



Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission “Safe on 17” / Highway 17 Safety Corridor Project

Fact Sheet
March 2015

Highlights

- ❖ Collaboration of many agencies
- ❖ Includes: securing funding, construction of safety enhancement projects, enforcement, and public education
- ❖ Decreased injury & fatal collisions by 40% from pre-program average



Project Description

The Highway 17 corridor was identified as a high collision corridor in 1998 as a result of collision data analysis and recommendations of local, regional, county and state agencies. A Task Force was formed to develop collision reducing strategies. The Task Force is comprised of representatives from the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC) and the San Francisco Bay Area’s Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), the California Highway Patrol (CHP), California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), local police and fire departments, legislators’ offices and the media.

Strategies

The strategies developed by the Task Force to reduce collisions on the Highway 17 corridor include enhanced CHP enforcement, road improvements and public education. These strategies focus on preventing the occurrence of the top five Primary Collision Factors in fatal and injury collisions including driving at unsafe speeds, vehicle right-of-way violations, improper turning and improper lane change.

- Extra enforcement adds to the number of CHP officers patrolling Highway 17. High CHP visibility serves to encourage safer driving and deter traffic violations.
- Road improvements include shoulder and lane widening, improved barriers and road drainage, additional warning devices, and tree trimming. These improvements increase vehicle control, increase the clear recovery area for vehicles, increase sight distances, advise motorists to be cautious and address wet weather collisions.
- Public education efforts increase driver awareness of safe driving practices, especially on mountainous highways and thus reduce collisions. Brochures, press releases and articles are examples of mechanisms for informing the public about safety on Highway 17.

The strategies listed above were implemented courtesy of a 3-year grant from the State Office of Traffic Safety (OTS). After the OTS grant expired in 2002, the SCCRTC and MTC agreed to continue funding enhanced CHP enforcement with Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE) funds.

Results

For more than fifteen years, the coordinated approach of the Safe on 17 program -- including enforcement, safety improvements and public education -- has reduced by 40% the number of injuries and fatalities on the Highway 17 corridor. In 1996-1998 there were an average of 249 injury and fatal collisions, many of which were head-on. In 2014 that number was reduced to 174.

Service Authority For Freeway Emergency (SAFE)

RTC administers the SAFE for Santa Cruz County. SAFEs are funded by a \$1 registration fee on all vehicles in their region. The funds are used to provide the highway call box system, Freeway Service Patrols on Hwy 1 and 17, extra enforcement on Hwy 17 and other motorist-aid services.



For More Information

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