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## Harkey steps up as HSRC's new director



When David Harkey initially began his classes in civil engineering at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, he had no idea that his life would one day be dedicated to the pursuit of safer highways. He was planning on a career as a structural engineer. During his senior year, he was taking a class under former HSRC Director Dr. Doug Robertson, who encouraged him to pursue a career in transportation engineering. This career path has led him all over the world, conducting research studies from the rural roads of Alabama to the roundabouts of Australia and finally, to Chapel Hill, where he will settle in as the Center's fourth director since its establishment in 1965.

Throughout his 14 years with HSRC, Harkey has served as the principal investigator on several studies for the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as well as the National Cooperative Highway Research Program. He has been working to improve highway safety through applied research for all modes of surface transportation – cars, large trucks, pedestrians and bicyclists. Many of his studies have produced results for policy makers, while others have resulted in tools and software for practitioners.

Harkey currently serves as the principal investigator on the FHWA Highway Safety Information System as well as NCHRP projects related to the development of accident modification factors and improved guidance for the installation and operation of accessible pedestrian signals for the visually impaired.

When asked what he envisions for the future of HSRC, Harkey responded, "I plan to build upon the strong reputation HSRC has developed over the past 40 years and expand the Center to do more to serve the state, to help meet national goals that have been set to reduce fatalities on our roadways and to look for opportunities internationally where we can have an impact on global road safety."

Harkey has already begun international collaboration through his efforts to establish a joint international research consortium and to launch a staff exchange program with the Institute for Road Safety Research in The Netherlands.

Said Vice Chancellor of Research and Economic Development Tony Waldrop, "This appointment is based upon the unanimous recommendation of the search committee as well as my own belief that David is extremely well qualified for this important position."

Harkey has been serving as HSRC's interim director during the selection process, and previously acted as deputy director of the Center. Prior to his arrival at the Center in 1993, Harkey served as director of the traffic engineering and safety division of The Scientex Corporation.

The staff of HSRC welcomes Harkey to his new role and looks forward to the future of the Center under his leadership.

## HSRC to host Highway Safety Symposium in honor of 40th anniversary

The field of highway safety research has come a long way since former Governor Dan K. Moore first signed the Highway Safety Research Center into existence in 1965. One year later, with a new director and a hope of improving highway safety, the Highway Safety Research Center was established in the Veteran's Club on the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill campus.



This October, forty years later, the Highway Safety Research Center will host *The Evolution of Highway Safety: How Research Can Save Lives on Our Roads*, an inaugural symposium in celebration of the anniversary of the Center.

The symposium will discuss the many factors that influence highway safety and the importance of research in developing solutions. Speakers will review the accomplishments that have led to improved practices, policies and legislation, as well as look to the future and discuss the type of research that will be required by multiple disciplines to reduce the toll on our highways. The symposium will be an opportunity to foster a stronger connection between practitioners and researchers and to learn where different disciplines –behavioral scientists, engineers, public health researchers and others – will need to focus their efforts in the future.

HSRC is privileged to present the following speakers whose careers have been dedicated to improving highway safety:

- Dr. Forrest Council, former HSRC director and senior researcher for over 30 years, will review highway safety in a historical context and discuss many of the accomplishments achieved in recent decades.
- Dr. Bruce Simons-Morton, Chief of the Prevention Research Branch in the Division of Epidemiology, Statistics, and Prevention Research at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, will present his vision of how the social/behavioral sciences should contribute to future highway safety research.
- Dr. Ezra Hauer, world renowned engineer and Professor Emeritus in the Department of Civil Engineering at the University of Toronto, will speak on the future of highway safety research within the engineering realm.

The event is open to the public and will host an audience of highway safety researchers and practitioners, University officials, researchers and students, as well as members of the general public.

To learn more about the symposium and the speakers, or to sign up to attend the symposium, please visit [www.hsrc.unc.edu/news\\_room/events\\_40th-anniversary.cfm](http://www.hsrc.unc.edu/news_room/events_40th-anniversary.cfm).

## Highway Safety Information System receives continued funding



For many researchers, acquiring data to study the safety of our roadways used to be a lot more difficult. That changed in 1990 when the Highway Safety Information System (HSIS) was launched as the nation's only multi-state database that includes both crash and non-crash safety data.

The concept for HSIS was developed in 1987 under the direction of Dr. Forrest Council, former HSRC director and HSIS principal investigator. "We wanted to develop a system, not just a database, that could be used to answer the most critical highway safety questions," said Council.

The HSIS now offers data from nine states as well as two urban areas. These states and municipalities were chosen for the quality of their data, their ability to link crash data with road inventory data, and their willingness to work with the HSIS staff to provide and improve the data. Some states also provide unique data to the

system, such as road curvature, expanding the database and the list of safety issues that can be addressed. In return for their participation, the HSIS staff provide quality assurance on the data received and feedback to the states regarding any anomalies discovered.

The HSIS is used most often by researchers to evaluate the safety effectiveness of engineering countermeasures and to determine the relationships between characteristics of the roadway environment and crashes. The results of these research efforts are provided to engineers, planners and policy makers and help them to make better decisions about where to spend their limited resources for safety improvements and what changes are needed in the design, operations and maintenance of their roadways.

HSIS staff also conduct research using the data. Recent studies have included an investigation of collisions involving passenger cars and large trucks, safety analysis of rumble strips, and a crash analysis of collisions involving pedestrians and motor vehicles on rural roads. In addition to conducting research, the HSIS has served as a mechanism for producing analysis tools for practitioners. The Pedestrian and Bicycle Crash Analysis Tool (PBCAT) and the Geographic Information System (GIS) Safety Analysis Tools were both upgraded recently and are available for download on the [HSIS Web site](#).

The HSIS will continue operations for the next five years with the recently awarded \$5.8 million in funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

"With renewed funding, we will continue to provide the data to enable researchers to answer key roadway safety questions. At the same time, we will explore the possibility of adding additional states and urban centers to the system in the near future," said David Harkey, HSRC director and HSIS principal investigator.

For more information on the Highway Safety Information System, please visit [www.hsisinfo.org](http://www.hsisinfo.org).

## HSRC News Briefs

### HSRC Senior Researcher speaks to NC Senate and House Judiciary Committees regarding teen cell phone legislation

HSRC Senior Researcher Arthur Goodwin spoke before the North Carolina Senate and House Judiciary Committees regarding Senate Bill 1289, which would make it illegal for a person under the age of 18 to talk on a cell phone while driving. The bill passed and was signed into law by Governor Mike Easley on August 2, 2006.

"The cell phone restriction is designed to reduce distractions during a very high risk period when teens are first learning how to drive" according to Arthur Goodwin. "The cell phone bill will be a new component of North Carolina's GDL system, and will further help to protect young drivers."

Under the new law, teen drivers caught using a cell phone face a \$25.00 fine and a six-month extension of their graduated license restrictions. The new law does not assess any additional insurance points for an infraction and also includes exceptions for calling emergency response personnel or parents. Dr. Rob Foss, Senior Research Scientist with HSRC, played an instrumental role in crafting the legislation.

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### HSRC launches senior pedestrian program

Hendersonville community members, ranging in age from eight to 88, walked through the city in support of community-based senior pedestrian program *Walk Wise, Drive Smart* on Saturday the 13th of May.

The *Walk Wise, Drive Smart* program, spearheaded by HSRC as part of the Henderson County Livable Senior Friendly Communities Initiative, launched their official kick-off at Jackson Park in Hendersonville with help from the Henderson County Council on Aging, the AARP and local volunteers who serve on the program's community advisory group.

Around fifty pedestrians and volunteers gathered to embark on a series of walks, the longest of which wrapped through downtown Hendersonville. Wearing bright yellow t-shirts with the *Walk Wise, Drive Smart* apple logo, the pedestrians were hard to miss during their jaunt through the park and beyond. In fact, increased visibility is one of the messages of the program, which strives to encourage safe walking and driving habits.



Hendersonville City Manager Chris Carter spoke at the event about the multiple bond referendums that the city has already passed, and is planning for the future, to improve the sidewalks and safety of Hendersonville streets.

Officers from the North Carolina Highway Patrol and Hendersonville Police were also present; they have pledged to more actively enforce dangerous driving conditions that could be harmful for pedestrians, such as illegal right turns on red and failure to yield to pedestrians.

"We were very pleased with the turnout for the kick-off event and the enthusiasm Hendersonville residents have for supporting this program," said *Walk Wise, Drive Smart* Director Bill Hunter. "We look forward to the continued participation of the city in making Hendersonville a more inviting walking environment for pedestrians of all ages."

The program plans to continue its efforts throughout the year by educating and encouraging pedestrians and motorists to think about the benefits of walking for the environment and to practice safe habits when walking and driving. *Walk Wise, Drive Smart* also aims to complete one safe walking route in each of 10 Hendersonville neighborhoods. Other sidewalks will be repaired and upgraded to make walking safer and more convenient.

The next activity planned for the *Walk Wise, Drive Smart* program is Active Aging Week, taking place in Hendersonville from September 25th through October 1st, 2006. For more information visit [www.walk-wise.org](http://www.walk-wise.org) or call Bill Hunter at 919-962-8716.

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## National Center for Safe Routes to School hosts first annual meeting of the State Safe Routes to School Coordinators



Safe Routes to School (SRTS) State Coordinators gathered in Washington, D.C., from July 31 – August 2 for their program's first national meeting. Forty-one States and the District of Columbia were represented at the meeting hosted by the National Center for Safe Routes to School (NCSRTS) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

The National Center for Safe Routes to School is led by the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center in partnership with AASHTO, GHSA, ITE, America Walks and Toole Design Group.

Both permanent and interim SRTS Coordinators gathered to meet one another and share information about programs in their states. They discussed program plans, application procedures and evaluation issues, and heard about current programs and plans for the NCSRTS. The Coordinators also heard from federal agencies and national advocacy and nonprofit organizations that are active in SRTS initiatives around the country including AASHTO, America Walks, FHWA, Governors Highway Safety Association, the League of American Bicyclists, the National Center for Bicycling and Walking, NHTSA and the Safe Routes to School National Partnership. A highlight of the meeting was a stirring keynote address presented by Congressman James L. Oberstar of Minnesota.

"The State SRTS Coordinators are an energized group of professionals who are dedicated to the success of the national SRTS program and looking forward to working together to promote safe routes to school," said Lauren Marchetti, NCSRTS Director.

For more information, please visit the NCSRTS Web site at [www.saferoutesinfo.org](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org).

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