THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
HIGHWAY SAFETY RESEARCH CENTER
# DIRECTIONS
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# HSRC receives $6 million to encourage safe walking, bicycling for schoolchildren

The University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center (HSRC) has been awarded $6 million in funding to assist communities in enabling and encouraging children to safely walk and bike to school.

The HSRC will use the funding, awarded over five years by the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, to establish a clearinghouse on the National Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program, a federal program established to create safe settings where more parents and children can walk and bicycle to school.

**Visit the National Safe Routes to School Clearinghouse Web Site**

The clearinghouse will provide technical assistance to SRTS program coordinators and serve as the central hub of information on successful SRTS strategies and programs.

“The clearinghouse will help Safe Routes to School programs thrive based on knowledge, research and quality communication and promotion,” said Lauren Marchetti, program manager for the clearinghouse.

The HSRC also will be responsible for developing educational programs on SRTS, as well as developing and maintaining a clearinghouse Web site, listserv and toll-free phone number.

The HSRC will develop the clearinghouse in collaboration with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, America Walks, the Governor’s Highway Safety Association, the Institute of Transportation Engineers and Toole Design Group, as well as a network of experts nationwide.

“The implications of SRTS are far reaching,” Marchetti said. “Communities are struggling with motor vehicles clogging roads around schools, motor-vehicle emissions polluting the environment and more children engaged in less physical activity.”


Childhood obesity rates have more than tripled in the past 30 years, while the number of children walking and biking to school has declined, Marchetti said.

According to the 2001 National Household Travel Survey, less than 16 percent of students between the ages of 5 and 15 walked or biked to or from school, compared to 42 percent in 1969.

Through the 2005 passage of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), Congress designated a total of $612 million toward developing the National Safe Routes to School Program. Prior to the federal funding in the United States, several states and communities already had dedicated funding for Safe Routes to School programs.

With roots in Europe, Safe Routes to School is an international movement to help create safe environments for walking and bicycling to school.

# Pedestrian safety guide implemented

The Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (PBIC) recently completed the guide *How to Develop a Pedestrian Safety Action Plan* for the Federal Highway Administration's Office of Safety. The instructional manual is intended for use by local and state officials to guide pedestrian safety planning, implementation and improvement.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, there were 4,641 pedestrians killed in traffic crashes in 2004. The number of pedestrian fatalities has decreased over time, but is still a large problem that the PBIC is aiming to help though safety measures, planning and education.

"In a society that values choice and freedom, people should be able to walk safely, whether for fun and recreation, errands, getting to work or school, shopping or other reasons. However, pedestrians are often left out when planning or renovating roadways," said Charlie Zegeer, PBIC director and co-author of the how-to guide. "With the creation of *How to Develop a Pedestrian Safety Action Plan*, we hope to encourage cities and states to make their streets more friendly and safe for pedestrians."

The manual offers guidance that can help municipalities determine and solve their pedestrian safety concerns, from identifying pedestrian safety problems to obtaining funding and enacting change. Easily tailored to individual areas, the manual also offers expertise on managing a pedestrian advisory board, collecting and analyzing data and planning a street that offers optimal pedestrian accessibility.

Following the development of the manual, the PBIC will be working with selected states and cities to train and assist city planners, engineers, public health and injury prevention officials, traffic safety and enforcement officers and any other key decision makers.

The PBIC recently conducted several training sessions in Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, New Jersey and New York, attended by state and local transportation and government officials; roadway design, traffic safety and planning engineers; and metropolitan planning organizations.

Dennis Scott, state pedestrian/bicycle coordinator for the Florida DOT said, "During the sessions, the group participated in field training and looked at unfriendly intersections. All parties came to a consensus as to how the intersection could be made safer for both pedestrians and drivers, and plans are underway to enact these changes."

Trainings took place in Tallahassee as well as St. Petersburg in late March of this year. "The training was well-received," said Scott. "We hope to do similar trainings throughout the state and help more people see that local and state governments can work together to make Florida safer for pedestrians and drivers."

Moving forward, the PBIC will also be instructing in Hawaii, Illinois, Michigan, New Mexico, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Texas. Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York City and Phoenix are the cities where the PBIC will provide technical assistance and training.

*How to Develop a Pedestrian Safety Action Plan* is part of FHWA's goal to decrease pedestrian fatalities by 10 percent in two years. FHWA has launched a campaign to encourage municipalities to take pedestrian safety into their own hands and develop independent plans and pedestrian-safety programs. The manual was contracted through Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc., a national engineering firm, who subcontracted HSRC to author this FHWA project and provide technical assistance.

For more information on how your community can participate in training to improve pedestrian safety, please contact Charlie Zegeer at charlie_zegeer@unc.edu.

# Motorcycle education program aims to reduce crash rate

HSRC has partnered with the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) to conduct a study of the benefits of motorcycle safety instruction. The grant from MSF and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) will be used to evaluate the safety benefits of continuing participation in rider education.

From 1997 to 2004, motorcyclist fatalities in the U.S. increased approximately 89 percent from 2,106 to 4,008. According to the *National Agenda for Motorcycle Safety*, research identified braking, cornering and swerving as crash avoidance skills often absent among crash-involved motorcyclists. The MSF Rider Education and Training System (RETS) is composed of a series of interrelated courses and other training opportunities designed to improve crash avoidance skills, increase knowledge and improve risk management strategies.

“Our widely recognized rider education and training system used in this study is built upon the principle of safety renewal,” said Tim Buche, president of the MSF. “We believe that motorcycle-riding and decision-making skills can diminish over time. It’s important to refresh or renew abilities to improve a rider’s knowledge, skill and risk management strategies.”

This project will allow HSRC to test how motorcycle crash avoidance skills are improved and how crashes are prevented with the addition of extended opportunities for riders to renew their skills and refresh their safety mindset. “The Discovery Project,” as the study has been coined, will compare data from riders who participate in only the basic motorcycle safety class to riders who participate in the basic motorcycle safety class as well as a variety of continuing education classes.

“We welcome the opportunity to be part of research that for the first time takes a comprehensive, field-based look at the effects of participation in a rider education and training system over several years, and its potential to ultimately reduce the number of crashes,” said Jane Stutts, HSRC’s associate director for social and behavior research.

The awarding of the funding was announced on March 28 at the 2006 International Motorcycle Safety Conference in Long Beach, California, where experts in motorcycle safety from 20 countries gathered to share their latest research.

“We are pleased to contribute to such a significant study, and are looking forward to working with the MSF and NHTSA, two organizations that have such a strong history in championing motorcyclist safety,” said Stutts

Since 1973, the Motorcycle Safety Foundation® (MSF) has set internationally recognized standards that promote the safety of motorcyclists with rider education courses, operator licensing tests and public information programs. The MSF works with the federal government, state agencies, the military and others to offer training for all skill levels so riders can enjoy a lifetime of safe, responsible motorcycling. The MSF is a not-for-profit organization sponsored by BMW, Ducati, Harley-Davidson, Honda, Kawasaki, KTM, Piaggio/Vespa, Suzuki, Triumph, Victory and Yamaha.

# HSRC News Briefs

## UNC Highway Safety Research Center establishes scholarship

The UNC Highway Safety Research Center (HSRC) announces the first annual scholarship for graduate students interested in pursuing a career in highway safety.

The $1,000 scholarship is available to a full-time graduate student with career goal emphasis on transportation safety who will be enrolled in the fall of 2006 at any of the University of North Carolina campuses.

“The field of transportation safety is currently going through a transition period that has created many new career opportunities,” said HSRC Interim Director David Harkey. “We hope this scholarship will serve to encourage more students to pursue a career in one of the many disciplines of highway safety.”

Candidates will be evaluated based on academic performance, career goals, extracurricular and professional activities, work experience and a 1,000-word essay on a current highway safety issue.

The scholarship will officially be awarded to the graduate student finalist during HSRC’s 40th anniversary dinner event scheduled for Thursday, October 5, 2006.

The deadline for applying is July 1, 2006, and the application can be downloaded at www.hsrc.unc.edu/scholarship/.

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## HSRC encourages visibility during Yield to Heels event

HSRC collaborated with the UNC department of public safety to educate the campus’ pedestrians on the importance of visibility during the spring event for Yield to Heels, an on-campus pedestrian safety education campaign.


Nighttime presents the greatest risk of a pedestrian being involved in a crash as factors such as glare and low visibility make it more difficult for motorists to see them. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, almost half of pedestrian fatalities occur at night between 6:00 p.m. and midnight.

“Even a pedestrian wearing white can only be seen from about 180 feet away, which does not allow ample time for a vehicle traveling 40 mph to stop after seeing the pedestrian,” says David Harkey, HSRC’s interim director.

In order to encourage visibility, Yield to Heels volunteers distributed educational fliers and retro-reflective items to pedestrians at crosswalks across campus. Reflective gear can be seen by motorists up to 500 feet away at nighttime, making pedestrians and bicyclists much more visible to motorists.

Yield to Heels also aims to clear up myths about traffic safety for both pedestrians and drivers. Many pedestrians believe that seeing a “walk” signal means that it is safe to walk without checking all directions for vehicles. Pedestrians should always look across all lanes and in all directions before stepping out into an intersection, including looking for turning vehicles, regardless of what the signal displays. Equally, drivers need to slow down and be ready to yield to pedestrians in crosswalks.

For more information on pedestrian safety, please visit http://www.hsrc.unc.edu/y2h or http://www.dps.unc.edu.

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## HSRC launches redesigned Web site

HSRC is pleased to announce the launching of its newly redesigned Web site in conjunction with the 40th anniversary of the Center.

The site features detailed information about current research projects, a bibliography listing of published research, a news room featuring news releases, links to project Web sites maintained by the Center and an option for viewers to sign up for email updates from the Center.

New features include a flash movie and time line chronicling the Center's achievements over the past 40 years. To visit the site, please go to www.hsrc.unc.edu.