



# Chapter 1: Introduction

Colorado updates its SHSP every five years to align with changing trends and best practices and to remain eligible for Federal Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funding (a core federal-aid program to reduce fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads, including non-state and tribal roads). This chapter introduces the plan's Vision and Mission, organization, development, goals, implementation, and alignment with other plans.

## SHSP Vision and Mission

### Vision

The future of Colorado is zero deaths and serious injuries so all people using any transportation mode arrive at their destination safely.

### Mission

Colorado agencies and partners will cooperatively implement strategies that eliminate transportation system fatalities and serious injuries.

The Vision and Mission for Colorado's Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) were established by the participants of Colorado's Advancing Transportation Safety (ATS) initiative (a statewide collaboration born from the state's previous SHSP) with support and approval by the SHSP's Steering Committee, which includes representatives from:

- » Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT).
- » Colorado State Patrol.
- » Colorado Department of Revenue.
- » Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.
- » National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
- » Federal Highway Administration.
- » Additional state agencies, advocacy groups, and special interest organizations.

The plan's Vision and Mission align with Vision Zero, a multinational effort aiming to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries on transportation systems. The Vision and Mission recognize that numbers of fatalities and serious injuries are not just statistics—they reflect the lives of real people forever changed by crashes. Even one life lost or altered is too many.



# SHSP - Bridging Vision & Mission With Action

An SHSP is defined by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as a statewide-coordinated safety plan that provides a comprehensive framework for reducing fatalities and serious injuries on public roads. In essence, it defines the strategies that prioritize and focus actions to achieve the Vision and Mission.

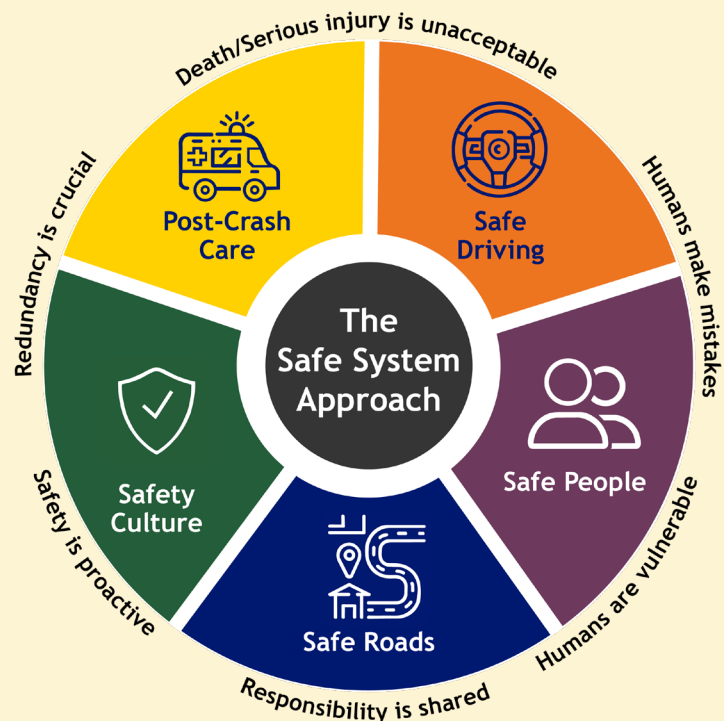
Colorado's SHSP is a data-driven, five-year plan that identifies multidisciplinary strategies (also referred to as countermeasures) to address safety priorities identified by reviewing data and gathering input from key stakeholders. The organization of the SHSP reflects Colorado's adoption of the Safe System Approach which includes five Emphasis Areas (Safety Culture, Safe Driving, Safe People, Safe Roads, and Post-Crash Care) and six principles:

- » Death and Serious Injuries are Unacceptable.
- » Humans Make Mistakes.
- » Humans Are Vulnerable.
- » Responsibility is Shared.
- » Safety is Proactive.
- » Redundancy is Crucial.

## The Five Emphasis Areas and Six Principles of the Safe System Approach

The Safe System Approach (SSA) is recognized nationally and internationally as an effective way to reduce deaths and serious injuries in transportation systems by addressing both human mistakes and human vulnerability. It promotes the design and implementation of transportation networks that prioritize redundant layers of protection for roadway users.

SSA's holistic and comprehensive nature encourages safety professionals to expand their influence beyond roadway design and beyond traditional transportation agencies. Additionally, the SSA prioritizes serious and fatal injuries (as opposed to all crashes), encouraging professionals to target severity reduction as a mechanism to reduce fatalities and serious injuries.



The SHSP follows the FHWA process model of planning, implementation, reporting, and evaluation (Figure 1-1). The remainder of this section describes key activities that shaped the 2025 SHSP.



Figure 1-1: FHWA Process Model

Figure 1-2 summarizes the SHSP planning process. It began by gathering agreement among key leaders on the process and desired outcomes. This was followed by stakeholder engagement with local, regional, state, federal, non-profit, and public- and private-sector organizations, using a robust and inclusive approach. These stakeholders, along with subject matter experts, aligned around the Vision and Mission and provided important insights to data analysis and community relevance, identifying and refining strategies, and action planning. Stakeholders were identified through a robust process further described in Chapter 3 Stakeholder Engagement.

Data collection and analysis informed the SHSP. The safety improvement strategies and actions identified in the plan are the direct result of data analysis, including observed trends in the crash data, the proven effectiveness of safety countermeasures, and self-reported behaviors gained through annual surveys. Chapter 2 Data Analysis & Findings further details the data collection and analysis.

FHWA requires additional analyses focused on three high-priority contexts: High-Risk Rural Roads (HRRR), Older Drivers and Pedestrians, and Vulnerable Road Users (VRUs)(see callout: FHWA Special Contexts for more details).

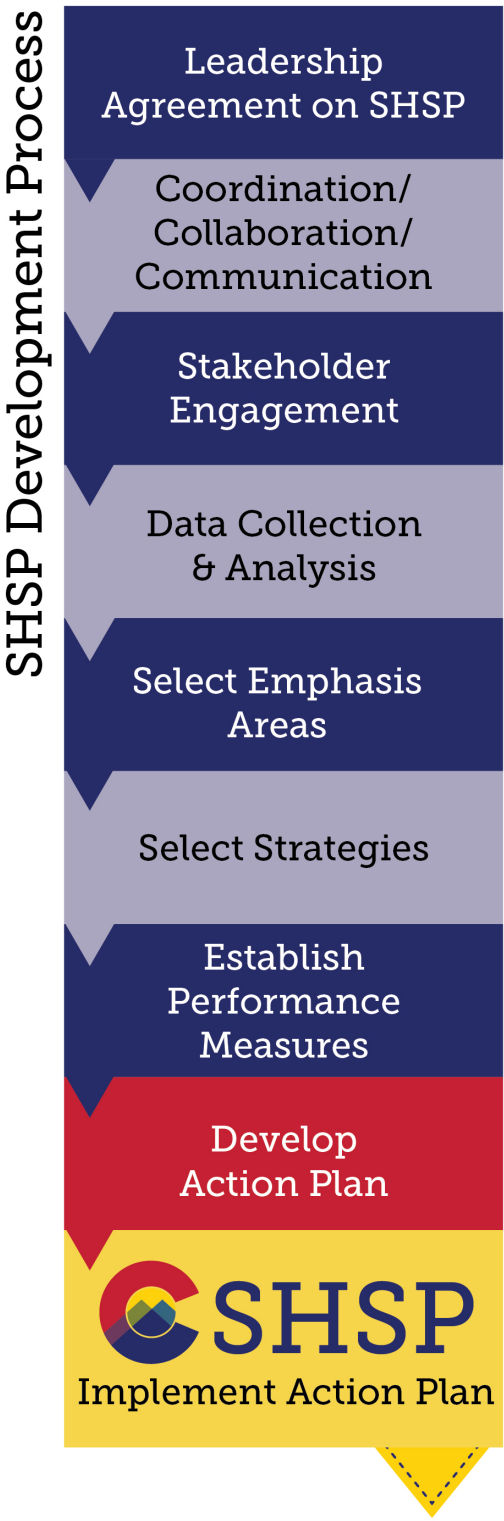


Figure 1-2: Colorado SHSP Development Process

Data collection and analysis coupled with stakeholder input supported the identification of Emphasis Areas (Chapter 4) and the selection of strategies (Chapters 5 - 9).

Performance measures were established based on the previous steps. The SHSP establishes goals to reduce fatalities and serious injuries by 5% year-over-year resulting in a 22.6% reduction from 2024 to 2029. These goals align with CDOT's Policy Directive 14 (a 10-year Statewide Plan). Details of these goals are discussed throughout Chapters 5 through 9.

Achieving these goals requires strong implementation and evaluation. The SHSP describes steps for implementation, reporting, and evaluation. The Advancing Transportation Safety (ATS) initiative is responsible for developing annual Action Plans and facilitating implementation by enumerating action steps with timelines, assigning champions, and creating accountability through regular reporting. Access to timely data, such as CDOT's data dashboards allows stakeholders to monitor and evaluate Colorado's progress on meeting the SHSP's five percent year-over-year reduction goal. Stakeholder reporting and annual reports are crucial for assessing progress toward reducing roadway fatalities and serious injuries. Implementation is discussed in Chapter 10 Implementation.

The Advancing Transportation Safety (ATS) initiative, developed under the 2020 Strategic Transportation Safety Plan (STSP), builds on Colorado's 2015 Moving Toward Zero Deaths effort. Recognizing the need for a unified safety coalition, ATS is the result of implementing STSP Strategy B: Build a Safety Coalition- advocating for safety, fostering a strong safety culture, and reducing fatalities and serious injuries across Colorado. The ATS initiative brings together safety partners across the state to implement strategies adopted through the SHSP. These partners are organized into working groups based on Emphasis Areas and develop, champion, and monitor annual Action Plans.

## FHWA Special Contexts (Special Rules)

Per the requirements of the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), updates to a state's SHSP must address three specific topics (i.e., special rules) aimed at areas of desired safety improvement. The special rules are assigned to states based on observed crash history and are specific to each state. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), signed on November 15, 2021, introduced a new Vulnerable Road User (VRU) Special Rule under the HSIP while maintaining the existing rules for High-Risk Rural Roads (HRRR) and Older Drivers and Pedestrians. The VRU and Older Drivers and Pedestrians HSIP special rules apply to Colorado. As of 2025, the HRRR special rule does not apply to Colorado. The VRU Special Rule strengthens the focus on non-motorist safety and requires states to complete VRU safety assessments as part of the SHSP update process.



**High Risk Rural Roads (HRRR)** High Risk Rural Roads (HRRR) are defined in Title 23 of the United States Code as “any roadway functionally classified as a rural major or minor collector or a rural local road with significant safety risks, as defined by a State in accordance with an updated State Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP).” Each state is required to define significant safety risks.

In Colorado, HRRR are defined as:

Any roadway functionally classified as a rural major or minor collector or a rural local road experiencing severe (serious bodily injury or fatality) crash rates that exceed the average for similar facilities as determined by a Level of Service of Safety (LOSS) (for on-system roadways) or a crash rate analysis (for off-system roadways). On-system roadways are under the jurisdiction of the State of Colorado whereas local agencies (e.g., Cities, Towns, Counties) have jurisdiction over off-system roadways.

Per FHWA requirements, when a state qualifies for the HRRR special rule, the state must obligate in the following fiscal year an amount equal to at least 200% of the amount of funds the State received for fiscal year 2009 for high risk rural roads. For Colorado, that equates to approximately \$2.8M per year. As of 2025, Colorado is not required to set aside these funds; however, whether the special rule applies is reviewed annually to determine if Colorado meets the threshold of the special rule.



**Older Drivers and Pedestrians** The Older Drivers and Pedestrians Special Rule requires Colorado to include strategies in the SHSP to address the rising rate of fatalities and serious injuries among older road users (age 65 and older). The state must analyze whether increases are due to driver or pedestrian incidents—or both—to guide targeted countermeasures. As detailed in Chapter 7 Safe People, fatality and serious injury increases have occurred among both older drivers and pedestrians, necessitating that the SHSP incorporate treatments from the 2014 FHWA Handbook for Designing Roadways for the Aging Population.



**Vulnerable Road Users** Under the VRU Special Rule, Colorado must allocate at least 15% of its HSIP funding to projects improving safety of VRUs. All highway safety improvement projects, including those implemented under the VRU Special Rule, must be on a public road consistent with Colorado’s SHSP and correct or improve a hazardous road location or feature, or address a highway safety problem. Therefore, Colorado’s SHSP addresses fatalities and serious injuries among pedestrians and bicyclists. Furthermore, Colorado uses a data-driven approach to address safety problems and opportunities on all public roads and for all road users as part of the SHSP.

In 2023, Colorado completed a Vulnerable Road Users (VRU) Safety Assessment that outlined strategies and actions aimed at improving safety for those most vulnerable to serious injury or fatality in the event of a crash. The results of the 2023 VRU Safety Assessment informed the VRU Assessment included in this SHSP. Moving forward, the VRU Safety Assessment is now a part of the SHSP process and will be updated every five years. The Safe People Emphasis Area contains the assessment and relevant strategies, described in Chapter 7.

## Emphasis Areas and Focus Areas

Colorado's Emphasis Areas are based on the Safe System Approach and include Safety Culture, Safe Driving, Safe People, Safe Roads, and Post-Crash Care. Within each of these Emphasis Areas, there are Focus Areas that describe particular contexts (e.g., intersections), behaviors (e.g., impaired driving), or populations (e.g., pedestrians) that are associated with fatal and serious injury crashes. For example, in the Safe Roads Emphasis Area there are four Focus Areas: intersections, lane departures, off-system (roads), and speed management (Figure 1-3). This plan identifies specific strategies suitable for each Focus Area including clear performance measures, funding sources, project-level detail, and evaluation criteria. Strategies for each Emphasis Area and Focus Area are included in Chapters 5 through 9.

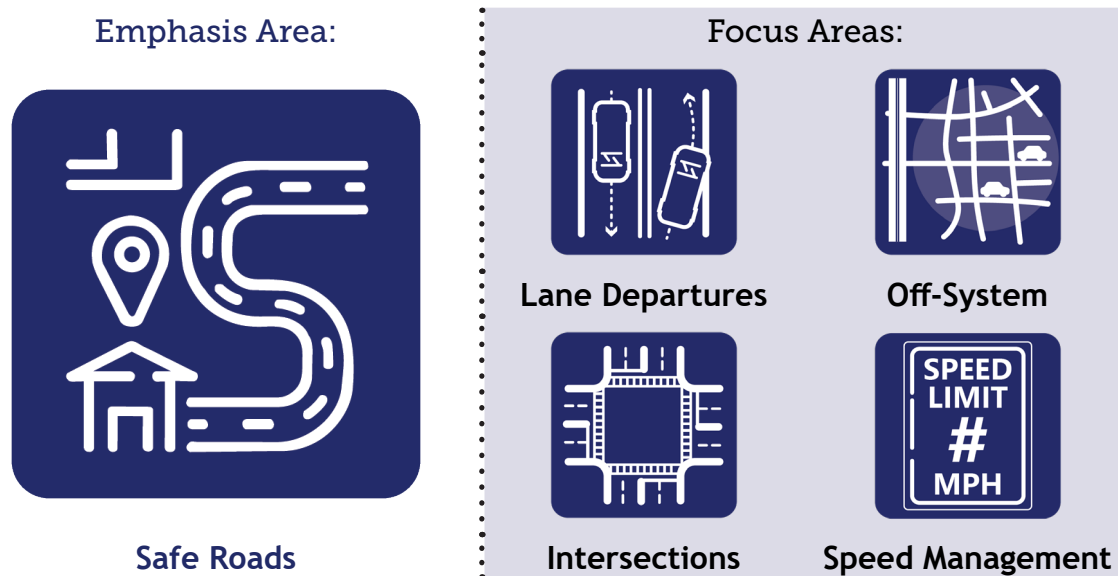


Figure 1-3: Safe Roads Emphasis Area and Focus Areas

## Alignment with Other Plans

The complexity and long-term nature of the transportation system requires multiple short- and long-term plans. Such plans address different geographies (e.g., metropolitan and rural), modes, vehicle classes (e.g., commercial), and safety-related factors (e.g., infrastructure and behavioral).

The SHSP development process involved coordination with various state planning processes, as well as federal, industry-specific, and local road safety plans (Figure 1-4). In total, 44 plans were reviewed to assess alignment with high-level goals, performance measures, strategies, and objectives and identify how these plans could contribute to SHSP implementation. The Appendix includes a full matrix detailing each plan's goals, strategies, objectives, and performance measures and alignment with the SHSP.

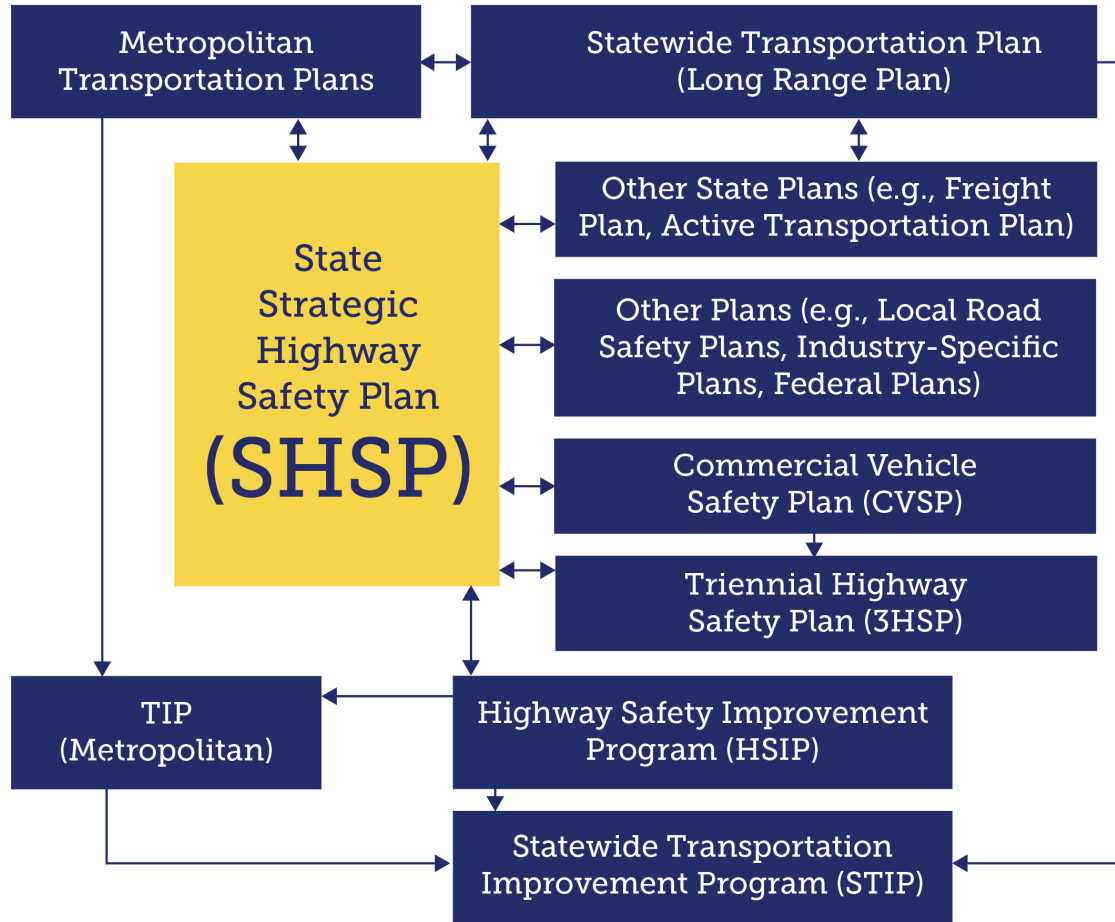


Figure 1-4: Coordinated Transportation Safety Planning, Source reference HSIP.

Opportunities to continue improving alignment with on-going state and local transportation and safety planning efforts include:

- » Developing compatible annual planning timelines.
- » Using consistent data and analysis strategies.
- » Aligning plan and program mission / vision / goals.
- » Identifying consistent strategies and countermeasures.
- » Determine priorities for the correction of hazardous road locations, sections, and elements via identified crash data analysis.
- » Targeting funding to implement strategies associated with SHSP Emphasis Areas.
- » Engaging SHSP stakeholders in planning processes, safety committees, and local and regional safety action planning.
- » Including safety criteria in performance reviews.
- » Providing access to safety data and analysis results.
- » Including SHSP criteria in HSIP and Triennial Highway Safety Plan (3HSP) grant solicitation requirement.



## Summary of Strategies

The following tables summarize the SHSP strategies by Focus Area. More detailed descriptions of the strategies are provided in the SHSP Emphasis Area chapters and the Appendix.

Table 1-1. Safety Culture Strategies

Focus Area	Strategy
Organizational Safety Culture	SC1: Conduct organizational safety culture assessments
Organizational Safety Culture	SC 2: Local agency support programs (LTAP and Safety Circuit Rider)
Organizational Safety Culture	SC3: Expand public engagement
Organizational Safety Culture	SC4: Consider communities with below average safety outcomes when making transportation safety investment decisions
Organizational Safety Culture	SC5: Enhance collaboration and information sharing among traffic safety professionals
Public Safety Culture	SC6: Pilot community-level safety culture partnerships
Public Safety Culture	SC7: Educate through media campaigns
Public Safety Culture	SC8: Build capacity among the public

Table 1-2: Safe Driving Strategies

Focus Area	Strategy
Occupant Protection	SD1: Promote proper use through media campaigns
Occupant Protection	SD2: Educate on primary seat belt law
Impairment	SD3: Provide polydrug impairment education
Impairment	SD4: Prioritize high-risk impaired driving corridors
Impairment	SD5: Continue high-visibility enforcement
Aggression	SD6: Deploy anti-aggressive driving campaigns
Aggression	SD7: Prioritize high-risk aggressive driving corridors
Speeding	SD8: Prioritize high-risk speeding locations
Speeding	SD9: Deploy speed safety camera systems
Distraction	SD10: Provide education on hands-free law
Distraction	SD11: Enhance data collection



Table 1-3: Safe People Strategies

Focus Area	Strategy
Motorcyclists	SP1: Expand motorcycle operator safety training
Motorcyclists	SP2: Increase public awareness of motorcycle safety
Motorcyclists	SP3: Improve motorcycle licensing and endorsement
Motorcyclists	SP4: Increase helmet and other personal protective equipment (PPE) use
Aging Drivers	SP5: Improve visibility of traffic control devices
Aging Drivers and Pedestrians	SP6: Improve sight distances
Aging Drivers and Pedestrians	SP7: Expand community-based mobility options
Aging Drivers	SP8: Enhance and expand resources for aging drivers
Young Drivers	SP9: Expand access to driver's education
Young Drivers	SP10: Improve quality of driver's education
Pedestrians and Bicyclists	SP11: Prioritize pedestrian and bicycle crash types
Pedestrians and Bicyclists	SP12: Improve VRU exposure data
Pedestrians and Bicyclists	SP13: Conduct Road Safety Audits (RSAs)
Pedestrians and Bicyclists	SP14: Perform regional pedestrian/bicyclist studies
Pedestrians and Bicyclists	SP15: Analyze VRU crash demographic data
Pedestrians and Bicyclists	SP16: Conduct VRU before-and-after studies
Pedestrians and Bicyclists	SP17: Educate traffic safety professionals on VRU best practices
Pedestrians and Bicyclists	SP18: Inventory VRU infrastructure
Pedestrians and Bicyclists	SP19: Expand VRU data sources
Pedestrians and Bicyclists	SP20: Evaluate VRU priority locations
Work Zones	SP21: Create work zone safety committee
First Responders	SP22: Provide resources and support for first responders



Table 1-4: Safe Roads Strategies

Focus Area	Strategy
Lane Departures	SR1: Install traffic controls and safety barriers
Lane Departures	SR2: Improve roadway geometry
Off-System	SR3: Provide local agency assistance
Off-System	SR4: Encourage community-specific plans
Intersections	SR5: Reduce intersection conflicts
Intersections	SR6: Perform Intersection Control Evaluations (ICE)
Intersections	SR7: Incorporate VRU designs
Intersections	SR8: Prioritize high-risk intersection locations
Intersections	SR9: Implement improved traffic controls
Speed Management	SR10: Promote appropriate speeds
Speed Management	SR11: Set safe and realistic speed limits





Table 1-5: Post-Crash Care Strategies

Focus Area	Strategy
TIM/EMS	PC1: Improve collection of post-crash care data
TIM/EMS	PC2: Improve quality of care
TIM/EMS	PC3: Provide education on post-crash care best-practices
TIM/EMS	PC4: Enhance programs in light of differences in post-crash care outcomes
TIM/EMS	PC5: Support statewide traffic incident management (TIM) activities