



## OTS TRACKS: FEBRUARY 2026

As February wraps up, this issue highlights California's expanded "Slow Down, Move Over" law, the Varner Road Safety Corridor, and campaigns like Crash Not Accident. Plus, see how OTS teamed up for Super Bowl safety outreach. Together, let's keep building a culture of safe, responsible travel. Go Safely!

### California Expands "Slow Down, Move Over" Law to Protect All Roadside Drivers



The California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) joined Caltrans, CHP, and the Auto Club of Southern California to host media events in Los Angeles (January 27) and San Diego (January 28), spotlighting California's expanded "Slow Down, Move Over" law. Effective January 1, 2026, Assembly Bill 390 requires drivers to move over or slow down for any stopped vehicle using hazard lights or emergency indicators, including first responders, tow operators, and highway workers. OTS Director Stephanie Dougherty emphasized that roadside safety is a shared responsibility: "Make safety the destination we all share by looking out for every vehicle and person on the roadside." National data shows that hundreds of stranded drivers and 46 emergency responders were killed last year after being struck while assisting at roadside scenes.

[Learn more about Slow Down Move Over](#)

### California Expands Data-Driven Road Safety Initiative to Save Lives



California has expanded its data-driven road safety initiative by designating Varner Road in Thousand Palms as the [state's newest Priority Safety Corridor](#). Announced on February 3 by California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) Secretary Toks Omishakin, alongside Caltrans, CHP, and the OTS, the designation targets a 2.3-mile stretch that experienced 17 fatal or serious injury crashes between 2019 and 2023. The corridor project will implement proven safety measures, including raised medians, rumble strips, upgraded lighting, and improved signage, to address crash risks identified in crash data. This effort builds on the [Joint Secretary's Policy on Road Safety](#) adopted in October 2025, which sets an interim goal to cut deadly and serious injury crashes by 30% by 2035. Additional enhancements include pedestrian-friendly intersections, speed management tools, and community engagement through the new [SLOWCAL campaign](#). Success will be measured by reductions in fatalities and serious injuries, reinforcing California's commitment to safer roads statewide.

[Learn more about State Priority Safety Corridors](#)

## OTS Launches “Crash Not Accident” to Build a Safer Road Culture



The OTS is aiming to change the way we talk about traffic incidents through its “Crash Not Accident” campaign. Language can shape how we see and view things. Calling a crash an “accident” suggests an unpredictable or chance occurrence and removes accountability. In reality, crashes are preventable events caused by many factors and choices like speeding, distraction, or impaired driving. By using “crash,” we emphasize responsibility and the need for safer behaviors on our roads. [Research shows](#) that language influences public perception. Framing crashes as preventable increases public support for safety measures and encourages us to proactively analyze root

causes and implement data-driven strategies. It also recognizes that the life-changing impact of every person killed or seriously injured in a crash was not the result of an accident, but a tragedy that could have been avoided. The OTS invites everyone to take the pledge and commit to spreading the message. Together, we can create a culture that prioritizes prevention and emphasizes our individual and collective responsibility for road safety. It's a crash, not an accident. Help us change the conversation – and the outcome.

[Learn more about Crash Not Accident Campaign](#)

## Score Big on Safety: OTS and Partners Teamed Up for The Big Game



California played its own championship game off the field during Super Bowl weekend, teaming up for a collaborative social media blitz to remind fans that safety is the ultimate win. The “Go Safely Game Plan” video featured leaders from CalSTA, OTS, Caltrans, CHP, DMV, and ABC sharing quick tips with a football twist: designate a sober driver, follow the speed limit, and keep your eyes on the road—not your phone. Just like a strong defense wins championships, planning ahead is the best way to avoid penalties like DUI arrests or crashes. The video, posted across LinkedIn, Instagram, X, Facebook, and Tik Tok, encouraged Californians to celebrate responsibly and protect their teammates on the road.

[Watch the Be A Good Host Video](#)



CalSTA released its 2025 Accomplishments Report, highlighting historic progress toward a safer, cleaner and more connected transportation system — from reducing traffic fatalities to expanding clean transportation access statewide. [Read the report](#)

#### **California Strategic Highway Safety Plan Releases Winter 2026 Newsletter**

This edition's e-newsletter shares the development and implementation of the 2025-2029 California SHSP, discusses creating a pro-social traffic safety culture, spotlights California tribal representation and partnerships, and provides new crash data and research on the effects of cannabis consumption on driving. [Read the newsletter](#)

#### **SafeTREC: 2026 California Safe System Institute for Road Safety**

The UC Berkeley Safe Transportation Research and Education Center (SafeTREC) is excited to announce that applications are now being accepted for the [California Safe System Institute for Road Safety \(Institute\)](#). The Institute is a Safe System Approach training and technical support program. It aims to deepen participants' understanding of the Safe System framework, provide collaborative opportunities within the cohort, and create tangible next steps for institutionalizing the SSA in participants' organizations. [Apply now](#)

#### **Now Available: 2023 OTS Crash Rankings**

The 2023 OTS Crash Rankings provide cities with updated traffic safety comparisons against similar-sized communities to help identify trends, problem areas, and opportunities for improvement. [Learn more](#)

#### **Guidelines for Selecting Communication Channels to Deliver Traffic Safety Messaging**

As part of the Behavioral Traffic Safety Cooperative Research Program, the Transportation Research Board released a report that provides guidelines for delivering effective traffic safety messaging, including information on how different delivery methods impact various demographic groups. [Read the report](#)



*The OTS participates in community outreach and engagement events to connect with residents, local partners, and stakeholders to share information, gather feedback, and encourage Californians to Go Safely. These events provide valuable opportunities to build relationships, support local initiatives, and ensure our traffic safety efforts are informed by the voices and needs of the communities we serve.*

**Sacramento Mexican Consulate Facebook Live Event** – The OTS joined the Sacramento Mexican Consulate for a [Facebook Live Event](#) on February 5, 2026, titled "Staying Safe on the Road: A Community Conversation." The event highlighted the OTS's mission and traffic safety education efforts, as well as the dangers of driving under the influence.

With real-time viewer participation, the OTS answered questions and heard from community members about what they believe will help make roads safer.

**DUI Symposium at Sierra College** – The OTS participated at a DUI Symposium on February 5, 2026, at Sierra College in Rocklin, California, hosted by the Placer County Probation Department. Open to students and community members, the Symposium raised awareness regarding the impacts of driving under the influence. Speakers included OTS Director Stephanie Dougherty, a representative from Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the Placer County District Attorney. The OTS also had an outreach table to provide information regarding OTS programs and traffic safety.



**Feria Universitaria Bilingüe** – The OTS attended the Sacramento Mexican Consulate's 15<sup>th</sup> annual Steps to College event, Northern California's largest bilingual and trilingual college fair, on February 7, 2026. More than 1,500 attendees, including students and families, stopped by the OTS outreach table to learn more about traffic safety initiatives and talk with OTS staff.



- 📌 March 2-8 – [Vehicle Safety Recalls Week](#)
- 📌 March 8 – Daylight Saving Time
- 📌 March 17 – St. Patrick's Day ([Release Template](#) | [Media Materials](#))

#### New Media Toolkits

- [Crash Not Accident](#)

Keep an eye on your inboxes for campaign templates and social media assets.  
Additional outreach materials are always available at [GoSafelyCA.org/MediaToolkits](https://GoSafelyCA.org/MediaToolkits).

[View the OTS Communications Calendar](#)

## **Additional Resources**

[Release Templates](#)

[Law Enforcement Liaison \(LEL\) Program](#)

[OTS Funding At a Glance](#)

[OTS Logos](#)

[Grant Program Resources](#)

[Traffic Safety Data](#)

*The OTS administers traffic safety grants that deliver traffic safety programs to prevent people from being killed and seriously injured in California. The OTS is a department under the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA).*

Contact the OTS Communications & Public Affairs Team  
[pio@ots.ca.gov](mailto:pio@ots.ca.gov)

### **Follow Us**

[Facebook](#) | [X](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Youtube](#)

**Copyright © 2026**

**OTS Communications and Public Affairs**

**All Rights Reserved**

California Office of Traffic Safety | 2208 Kausen Drive Suite 300 | Elk Grove, CA 95758 US