



Minnesota Advisory Council for Traffic Safety

The Office of Traffic Safety is proposing the formation of an Advisory Council for Traffic Safety through an amendment to Minnesota Statute 4.075. The Minnesota Office of Traffic Safety was formed in 1967, in part, as a requirement contained in the federal Transportation Act of 1966 with the mandate to reduce and prevent fatal and serious injury crashes on all Minnesota roads. The Minnesota Office of Traffic Safety is a Division of the Department of Public Safety and serves as the primary policy advisor and administrator of the majority of traffic safety programs and projects across the state. DPS-OTS has a very close working relationship with both MN-DOT and MN-MDH and its Director serves as one of the three co-chairs for the Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) initiative. The proposed Advisory Council housed within DPS-OTS will serve as the host for the TZD initiative as well as other traffic safety programs.

Description:

The proposed Advisory Council for Traffic Safety will bring together in a formalized way the key stakeholders and communities that have a vested interest in improving the safety of Minnesota roads. Historically Minnesota roads have been considered some of the safest in the nation. This was in part due to the success of the Toward Zero Deaths initiative that was launched in 2003. However, from 2011 through 2019 the fatality rate on Minnesota roads had plateaued with little improvement in the fatality rates. In 2020 and continuing to today, the fatality rate has again spiked to levels not seen since at least 2007. We have experienced an approximate 37% increase in fatalities in just 24 short months. Bold and decisive action is required in order for us to regain our momentum and prevent even a single Minnesota family from losing a loved one as a result of a completely preventable event.

Proposed Change:

DPS-OTS proposes to amend Minnesota Statute 4.075 to authorize the formation of an Advisory Council for Traffic Safety hosted by the Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic Safety to develop and direct the projects, programs, and initiatives that will save lives and prevent life changing injuries due to motor vehicle crashes on Minnesota roads.. Additionally, DPS-OTS seeks state funding to support a wide variety of traffic safety projects and programs as well as to support the staffing that will be required. This proposal also serves as a compliment to current TZD renewal initiative that is being conducted jointly by MN-DOT, MN-DPS, and MN-MDH.

The Toward Zero Deaths initiative brought together Minnesota city, county, and state engineers, educators, city, county, and state law enforcement, and emergency medical service



providers to solve the tough challenges unique to each of our regions. This approach proved to highly effective during it's initial implementation and became a nationally recognized model. But our progress has stalled and, in fact, is now regressing. Public Safety is threatened by what is happening on our roads currently and there is a critical need to improve the development and delivery of the projects and programs that will make our roads safer. The Advisory Council model will bring structure and a cohesive approach which will formally bring together all of the relevant stakeholders that can and will dig in and solve tough problems.

Goal:

To memorialize in statute the commitment to improving traffic safety across all of Minnesota through a formalized and recognized, stakeholder driven governance body. To ensure that adequate resources are available to support these efforts and the work of the Council.

Further Explanation:

In response to a significant increase in crash fatalities across the state, in 2003 the Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) initiative began with a pilot project in the southeastern area of the. The TZD program (based on a similar model developed in Sweden) soon proved to an effective and holistic way to reduce and prevent serious injury and fatal motor vehicle crashes. From 2003 until about 2011 Minnesota realized an approximate 40% reduction in fatalities in part as a result of the TZD efforts. Currently the TZD initiative and as well as most programs administered by DPS-OTS are supported using only federal funds (NHTSA and FHWA). These funding sources are somewhat restrictive in how the funding is expended and require local (state) matching funds. With passage of the US DOT Transportation Bill as well as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) additional state matching funds will be required to qualify for all available federal funding. Minnesota has historically relied primarily on federal funding for traffic safety programs with only minimal state funding investments. In 2020 the three supporting agencies (MN-DOT, MN-DPS, and MN-MDH) came together to begin the process of developing the next iteration of TZD in MN. A significant part of this process is the need for a formalized structure and state resources (funding). This proposal is an excellent compliment to that process and will help us reach the ultimate goal of ensuring public safety and realizing **zero** traffic related deaths on Minnesota roads.