PROJECT NUMBER: 01454

PROJECT TITLE: Public Information and Education – Seat Belt Survey

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:
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PROJECT OBJECTIVES:
The singular goal of this project is to accurately establish the statewide usage rate for seat belts and children restraints, using observers (Surveyors) to conduct surveys. The survey will be conducted using accepted principles for sampling of traffic flow and the Surveyors will be properly trained in observational techniques.

PROJECT ABSTRACT:
Seat belt and child restraint use in Alabama have traditionally lagged that of other states. Great strides were made in 2000 when the seat belt rate climbed to 77% (an all-time high) and a good increase in child restraint usage was detected. The major catalyst for this change was adoption of a stronger law on mandatory seat belt use. There were several public information and educational programs that also played a strong role in these increases. However, in 1999 there were still 47,065 persons injured and another 1,148 killed in traffic crashes on Alabama’s roadways. Obviously, there is still much work to be done to reduce the loss of life and to minimize the suffering associated with crashes.

One of the most cost-effective countermeasures in reducing crash severity is to encourage the use of seat belts and children restraints. Looking at drivers and passengers involved in 1999 crashes, individuals were 17.6 times less likely to be killed and 3.2 times less likely to be injured if wearing their seatbelts. Alabama has several seat belt promotion campaigns/programs planned or underway, with additional large efforts (like the “Click It or Ticket” program) ready to start. But, it is necessary to collect use-rate data before and after these programs to assess their effectiveness. This proposal was prepared too offer such services through UTCA.

PROJECT TASK DESCRIPTIONS:
1) Coordinate with other involved agencies (ADECA and DPH).
2) Recruit Surveyors.
3) Refer Surveyors to DPH for training.
4) In conjunction with ADECA and DPH, assign observation locations and times to the
Surveyors.

5) Conduct the surveys, using approved methods, and collect the raw data.
6) Furnish the raw data to DPH, which will prepare the “Observational Survey of Occupant Restraint Use Report.”

MILESTONES AND DATES:
Startup – April 1, 2001
Tasks 1-2: conclude April 20, 2001
Task 3: conclude April 30, 2001
Task 4: conclude May 7, 2001
Task 5: conclude July 15, 2001
Task 6: concludes Sep 30, 2002

TOTAL BUDGET:
One-year project; Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs $104, 218; total budget $104,218.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT:
No university students will be employed by this project.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER RESEARCH PROJECTS:
This project is not directly related to any other UTCA projects. However, it does support the activities conducted during projects 99459 – “Public Awareness Safety Campaign - Phase 2,” and 00473 – “Public Awareness Safety Campaign - Phase 2.” This survey is a required portion of the State’s highway safety activities.

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER ACTIVITIES:
There are no technology transfer activities in this project.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT:
There are no direct benefits. However, there is a large indirect benefit in that an accurate assessment can be made of the various public information campaigns aimed at increasing seatbelt use.

TRB KEYWORDS:
Seat belt use, child restraint use, assessment, survey