenses. Breakdown of the 49 citations: 12 DUI, 10 DWLSR 10, 3 speeding, 1 seatbelt, 2 violation of D/L restriction, 1 insurance, 4 expired tags, 10 other moving violations, 5 other non-moving violations.
- Kristy Patterson asked if there was a mock funeral procession planned this year on New Years' Eve as has been done in the past. Nothing has been coordinated to the knowledge of the CTST Enforcement members present .

Dave Fechter pointed out that on the last page of the meeting minutes from last month there was a summary of activities completed for October as announced at the November meeting. This summary format will facilitate quick reporting of CTST activities and will be continued from this point forward. Committee Chairs are requested to submit events completed in this format at each meeting and addition into minutes distributed to CTST members.

A discussion was held regarding the upcoming WFLA-TV media safety campaign. Members agreed the campaign is an excellent concept and are excited to participate in the development of the materials. CTST members were wondering how things would be coordinated from this point forward and requesting additional information in the process to help WFLA-TV.

Lee Brown, an employee of Great Bay Distributors of Largo, presented information to the CTST about the third year of the Tow-To-Go program sponsored jointly by AAA and Budweiser from the Thanksgiving through New Year. As a community service to help make the roads safer, the program runs throughout the county to provide a free ride home and vehicle tow to reduce the number of intoxicated drivers on the roads. Posters and business cards with the toll-free 800-AAA-HELP number were distributed to members to help spread the word to the community. AAA dispatch center handles the call like any

other call, with the reported average reported response time by an authorized AAA towing vendor as 20 minutes. If the vehicle had too many occupants to fit in the tow vehicle, a free cab ride home was also available to the rest of the group. Last year over 1,200 people used the service. Great Bay drivers distributed posters to bars, restaurants, the St. Pete Times, Beacon Leader Bee and other community locations. Bay News 9 had plans to run a billboard as an advertisement. Some county government offices were including the color business cards with the 800 number to employees. CTST members were asked to spread the word via email as well. Lee requested suggestions from CTST members on other methods to communicate the information. Officer Bordner recommended that a similar program to prevent drunk driving on the water be initiated with SeaTow to work with beach restaurants. Reportedly there has already been some conversation and effort to accomplish this. Water safety charts are available for areas both north and south of Clearwater. The Safe Kids "Splash Into Summer" group was suggested as being proactive and possibly a good contact.

Vicki Gilbert, a representative of RID of Tampa Bay, reported that a memorial service is planned at the Methodist Church on 4th Street Southwest in Largo on 12/13/03 at 6:30 pm. Representatives from each law enforcement area were requested to attend. Approximately 20 SADD students are slated to be in attendance. Refreshments will be provided and Officer Gage and his wife will be singing. Distribution of red ribbons by MADD and RID has been partially completed to several law enforcement agencies. The groups requested that officers tie the ribbon onto the squad cars to reflect support for "tie one on " message of "Don't Drink & Drive". Also, community service suggestions were requested following the recent DUI judgment against Jack St. Arnold. RID was having him wash cars and was seeking other suggestions for activities. CTST members recommended that Mr. St. Arnold could deliver the ribbons and assist at DUI checkpoints. Washing police cars was also suggested, but would require supervision. It was recommended that private vehicles not be washed due to potential liability concerns. CTST members with other ideas are encouraged to call 545-1260. Thanks were offered to enforcement officers for the recent checkpoints, stating that "Road Rage" is bad in some places in Clearwater. The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office recently dedicated a DUI checkpoint to a DUI victim, which received very positive feedback. MADD in Hillsborough County has plans for a candlelight memorial service, to which all are welcome. A date was uncertain.

Officer Jim Bordner wanted to publicly thank the Remove Intoxicated Drivers (RID) group for the food and service provided to officers at the recent checkpoints. He mentioned that a representative from the State Attorney's Office was present for the entire checkpoint held on 11/21/03.

CTST members were reminded that on 12/5/03 at Fort DeSoto is this year's "Ride for the Stars" event. Registration started at 7 am with participants receiving a t-shirt and lunch. A Bike Rodeo (helmets mandatory) was scheduled to be part of the event. Proceeds go toward the Pinellas County Sheriff's Christmas Sharing project.

The annual Toys for Tots motorcycle run was planned for Sunday, 12/6/03 from mid to south county locations during the morning hours. Participation in the event is growing; however, there is often significant traffic delay due to the lengthy stop times to permit the group to pass uninterrupted.

During both 12/7/03 and 12/13/03 two concerts are planned at Coachman Park, which will affect vehicular traffic flow and increase pedestrians in the surrounding areas.

Mike Gust from the City of Dunedin commented that upcoming improvements to the railroad tracks near Northeast Coachman will have a huge impact for traffic on that road as well as Belcher Road, US 19, Drew Street and Sunset Point Road.

The next Pinellas County CTST meeting will be held on January 8, 2004. The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 am.

Alison Weber
Pinellas CTST Secretary

Members Present:

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| Ernie Armistead | Belleair Beach PD | 595-4646x130 |
| Jim Bordner | Pinellas Sheriff's Office | 582-6439 |
| Lee Brown | Great Bay Distributors | 587-6823 |
| Lt. Steve Burch | Clearwater PD | 562-4161 |
| James Byers | PSTA | 533-4304 |
| Charles Cronin | Clearwater PD | 562-4162 |
| Dave Fechter | TEI Engineers& Planners | 813-884-7339 |
| Michael Frederick | City of St. Petersburg | 893-7843 |
| Vicki Gilbert | RID of Tampa Bay | 545-1260 |
| Thomas Goldberg | Kenneth City PD | 544-2564 |
| Mike Gust | City of Dunedin | 298-3223 |
| Marc Hanger | Pinellas MPO | 464-8200 |
| Terry Hensley | Law Enforcement Liaison | 367-9633 |
| Sgt. Dennis Hobbs | FL Highway Patrol | 647-3743 |
| Peter Hsu | FDOT Safety | 813-975-6251 |
| Thea Johnson | Neighborly Care Network | 571-4384 |
| Felicia Leonard | Clearwater Bike/Ped | 562-4852 |
| Kristy Patterson | Palm Harbor Fire | 787-5974 |
| Joseph Pratt | St. Pete PD | 893-4883 |
| Diane Roffey | Suncoast Safety Council | 442-0233x328 |
| Jeanette Rouse | FDOT Safety | 813-975-6256 |
| Scott Vaughn | St. Pete Beach PD | 363-9200 |
| Bill Walker, RN | East Lake Fire Rescue | 784-8668 |
| Sgt. Butch Ward | Largo PD | 586-7473 |
| Alison Weber | Pinellas Co Schools | 588-6151 |
| Steve Yeatman | Pinellas Signal Shop | 464-8987 |
| Jeffrey Pegler | State Attorney | 464-6731 |