



OTS TRACKS: August 2026

With back-to-school season in full swing, August's newsletter brings updates on several traffic safety-related initiatives, including the ABCs for school zone safety, the release of a new web-based driving simulation game for teens, a Traffic Safety Champion program webinar that focuses on e-bike safety programs for schools, and a trip to Minneapolis to represent California at the Governors Highway Safety Association Annual Meeting.

“ABCs” for School Zone Safety: State and Local Leaders Announce New Efforts to Promote Safe Biking and Walking Options as Students Return to School



The California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) joined the City of Sacramento's Mayor Kevin McCarty and other state and local leaders to [announce](#) a new school zone safety media campaign. The media event highlighted the recent quick-build and low-cost traffic safety improvements throughout the city of Sacramento that have expanded safe biking and walking options near schools.

Mayor Kevin McCarty emphasized the city's work on Safe Routes to School and Complete Streets, while the OTS Director Stephanie Dougherty urged drivers to remember their ABCs for safety.

"As students head back to school, we want every trip to be a safe one," said OTS Director Stephanie Dougherty. "The 'ABCs for School Zone Safety' campaign highlights driving basics that protect children on their daily routes. Remember your ABCs on every trip—stay alert for bicyclists and watch for and yield to children crossing the street."

Pedestrian and bicycle safety remains a critical concern. In Sacramento, pedestrians account for less than 1 percent of miles traveled but were involved in 43 percent of fatal crashes by vehicles. According to federal data, 1,253 people were killed while walking or biking on California roads in 2024, accounting for nearly a third (32 percent) of all people killed in car crashes.

[Social media and other digital messages](#) ran in English and in Spanish through the end of the month. To learn more about the City of Sacramento's Vision Zero Action Plan, visit the [Transportation Planning website](#).

[Watch the news conference](#)

OTS and Caltrans Release The Road Ahead, a New Video Game Driving Simulator to Help Teens Practice Safe Driving



The OTS and Caltrans announced the release of [The Road Ahead](#), a gaming experience that teaches young drivers the rules of the road in an interactive environment and challenges teens to make safe driving choices against social pressure and distractions.

The simulation features three gameplays:

- **“One Look Away” – Distracted Driving:** Users experience the social and emotional pull to check their phone as they receive multiple text messages while driving.
- **“Caught Up in It” – Speeding:** Users face normalized, peer-driven pressure to speed when running late.
- **“One More Drive” – Impaired Driving:** Users experience the overconfidence that can precede the decision to drive home while impaired during a night drive.

“Teens are still developing the skills and experience they need to navigate the new, exciting milestone of driving,” said OTS Director Stephanie Dougherty. “‘The Road Ahead’ is another tool that helps young drivers step into realistic driving scenarios, make consequential choices and immediately see how those decisions play out. Building safer driving habits and making smart decisions at an early age supports safer travel for everyone using our roads.”

As part of the game, users are scored on their reactions. Each game scenario also includes a work zone safety component and quiz questions to reinforce traffic laws and rules of the road. Users also have the option to share their score and invite others to participate in the game.

To drive the adoption of The Road Ahead, the OTS and Caltrans created a user guide. The guide provides an overview of the game instructions for getting started, technical and browser guidance and multiple options for playing individually or with groups. The user guide is [available online](#).

Teens, parents, educators, mentors and California drivers can play The Road Ahead at **TheRoadAhead.GoSafelyCA.org**.

[Read the news release](#)

OTS Hosts Traffic Safety Champion Webinar - Safe Routes Start Here: Protecting our Community as Students Head Back to School



On August 11, 2026, the OTS welcomed community leaders to share their insights on e-bike safety best practices this back-to-school season. Theresa Vallez-Kelly with the San Mateo County Office of Education highlighted [e-bike safety education](#) and effective [on-campus e-bike use policies](#) implemented across the county. Pacifica resident Cherie Chan spoke about e-bike safety efforts in her community. Clarence de Guzman and Cindy Estrada-Loera with the City of Rancho Cucamonga discussed strategies for building support and running impactful Safe Routes to School programs. Alta Loma Elementary School Principal Maureen Vaas shared her perspective working with the City of Rancho Cucamonga in implementing their Safe Routes to School program.

Established in 2023, the [Traffic Safety Champion program](#) is a positive engagement effort rooted in shared responsibility that provides organizations, communities and families with tools and resources to champion traffic safety.

[Watch the Webinar](#)

OTS Represents California at Governors Highway Safety Association Annual Meeting in Minneapolis



The OTS joined hundreds of federal partners, law enforcement officials, public health professionals and other traffic safety leaders at this year's Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) Annual Meeting August 29-September 2 in Minneapolis, Minn.

The OTS Director Stephanie Dougherty spoke during a Tech Talk on California's work with [Impact Teen Drivers](#) on teen safe driving programs. The OTS Deputy Director of Communications Tim Weisberg moderated a panel on the emerging use of pre-hospital blood transfusions to help save traffic crash victims' lives.

Throughout these discussions, the OTS shared California's traffic safety initiatives and collaborated with partners from across the country to develop innovative approaches to advance traffic safety.

[Learn more about the GHSA Annual Meeting](#)

Safety Snapshot of the Month: Back to School Time!



As students headed back to the classroom in August, the OTS law enforcement partners did their part to help keep them safe. Police and Sheriff's Departments visited schools throughout the state to welcome kids. Departments conducted traffic enforcement to curb speeding and support safe trips for students biking, walking or rolling to class.

The CHP also ramped up school bus enforcement operations where officers focus on drivers who fail to stop for flashing red lights.

Here are a few safety reminders for drivers:

- Slow down and stay alert in school zones, where you'll see more pedestrians and bicyclists. 🚶🚲
- Use designated drop-off and pick-up areas whenever possible. 🚗
- Follow the directions of crossing guards. 🚧
- Always stop for school buses with red flashing lights. 🚌

[Watch this School Bus Safety Video from the Bakersfield Police Department](#)

The OTS Staff: People on the Move

Connie Florez – Join us in welcoming Connie Florez as a Retired Annuitant who will serve part-time as an Administrative Services and Project Coordinator. With over 20 years of state service, Connie previously held executive, administrative, and fiscal positions at the Department of Health Care Services. More recently, she worked as a Retired Annuitant with the Department of Social Services. Connie's extensive state service and hands-on experience with administrative, policy and program functions will be a great addition to our office.



Katarina Snow – Join us in welcoming Katarina Snow as the new Public Affairs Manager in the Communications and Public Affairs Division. Katarina brings several years of dedicated experience in communications, public outreach and social media from her time at the California Department of Motor Vehicles and California Department of Food and Agriculture. Katarina's experience will be invaluable as she provides strategic oversight for a variety of campaign initiatives.



Publications, resources, training opportunities, and other relevant updates from our state and national traffic safety partners.

Attitudes Toward Speeding: Results from a National Survey 📄

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety released the results from a survey on driver's attitudes towards speeding and speeding-related countermeasures through focus group discussions with drivers. Read the [report](#).

U.S. Department of Transportation Releases National Roadway Safety Strategy ⚠️

The new [plan](#) prioritizes three core objectives – safer people, safer roads and safer vehicles. [Read the full National Roadway Safety Strategy](#).

NHTSA Announces Sober Driving Pledge Tailgate Tour 🚗

Representatives from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) will travel to major college football games throughout the season to give attendees the opportunity to take the sober driving pledge and help save lives on the road. [Read the news release](#).

NHTSA Targets Dangerous Drivers ⚠️

NHTSA is investing \$20 million in traffic safety enforcement innovations, targeting dangerous drivers. [Read the news release](#).

IIHS Study Shows Far More Drivers Using Cell Phones Prior to Crashes than is Reported 📱

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety's (IIHS) latest study shows that cell phone use prior to a crash is underreported in police reports. [Learn more](#).

Request for Candidate Research Problem Statements: The Transportation Research Board (TRB) and Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) are soliciting candidate research problem statements for the Behavioral Traffic Safety Cooperative Research Program (BTSCRP). The deadline is September 30, 2026. [Submit a problem statement](#).



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.



Berkeley's National Night Out – The OTS joined the City of Berkeley Police Department for National Night Out on August 4, 2026, in Alameda County. Residents received traffic safety materials and resources, and the OTS conducted public participation and engagement activities to collect feedback from residents on ways to advance traffic safety in their community.



San Francisco Mexican Consulate Education Fair – On August 7, 2026, the OTS participated in the San Francisco Mexican Consulate's Education Resource Fair. The OTS shared traffic safety resources and engaged with community members to learn about their traffic safety needs. At the event, the OTS was presented with a certificate of recognition from the Consulate for the OTS' commitment to advance traffic safety education to community members visiting the Consulate.



Elk Grove Police Department's BBQ in the Beat – The OTS attended the City of Elk Grove Police Department's BBQ in the Beat on August 15, 2026, at Okamoto Park. More than 600 attendees received traffic safety materials and resources, and met Safety Sam, the Caltrans mascot.



Mexican Consulate Back to School Resource Fair – On August 20, 2026, the OTS joined the Los Angeles Mexican Consulate at their Back to School Resource Fair in Los Angeles. The OTS hosted an information table and talked with residents about bicycle and pedestrian safety best practices, especially around schools.



Esparto Community Walk Audit – On August 22, 2026, the OTS participated in a walk audit and community meeting in Esparto, hosted by the Yolo County Health and Human Services Agency. The OTS provided traffic safety resources and conducted public participation and engagement activities to gather feedback from attendees on ways to improve traffic safety in their community.



Vision y Compromiso Health and Safety Conference – On August 29, 2026, the OTS participated in a Health and Safety Conference hosted by Vision y Compromiso and community health outreach workers in Modesto. The conference helps train community leaders on resources and programs available to better serve their community. The OTS helped teach leaders about the dangers of distracted driving and driving under the influence, and provided Spanish language information resources to share with the Modesto community.



- 📌 September – California Pedestrian Safety Month
- 📌 September 20-26 – [Child Passenger Safety Week](#)
- 📌 September 26 – [National Seat Check Saturday](#)

Media Toolkits

- *NEW* [The Road Ahead Teen Driving Simulator](#) Social Toolkit (Speeding, Distracted and Impaired Driving)
- *NEW* [ABCs for School Zone Safety](#) (Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety, Speeding)
- *NEW* [Bicycle, E-Bike and Pedestrian Safety](#) Social Toolkit
- *NEW* [Child Passenger Safety Week](#) Social Toolkit
- [Child Passenger Safety Law Brochure](#) (Occupant Protection)
- [Child Safety Seat Flier](#) (Occupant Protection)
- [E-bikes, E-motorcycles, and E-scooters](#)
- [Impaired Driving](#)
- [Slow the Fast Down](#) (Speeding)
- [Crash Not Accident](#)
- [Traffic Safety Champion](#)
- [Empty Chair Club Initiative](#)
- [Vehicle Safety Recalls](#) (General)
- [Vehicular Heatstroke Prevention Social Media Toolkit](#) (Occupant Protection)
-

Keep an eye on your inboxes for campaign templates and social media assets. Additional outreach materials are always available at 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

Follow Us

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

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