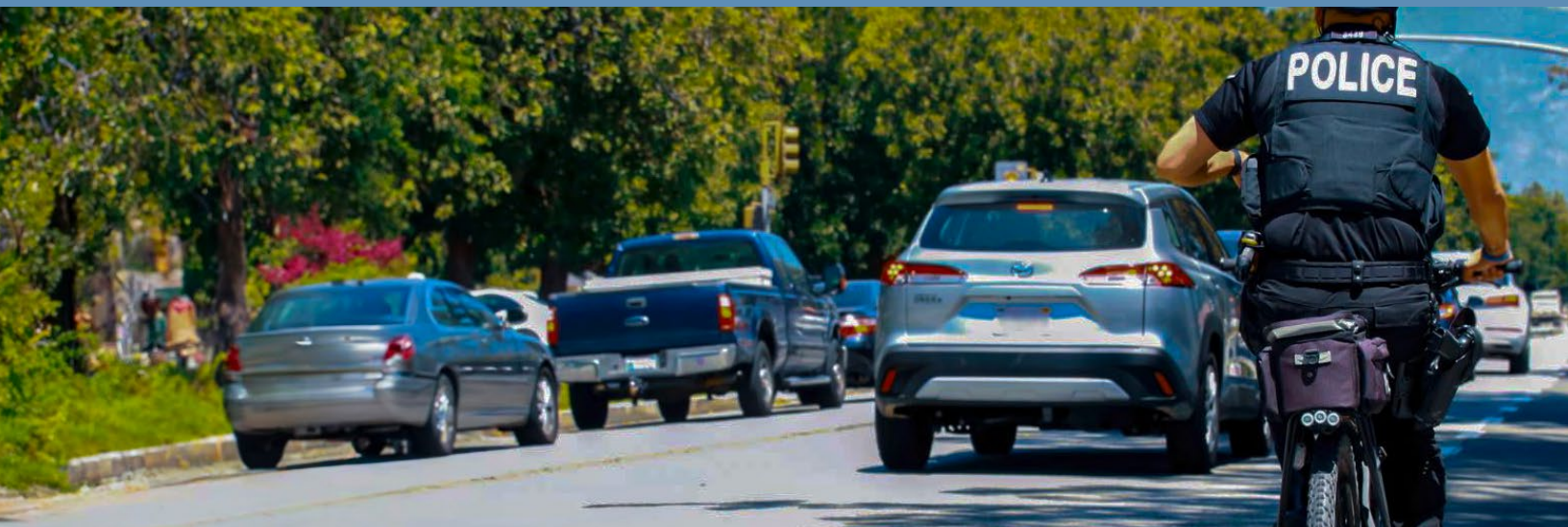




CALIFORNIA OFFICE OF TRAFFIC SAFETY



2025–2027 Strategic Plan

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Message From the Director



I am pleased to present the 2025-2027 Strategic Plan for the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS).

Our critical and urgent mission is saving lives. The OTS is achieving this by developing and implementing highway safety programs that address our biggest traffic safety challenges. These programs provide important layers of protection in a Safe System. We developed our OTS Strategic Plan with CalSTA's "Core Four" and the Safe System Approach in mind. We need all the tools at our disposal to reduce crashes – infrastructure, education, enforcement, vehicle safety, and emergency response – because all these approach roadway safety problems from very different angles. While we work

collaboratively with safety partners to advance population-level interventions, behavioral safety programs remain vital in combatting the riskiest problem areas, such as impaired and distracted driving, speeding, and lack of restraint, that remain crash contributors in a third of all fatal crashes. Our role in behavioral safety is to make sure that we are investing in countermeasures to address these issues, but also closely coordinating and collaborating with our peers in the other parts of the system, to make sure the safety net is as strong as possible.

The OTS sought feedback from a variety of stakeholders in the development of the Strategic Plan. This 2025-2027 Strategic Plan charts a path toward a brighter, promising future in road safety where there are zero people killed or seriously injured. The goals and objectives are built upon a passion for safe roads for all, meaningful collaboration with our partners and the communities we serve, valuing all perspectives where everyone has a voice, supporting new and innovative ways to improve traffic safety, and leading by example as a trusted leader and expert in traffic safety.

The approximately 12 people killed on California roads every day should not be thought of as an inevitable outcome. As a recognized leader in traffic safety, the OTS delivers impactful programs that improve traffic safety outcomes for everyone.

The OTS team is committed to advancing this Strategic Plan through everyday actions that prioritize getting to and from places safely. Together, we can achieve zero and make our vision a reality.

Stephanie Dougherty

Director, California Office of Traffic Safety

About Us

The OTS is California's leader and voice for safety on our roads. We are the state's advocate for safer travel while walking, biking, rolling, and driving. Through grant funding made available to California by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the OTS works collaboratively with hundreds of state, regional, and local agencies to develop innovative, data-driven highway safety programs that improve road safety.

The success of the OTS is cultivated through strong partnerships that foster innovation, inclusion, and establish a strong traffic safety culture. We track and expand upon successful programs, develop new countermeasures to address emerging traffic safety issues, and advance equity through a people-first mindset that leads to equitable outcomes.

Traffic safety is about people. The OTS engages with historically underserved areas, meeting people where they are at to work collaboratively on a focused set of safety strategies to improve traffic safety in communities that have been most harmed by traffic injuries and deaths. The OTS listens to the feedback and input received from communities to inform our Highway Safety Program, throughout all aspects of program planning, implementation, and evaluation.

In addition to the many traffic safety programs that make roads safer, the OTS shares the message of traffic safety. The OTS public awareness campaigns extend to the state's diverse audiences to educate the public on safe road behaviors and encourage people to join the movement for safer roads. The OTS is the primary source of traffic safety information and plays an active role in traffic safety at the local, state, and national level.





Vision

All people will be safe on California roads.

Mission

Deliver traffic safety programs to prevent people from being killed and seriously injured in California.



Photo courtesy SFMTA



Passion

We are devoted to our critical and urgent mission of saving lives.



Collaboration

We cultivate collaboration with our partners and with the communities we serve.



Inclusion

We value all people and engage with communities and stakeholders so that everyone has a voice, prioritizing underserved areas most impacted by traffic safety problems.



Innovation

We continuously seek new ways to improve our programs and traffic safety.



Integrity

We lead by example to promote respect, accountability, and trust.



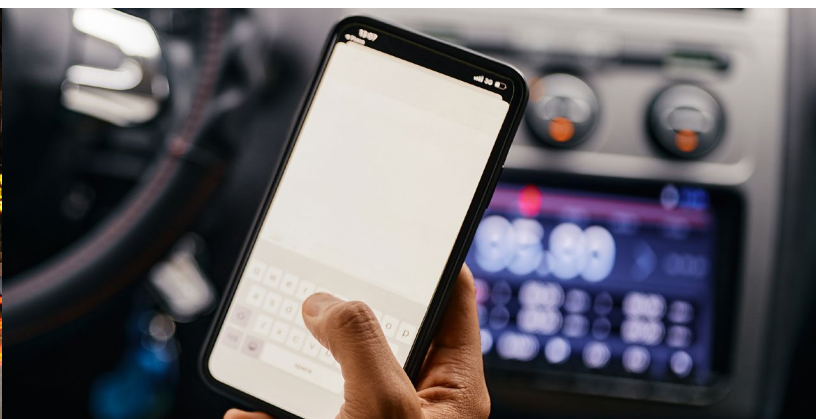
Our Programs

ALCOHOL-IMPAIRED DRIVING

Alcohol-impaired driving remains one of the biggest threats to public safety and well-being on our roadways. In 2022, 1,479 people were killed in alcohol-involved crashes, a 1.8% increase from 1,453 in 2021, accounting for nearly a third of all traffic deaths in California (33%). The OTS-supported programs look at road safety efforts through the lens of the Safe System approach, which accepts that crashes will happen, and that the focus should be on reducing the severity of injuries when a crash occurs. Under this framework, the OTS is able to better address every aspect of crash risks and implement multiple layers of protection to ensure that everyone traveling on California roadways will go safely. Grant programs include enforcement operations dedicated to stopping and arresting suspected impaired drivers, purchase of equipment such as breath testing devices, monitoring and treatment of high-risk DUI offenders, and youth education programs for high school and college students on the dangers and consequences of impaired driving.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Distracted driving is anything that takes your eyes, hands, or mind away from the task of driving. In 2021, 140 people were killed in California in crashes involving a distracted driver, an increase of 27.3% from 2020. Mobile devices remain the biggest distraction for drivers, whether it is texting, taking pictures, emailing, or using apps. A 2024 OTS Public Opinion Survey found 73.5% of Californians identified distracted driving because of texting as their biggest traffic safety concern on California roadways. Distracted driving countermeasures include paid media education campaigns that inform the public of the dangers of distracted driving and encourage drivers to travel free of distractions. Outreach activities and education programs target teen drivers to change behaviors and stay off the phone while driving, as data shows driver distraction is the primary cause of major injury crashes involving teens. Grant programs also include dedicated enforcement of California's hands-free cell phone law.



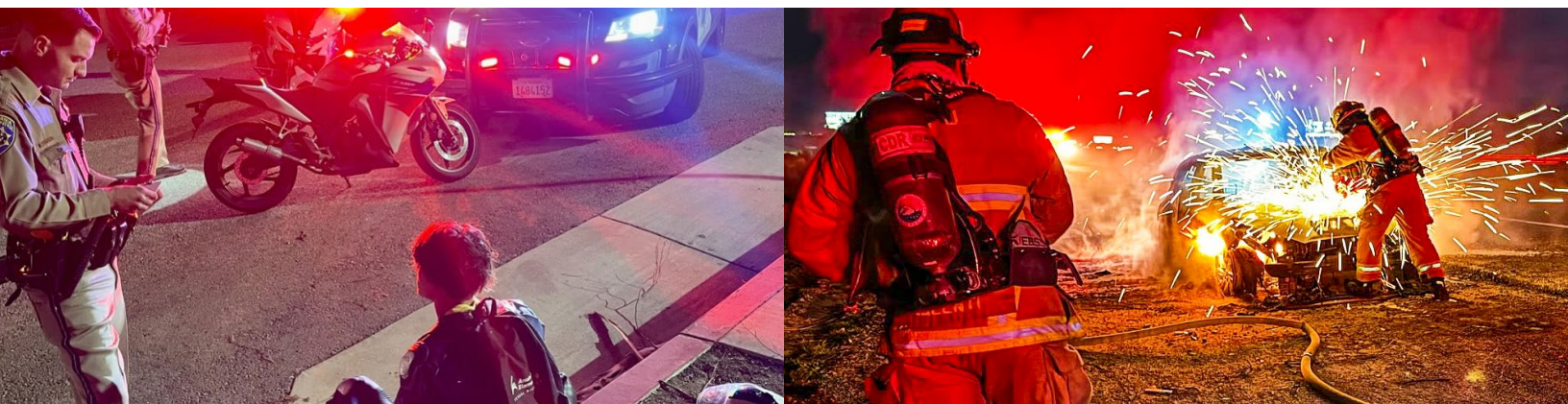
Our Programs

DRUG-IMPAIRED DRIVING

Drug-impaired driving is one of the toughest safety challenges we face on roadways. The number of drivers under the influence of drugs, or a combination of drugs and alcohol, is rising. Prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, marijuana, and illegal drugs may affect one's driving ability, especially in combination with alcohol or other drugs. In 2021 California reported 751 fatalities related to drug-involved driving. Of the fatally injured drivers with known drug tests in California for 2021, 52.9% were positive for drugs – legal and illegal. Measures to address the issue include increased officer training in identifying and detecting drug impairment in drivers through the Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement (ARIDE) and Drug Recognition Evaluator (DRE) programs. The OTS grant programs also include dedicated prosecution teams for drug-impaired driving cases, as well as prosecutor training on handling driving under the influence of drug cases through every step of the criminal process. Education campaigns inform the public about the dangers of driving under the influence of substances other than alcohol, helping shift social norms around drug-impaired driving.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS)

Providing timely care to crash victims is critical to reducing deaths and the severity of injuries. When a person is injured in a crash, they rely on first responders to quickly locate them, stabilize their injury, and transport them for care. Recent studies show that an effective emergency trauma care system can improve survival from serious injuries by as much as 25% and county-level coordinated systems of trauma care can reduce crash fatalities rates as much as 50%. The Safe System approach accepts that crashes will happen, but by focusing attention on reducing the severity of injuries when a crash occurs, such as post-crash care, we can better address every aspect of crash risks by being proactive and implementing multiple layers of protection. Grant programs for EMS include upgrading extrication equipment that allows emergency responders to quickly access occupants trapped in vehicles. Many emergency response agencies have outdated equipment that needs replacement, affecting their ability to reach victims quickly and increase their survivability.



Our Programs

MOTORCYCLE SAFETY

Crashes involving motorcycles are a major traffic safety concern in California. In 2022, 634 motorcyclist fatalities were reported, up 3.8% from 611 in 2021. Efforts to reduce motorcycle crashes, injuries, and fatalities include programs that provide education and/or hands-on motorcycle training to riders. The trainings allow experienced riders to hone their skills. Motorcyclist safety programs also include campaigns reminding riders of mandatory helmet requirements, increasing other road users' awareness of motorcycles, and campaigns to reduce impaired riding. Enforcement operations focus on drivers and riders who commit violations that increase the risk of crashes, including speeding, improper turning, running red lights, or failing to yield.

OCCUPANT PROTECTION

While the seat belt use rate in California is 95.3%, this translates to 842 unrestrained occupants killed in traffic crashes in California for 2022, an 8.4% decrease from 919 in 2021. Additionally, child passenger safety remains a critical program to ensure children are properly restrained in child safety seats. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, nearly 60% of car seats are used incorrectly. Grant programs focus on a variety of activities to educate parents and caregivers on child safety seat laws, including child safety seat check-ups, education classes on using and properly installing the correct car seat, and providing child safety seats to families in need. Child Passenger Safety Technician trainings and certification courses are also a top priority. Increased enforcement of seat belt laws and educating teens about buckling up are additional countermeasures to encourage vehicle occupants to use seat belts.



Our Programs

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE SAFETY

Unlike those traveling in vehicles with seat belts, air bags, and other safety features, bicyclists and pedestrians do not have the same level of protection and are more vulnerable every time they are on the road. In 2022, 1,158 pedestrians were struck and killed on California roads, accounting for 26% of all traffic deaths. In some communities, pedestrians account for half, even more than half, of all traffic deaths.

Furthermore, there were 177 bicyclist fatalities reported in the same year, representing a 32% increase from 134 in 2021. Projects in this program reach all age groups to raise awareness about traffic rules, rights, and responsibilities whether you are driving, walking, or bicycling. The OTS prioritizes historically marginalized populations that experience traffic safety barriers walking, biking, and accessing public transportation.

Activities also include projects that engage communities through walk audits that identify infrastructure changes and develop resident-led action plans to provide safer biking and walking options. Activities focus on underserved areas of the State with a higher proportion of deadly and serious injury crashes.

POLICE TRAFFIC SERVICES

The OTS provides grants to more than 200 law enforcement agencies throughout the state to conduct enforcement and education programs focused on deterring unsafe roadway behaviors and promoting safe roadway habits. Enforcement activities dedicate additional officers on roads to target specific traffic safety issues including impaired driving, speeding, bicycle and pedestrian safety, distracted driving, seat belt use, and other traffic violations that increase the risk for crashes. Other grant programs include officer training to conduct DUI/Driver's License checkpoints and training to identify suspected impaired drivers. Education activities include traffic safety presentations to community members, organizations, and schools.



Our Programs

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

The OTS Communications and Public Affairs program develops statewide public awareness campaigns, establishes strategic partnerships with public and private stakeholders, and conducts outreach and engagement activities with community-based organizations to encourage safe traveling behaviors.

The monthly and year-round education campaigns encompass the “Go Safely, California” mantra, our rallying cry to make traveling to and from places safely a top priority. Statewide media campaign efforts coincide with national campaigns focused on impaired driving, distracted driving, speeding, and pedestrian safety. The program highlights a series of traffic safety messages in English, Spanish, Cantonese, and Mandarin on TV, streaming services, outdoor billboards, radio, and social media for each campaign, with the goal of changing behaviors. Outreach efforts specifically target youth, teens, young adults, and communities identified as underserved who are disproportionately impacted by traffic safety issues. All public awareness and education campaigns include an Ethnic Media component that deliver traffic safety messages from individuals who look, sound, and are representative of the target audience.

ROADWAY SAFETY AND TRAFFIC RECORDS

High quality traffic records data is essential for identifying traffic safety problems and developing strategies and programs to prevent fatalities and injuries on California roadways. At the core of the state’s Traffic Records System (TRS) is information from six core data systems, comprised of crash, driver, vehicle, roadway, citation and adjudication, and injury surveillance data. The goal is to have timely, accurate, complete, uniform, integrated, and accessible data in each of the six components of the California TRS. The OTS remains committed to this goal through providing grant funding for the traffic records data quality improvement efforts, and through its leadership role and collaboration with other state and local departments and agencies in the Traffic Records Coordinating Committee (TRCC). The OTS grants are used to purchase hardware and software to establish or improve traffic records data reporting, collection, and management. In addition, the grants are used to advance the capability to analyze trends in crash occurrences, circumstances, and outcomes.



Goal 1

LEADER In Traffic Safety: Be a nationally recognized leader in traffic safety.

For over 50 years, the OTS has funded and promoted California's behavioral traffic safety programs. The OTS is uniquely positioned to bring California's traffic safety agencies and our partners together to collectively implement the Safe System approach.

OBJECTIVES

- 1.1 Actively represent the OTS in local, state, and national traffic safety stakeholder groups.
- 1.2 Facilitate collaboration between state and local traffic safety stakeholders.
- 1.3 Engage Californians to establish a strong traffic safety culture.
- 1.4 Develop staff to be traffic safety leaders.

Goal 2



Deliver Impactful Traffic Safety PROGRAMS:
Develop, refine, and deliver effective and innovative
traffic safety programs that save lives.

The OTS is continually working to deliver programs that effectively address California's most pressing traffic safety challenges. Our work involves identifying problems, analyzing data, selecting countermeasures, and soliciting and developing projects that will save lives. The development and solicitation of traffic safety programs is a collaborative process that proactively seeks full representation from communities, considers public comments and feedback, and incorporates meaningful input that will make the most impact. The OTS engages with Tribes and populations overrepresented in traffic crash data to receive input on department actions and decisions. This thoughtful and data-driven process produces innovative education and enforcement programs and technologies designed to reduce fatalities and serious injuries to zero.

OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 Continue to expand successful traffic safety programs.**
- 2.2 Create proactive data-informed traffic safety programs.**
- 2.3 Continuously improve traffic safety program integrity.**
- 2.4 Monitor and evaluate effectiveness of traffic safety programs.**



Goal 3

Advance EQUITY In Traffic Safety: Improve traffic safety outcomes for vulnerable and underserved populations.

The transportation system must be safe for all road users, in all communities, and for people of all incomes, races, ethnicities, ages, and abilities. As part of our commitment to advancing equity in traffic safety, the OTS is engaging with and prioritizing actions to improve road safety in underserved and disadvantaged communities. The OTS is committed to a data-driven, inclusive, and equitable approach to delivering its programs to save lives on all of California's roadways.

OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 Expand existing community engagement efforts by deepening partnerships with communities who are underserved or have a disproportionate number of fatalities and serious injuries to inform and continuously improve the OTS program planning and funding decisions.
- 3.2 Expand the use of equity data to identify communities that are overrepresented in traffic fatalities and serious injuries to inform the delivery of traffic safety programs.
- 3.3 Deliver, evaluate, and update equity strategies to ensure alignment with the OTS Equity Action Plan and Executive Order N-16-22.

Goal 4

Strengthen OTS WORKFORCE: Hire, train, and develop our employees to be experts in their fields.

The OTS believes that a diverse workforce that are inspired to be their best will lead our team to success. Encouraging growth and development will position the OTS to be leaders and experts in their fields. Promoting a culture of inclusivity, collaboration, and open communication allows our team to make a difference in traffic safety.

OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 Foster an inclusive office culture.
- 4.2 Promote ongoing training and professional development.
- 4.3 Recruit diverse candidates following fair hiring practices.

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