Distracted Driving Emphasis Area
Strategies, Countermeasures and Action Plans

Strategy Number	Description
1	Reduce fatalities and serious injuries by identifying and implementing education and awareness strategies to reduce distracted driving.
2	Improve the effectiveness of distracted road user educational techniques, tools, and strategies.
3	Improve and increase enforcement capabilities for addressing distracted driving.
4	Increase the installation of engineering countermeasures known to reduce distracted driving.
5	Use technology to reduce distracted-driving crashes, serious injuries, and fatalities.

STRATEGY 1

Reduce fatalities and serious injuries by identifying and implementing education and awareness strategies to reduce distracted driving.

Countermeasures

Focus	Number	Description	Action Plan
Age groups	1A	Develop and document a suite of countermeasures targeting distracted road users by age group.	
Car technology	1B	Educate consumers, parents, and the public with age-specific messages about car technology and safety options (e.g., mycardoeswhat.org) through car dealers, the media, and employers.	
Education—dangers	1C	Educate the public with age-specific messages (pre-teen to adult) about the dangers of distracted driving through the media, schools, car dealers, community events, and employers, and test the effectiveness of using personal stories/tragedies to impact teens and middle school students' behaviors.	✓
Education—human costs	1D	Educate public officials and employers about the human and economic costs of distracted driving through outreach programs.	
Education—apps	1E	Educate the public with age-specific messages about tools to encourage distraction-free driving (apps, technology, and programs) through outreach programs. Examples are informing adults/parents about tools they can use to limit teen cell phone use while driving, and educating consumers about apps that will disable phones while in a vehicle.	
Education—judiciary	1F	Inform members of the judiciary branch about tools that limit cell phone use and training programs such as Impact Texas Teen Drivers and the Texas Municipal Police Association/TxDOT adult course. Encourage voluntary participation in these courses.	
Teen involvement	1G	Consider using teens to conduct a public survey to determine the level of support for laws restricting distracted driving.	

Focus	Number	Description	Action Plan
Teen education—laws	1H	Inform teen drivers about cell phone, texting, and other restrictions under the Texas graduated driver licensing law.	
Teen education—video	1I	Continue to implement Impact Texas Teen Drivers, an informational tool (a two-hour video) designed to educate teens about distracted-driving dangers.	

Education—Dangers Countermeasure (1C) Action Plan

Educate the public with age-specific messages (pre-teen to adult) about the dangers of distracted driving through the media, schools, car dealers, community events, and employers, and test the effectiveness of using personal stories/tragedies to impact teens and middle school students' behaviors.

Element	Description
Steps for Implementation	1. Develop age-specific messages crafted into public service announcements (PSAs) for targeted media (i.e., PSAs for pre-teen/teen radio stations and media geared to that age group; PSAs for older adults to appropriate media). (Participating organizations: TxDOT, Distracted Driving Area Emphasis Team, and marketing firm) 2. Identify appropriate media targeted to each age group. (Participating organizations: TxDOT and marketing firm) 3. Develop and print materials and information that can be used as resource material or handouts at various events, meetings, businesses, etc. (Participating organizations: TxDOT and marketing firm) 4. Establish a clearinghouse to provide information to interested parties; identify additional champions to market and promote messages and materials to individuals and companies, automobile associations/manufacturers/car dealers, and other organizations for community events; and provide educational materials, messages, and handouts to Texas regional education centers for distribution to schools in each region. (Participating organizations: TxDOT and marketing firm)
Participating Organizations	See above for each step, in addition to probation officers, courts, media, parents, and school systems.
Effectiveness	**
Cost to Implement	$$
Time to Implement	Medium
Barriers	• Limited funding. • Cohesive organized effort. • Legislative roadblocks. • Public pushback. • State agencies. • Buy-in from different age groups. • Cultural issues.

STRATEGY 2

Improve the effectiveness of distracted road user educational techniques, tools, and strategies.

Countermeasures

Focus	Number	Description	Action Plan
Messaging efficacy	2A	Test the efficacy of current and future messaging with different age groups to determine effectiveness.	
Personal stories	2B	Test the effectiveness of using personal stories/tragedies to impact teens and middle school students' behaviors when driving distracted.	✓
Targeted outreach	2C	Use crash data to target locations for media buys and distracted-driving education and awareness campaign methods.	

Note: renumbered from the original listing.

Personal Stories Countermeasure (2B) Action Plan

Test the effectiveness of using personal stories/tragedies to impact teens and middle school students' behaviors when driving distracted.

Element	Description
Steps for Implementation	1. Develop a list/inventory of programs and/or personal stories available to this age group. These include programs offered in recent years (e.g., presentations by Tyson Dever given in 2016–2018) and other personal stories that could be offered and/or pursued in the future. (Participating organizations: TxDOT and TTI) 2. Summarize available data for existing speakers (e.g., attitudinal/awareness surveys conducted by TTI in association with Tyson Dever presentations, 2016–2018). (Participating organizations: TTI and TxDOT) 3. Identify new partners and sponsors by reaching out to coalitions, corporations, sub-grantees, state agencies, or anyone with common interests. (Participating organizations: TxDOT and marketing vendor) 4. Explore other means of spreading these personal (true) stories throughout the state. These could include integration into an annual statewide marketing campaign for distracted driving, social media, and/or other cost-effective digital sharing. (Participating organizations: TxDOT and marketing vendor) 5. Evaluate the program more thoroughly, especially in areas where presentations on this topic have been made multiple times by one or more speakers. Measure changes in awareness, attitudes, and behaviors. Analyze distracted-driving crash data. (Participating organizations: TTI and TxDOT)
Participating Organizations	See above for each step.
Effectiveness	Feedback from young students consistently indicates that true personal stories of this nature (as opposed to mock crashes, ghost-outs, etc.) have a much more effective and lasting impact on their attitudes and behavior.
Cost to Implement	$
Time to Implement	Medium
Barriers	• Limited funding available for evaluations. • Bias. Most data and/or assessments are survey based and may have biases. • Difficulty in tying these interventions to reductions and changes in crash frequency or severity (e.g., cause and effect).

STRATEGY 3

Improve and increase enforcement capabilities for addressing distracted driving.

Countermeasures

Focus	Number	Description	Action Plan
Traffic enforcement	3A	Use Selective Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP) grants and high-visibility enforcement techniques to enforce distracted-driving state laws and local ordinances.	✓
STEP grants	3B	Use crash data to determine the deployment of distracted-driving STEP grants.	
Law enforcement	3C	Encourage law enforcement personnel to report cell phone use in crash reports and citations when applicable; provide distracted-driving educational tools for law enforcement.	
Legislation	3D	Catalogue and disseminate state laws and local ordinances on distracted driving.	
MMUCC	3E	Encourage adoption of the Model Minimum Uniform Crash Criteria (MMUCC) recommendations on distracted driving.	
Policies	3F	Identify and disseminate model distracted-driving policies for law enforcement agencies.	

Note: renumbered from the original listing.

Traffic Enforcement Countermeasure (3A) Action Plan

Use STEP grants and high-visibility enforcement techniques to enforce distracted-driving state laws and local ordinances.

Element	Description
Steps for Implementation	1. Receive funds from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (Participating organization: TxDOT) 2. Increase funding for STEP grants through other revenue sources. 3. Apply for grant funds. (Participating organizations: law enforcement agencies) 4. Select agencies for funding. (Participating organization: TxDOT) 5. Implement grants. (Participating organizations: law enforcement agencies) 6. Evaluate grants. (Participating organizations: law enforcement agencies) 7. Manage and evaluate grants. (Participating organization: TxDOT) 8. Receive funding for the next year. (Participating organization: TxDOT) 9. Reapply for funding. (Participating organizations: law enforcement agencies) 10. Evaluate law enforcement liaisons' effectiveness. 11. Explore alternative distracted-driving enforcement techniques, such as placing officers in tractor-trailers, in buses, and on motorcycles.
Participating Organizations	See above for each step.
Effectiveness	***
Cost to Implement	$$
Time to Implement	Medium
Barriers	• Finding people to work. • Community pushback.

STRATEGY 4

Increase the installation of engineering countermeasures known to reduce distracted driving.

Countermeasures

Focus	Number	Description	Action Plan
Engineering	4A	Identify and systemically implement engineering countermeasures known to reduce distracted driving, such as edge line, centerline, and transverse rumble strips; wider and brighter striping; and lighting—especially in areas associated with distracted-driving crashes.	✓
Network screening	4B	Use network screening techniques to identify distracted-driving crash sites and recommend appropriate countermeasures for systemic installation across Texas.	

Engineering Countermeasure (4A) Action Plan

Identify and systemically implement engineering countermeasures known to reduce distracted driving, such as edge line, centerline, and transverse rumble strips; wider and brighter striping; and lighting—especially in areas associated with distracted-driving crashes.

Element	Description
Steps for Implementation	1. Identify and implement opportunities for creating a dialogue among cities, counties, law enforcement agencies, metropolitan planning organizations, TxDOT, and perhaps others to encourage collaborative working relationships. 2. Define distracted crashes using Crash Records Information System (CRIS) terminology. Retrieve CRIS data and perform hot spot analysis. TTI can help clarify the crash categories and contributing factors associated with driver distraction. Research and address barriers—such as cost, fear of trying something new and unfamiliar, and limited availability in rural areas—to the use of transportation services by older users. (Participating organization: TxDOT) 3. Identify owner/responsible party of hot spot locations. (Participating organizations: TxDOT and owner agencies) 4. Review the current and upcoming project list, and match needs with the project list or develop a separate safety project. (Participating organizations: owner agencies) 5. Identify the appropriate engineering countermeasures, and include any available standards/specifications into the project documents for consistent implementation (e.g., TxDOT work codes and Crash Modification Factors Clearinghouse). (Participating organizations: TxDOT and owner agencies) 6. Broadly announce the availability of funds and the countermeasures to be implemented. Allow agencies to apply for the funds with supporting data and information. 7. Review post-implementation crash data to evaluate effectiveness, and share the findings with other agencies. (Participating organizations: owner agencies and TTI)
Participating Organizations	See above for each step.
Effectiveness	**
Cost to Implement	$
Time to Implement	Medium
Barriers	• Knowledge sharing of subject matter experts from various disciplines such as engineering, maintenance, and traffic operations. • Lack of communication and coordination among agencies. • Lack of information on eligible project funds. • Leadership buy-in by elected officials and administration. • Funding for future projects. • Public concerns about the noise associated with rumble strips in urban areas.

STRATEGY 5

Use technology to reduce distracted-driving crashes, serious injuries, and fatalities.

Countermeasures

Focus	Number	Description	Action Plan
Apps	5A	Test and implement apps to encourage distraction-free driving and discourage distracted driving.	✓
Employer involvement	5B	Encourage employers to adapt company vehicles to include the safe-driving apps and encourage their use in private employee vehicles.	
National Safety Council	5C	Team with the National Safety Council to become informed about and use the technology for tracking employee cell phone use while driving.	

Apps Countermeasure (5A) Action Plan

Test and implement apps to encourage distraction-free driving and discourage distracted driving.

Element	Description
Steps for Implementation	1. Identify key user groups and developers/partners.
	• Formulate focus groups, such as:
	○ Users by age: youth/young drivers 15 to 25 years old, adults (middle-aged) 26 to 64 years old, and elderly 65+ years old.
	○ Users by type (based on varying rules/restrictions that may apply): government users that drive government vehicles (police, medical, city, county, state employees, etc.), private businesses, the commercial trucking industry, and the general public (private vehicle/personal time use).
	• Engage industry (auto manufacturers, car dealers, car operating systems, etc.) as partners, and get a better handle on upcoming technologies to address upcoming challenges proactively.
	• Engage app developers for car operating systems/secondary interfaces that integrate smartphones into dashboard/touchscreen (Apple CarPlay, Android Auto, etc.) and infotainment systems (Toyota, Ford, GM, etc.), the National Automobile Dealers Association (franchise car dealers), and the National Independent Automobile Dealers Association (independent car dealers).
	• Build focus groups around users and the industry/partner groups outlined above.
	• Develop questions/topics for focus groups for steps 2 and 3.
	2. Identify key technological sources of distraction and those with the potential to keep drivers engaged, such as:
	• Near-term: smartphones, car operating systems (a secondary interface running from the smartphone and displaying on screen/dashboard), wearables (e.g., watches and health trackers), and third-party in-vehicle add-ons (e.g., global positioning system devices such as Garmin, TomTom, Magellan, etc.).
	• Additional near-term: the Internet of Things, Amazon Alexa, Apple Siri, Google Assistant, Microsoft Cortana, and infotainment systems (built-ins in newer vehicles).
	3. Identify most common causes or sources of distraction (i.e., user activity) and under what conditions they occur. Identify the most common activities (e.g., texting, calling, using social media, and navigating) and conditions (e.g., speed, location, and road conditions).
	4. Develop a list of the most common existing mobile apps designed to deter distracted driving. Categorize by incentive-based versus phone-locked-down approaches. Rank existing apps by features, benefits, and evidence of positive impact.
	5. Call for apps (app-a-thon). Provide a list of preferred/necessary features. Rank vendors/developers by features, costs, and maintenance plans.
	6. Use the focus groups (from step 1) to review the app(s) and evaluate the features.
	7. Test the app(s).
	8. Analyze the data from the app(s).
	9. Develop new partnerships with the private sector: smartphone/service providers (AT&T, Sprint, Verizon, Apple, etc.), the National Automobile Dealers Association/National Independent Automobile Dealers Association, original equipment manufacturers (Ford, GM, Toyota, etc.), the insurance industry (State Farm, AAA, etc.), and the Internet of Things (Apple, Amazon, Google, Samsung, etc.).
	10. Identify and/or create new methods of (and leverage opportunities for) grassroots education at point-of-sale vehicles and devices.
	11. Encourage dealers and salespersons to market safety technology features.

Element	Description
Participating Organizations	AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, Strategic Highway Safety Plan Management Team and Distracted Driving Emphasis Area Team, auto dealers and manufacturers, law enforcement, TxDOT, and schools
Effectiveness	*** (based on preliminary evidence; further testing is required)
Cost to Implement	$$$
Time to Implement	Long
Barriers	• Funding for development. • Willingness for drivers to download and use the app.

Notes:

1. Government could require smartphone makers to place a warning label on all devices about the dangers of using smart devices and driving (similar to the warning labels on cigarettes or alcohol). This could help reduce the cost and burden of states paying for education and enforcement costs.
2. Seek partnerships with mobile app owners (e.g., Facebook, Snapchat, Apple, and Google) to collaborate with Texas to help fund (and perhaps provide in-kind staff/employees to support) the education of smartphone users about the dangers of distracted driving.
3. Require mobile app developers to include a disclaimer or alert about the dangers of using a mobile app while driving and a warning to users about fines and/or other consequences at the registration or download phase of the app.
4. Require a distracted-driving class before issuing dealer's (or auction) licenses. Dealers should be required to have a person on site to educate buyers about vehicle technology features and the consequences of distracted driving.