



These guidelines have been developed by the WisDOT  
Bureau of Transportation Safety in continued support of the  
Traffic Safety Commissions across Wisconsin.

Revised August 2016.

# Introduction

Each year, thousands of Wisconsin residents are injured and killed in traffic crashes. In an effort to prevent these tragedies, in 1971 the legislature created traffic safety commissions (TSC) in every county. These commissions are intended to bring local and state expertise to minimize the incidence and severity of traffic crashes. Because of the complexity of traffic crashes, the legislature required a breadth of expertise to serve on these commissions. TSC membership creates a collaboration of stakeholders dedicated to reducing injuries and death on their roadways locally, regionally and statewide.

Wisconsin's required TSCs offer each community/county the opportunity to create grassroots traffic safety initiatives that can directly impact what is happening on roadways.

So while Wisconsin Statute 83.013 requires each county to have a functioning TSC, each county must seize the opportunity to maximize the potential of their TSC. The statute lays out a structure for the TSC and spells out some baseline responsibilities. Counties should, however, try to foster a TSC that doesn't just meet the requirement, but rather uses every resource and established best practice possible to have a positive impact on reducing crashes.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Division of State Patrol, Bureau of Transportation Safety considers the county traffic safety commission in each of the state's 72 counties as a vital component and stakeholder in the creation and implementation of the Strategic Highway Safety Plan. The department is, therefore, committed to providing support and resources towards the effectiveness of the TSCs.



## Overview

### Structure/Membership<sup>1</sup>

The structure of the TSC varies greatly from one county to the next. Some counties formally appoint members through their county board, while some counties only appoint a chairperson or coordinator to run the meetings. Ultimately, the statute does not specifically require appointments. Counties should focus more on functionality than the formality of the TSC, as the TSC is generally regarded as an advisory body.

TSCs need to have a chairperson or coordinator who is responsible for the meeting logistics, agenda, follow up to action items and provides leadership for the quarterly meetings. State statute does not specifically place a requirement on who must fill this position. In most counties, this person generally is a sworn member of the sheriff's office or other major law enforcement agency in that county. This serves TSCs well in that law enforcement is in the best position to review traffic crashes—the primary foundation for why TSCs exist.

Another practice that has been effective is to designate both a coordinator and a co-coordinator (or chairperson and vice-chairperson). In the event of turnover of the coordinator/chairperson position, this practice allows for continuity of the TSC's ongoing work, projects and initiatives. Typically, the only other formal position is that of secretary (someone to record meeting minutes and maintain records of the TSC activities).

Active membership should meet statutory requirements at a minimum; attendance should include a representative from all law enforcement agencies within the county, all traffic safety stakeholders (ideally general injury/death prevention disciplines) as well as special interest groups. Some TSCs seek a citizen representative as well.

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<sup>1</sup> This section provides an overview of key points in regards to the structure and function of Traffic Safety Commissions. A more detailed breakdown of the statutory requirements follows in Addendum A.

## Meeting Dynamics

TSC meetings must be properly noticed, have an agenda and file recorded minutes. Most TSCs follow Robert's Rules of Order (often to a limited extent) that includes the review/approval of posting public meeting and the review/approval of previous meeting's minutes. As a meeting agenda drives the flow of the meeting, the coordinator should give thought to creating an agenda that facilitates a meeting that is effective, productive and results in an efficient use of everyone's time. Care must be given to not let the rules or agenda prevent productive discussion.



In addition to the standard agenda items of approving minutes, old business and new business, consideration should be given to including some form of action item tracking (who will do what by when), with follow up on those action items at the next meeting.

The review of crashes (fatal, serious injury and even frequent crash areas) is a foundational component of the TSC<sup>2</sup>. One of the purposes of having stakeholders from a multitude of disciplines around the table is for them all to weigh in on the prior quarter's crash review from their individual area of expertise and/or personal knowledge. The review of crashes should always include showing the crash location (and surrounding area) so participants are able to visualize what happened, where it happened and discuss all possible factors in why the crash happened—all with the goal of determining what, if any, countermeasures might be used to prevent future crashes. This can be done in multiple ways, such as Community Maps (discussed more below) and squad video presentations.

TSC coordinators should strive for a meeting that carries a proactive tone, as opposed to a reactive meeting that is driven by the agenda and reports. Additionally, TSCs should keep in the forefront of their commission that the vast majority of crashes are behavioral (speed, impaired driving, distraction, lack of the use of safety equipment, etc.) and guard against the tendency to focus primarily on infrastructure issues.

The use of a "round table" agenda item is an effective way to engage all stakeholders while at the same time incorporating the reports from the standing commission members. Here again, counties do well to focus on functionality and productivity as it relates to preventing crashes, injuries and deaths.

## Community Maps

As there is a statutory requirement for the TSC to maintain a "spot map," the Bureau of Transportation Safety developed an online program called Community Maps that provides an effective means for creating an online spot map. There are multiple uses and benefits to this program starting with reviewing traffic crashes. The program is Google based, which allows the user to use satellite view and street view so the meeting stakeholders can visualize the crash location and dynamics. Community Maps also provides a means for a review of behavioral and infrastructure issues.

While there are other effective means in which a county can satisfy the crash map requirement, whether on paper or through a record management system, it is worth recognizing that the wider the use of Community Maps across the state the higher the value for the end user.

## Citizen Input

As an open public meeting, citizens are welcome to attend the meeting and address the TSC, should they choose. A good practice for coordinators is to identify/research planned citizen appearances before the meeting so any relevant background information can be prepared. It is also recommended to allow citizen appearances as early in the agenda as possible and should the need arise be prepared to limit the amount of time of their appearance.

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<sup>2</sup> Included in these guidelines (Addendum B, C, & D) is a resource TSC Coordinators may choose to implement (all or parts of) to ensure an effective review of crashes.

## **Communication**

The coordinator should follow up on TSC communication with external partners to include local, county and state governing personnel via recommendations/conclusions reached at meetings. This may include: alerting state/local officials to traffic safety problems, encouraging/fostering traffic safety activity within jurisdictions, conducting traffic safety assessments and field reviews. TSCs are allowed to take positions on traffic safety issues/legislation, but only after thorough research into any proposed legislation.

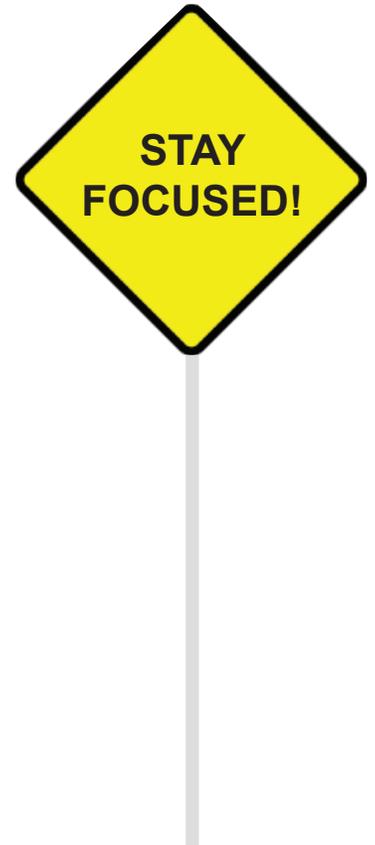
Many traffic safety commissions distribute press releases, maintain a web page and/or a social media site, and other creative means of communicating safety messages to the community while also giving the TSC an identity within that county.

# Addendum A

## I. Statutory Requirements (83.013)

### A. Composition/Membership

- County highway commissioner or designee
- Chief county law enforcement officer or designee
  - Sheriff or designee
- County highway safety coordinator
- Education representative (some possible members)
  - CESA administrator
  - School district administrator
  - High school principal or teacher
  - Driver education instructor
- Medical representative (some possible members)
  - Medical examiner/coroner
  - Hospital/clinic
  - Physician/nurse
  - EMS
- Representative (from legal community)
  - Judge or designee
  - Prosecutor or designee
  - County corporate attorney or designee
  - Attorney
- Wisconsin State Patrol representative
- Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT engineer) representative
- Wisconsin Bureau of Transportation Safety (BOTS) representative
  - Regional Program Manager (RPM); and/or
  - Law enforcement liaison (LEL)



All law enforcement agencies within the county are encouraged to attend and participate.

Note: Other parties that might be included in the meeting are: the Tavern League, treatment professionals, local business owners, etc.

B. Shall meet at least quarterly to do the following:

- Review traffic crashes and data at the county level.
- Review other traffic safety related matters.

C. Spot Map

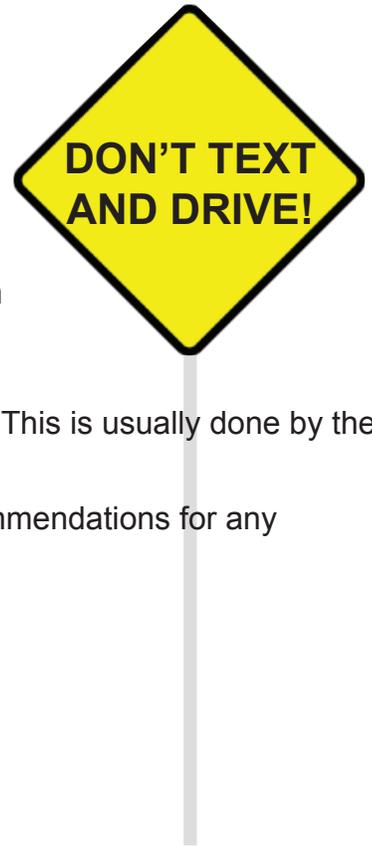
- Designate a person to map locations of traffic accidents on county and town roads and on city/village streets, if the population of the city/village is fewer than 5,000 (This is usually done by the sheriff's office.).
- Designate a person to map crash locations for cities, villages and towns with a population of 5,000 or more (This is usually done by the municipal law enforcement agency.).
- Upon review, the commission shall make written recommendations for any corrective actions it deems appropriate.

D. Reports

- Corrective Actions in writing to:
  - DOT
  - County board
  - County highway committee; or
  - Any other appropriate branch of local government.
- Meeting report shall be made to the DOT, usually through the RPM.

E. DOT furnishes TSCs with:

- Traffic crash data
- Map for use in spotting crashes (WisDOT BOTS supplies Community Maps for this purpose)



# Addendum B

## Traffic Safety Commission – Fatality Review Coordinator Outline

One of the primary functions of the county traffic safety commission is to conduct a quarterly review of fatality crashes in their respective county. It is important to note that this responsibility is not limited to fatality crashes and can be/should be considered to include serious injury crashes, as well as frequent crash areas.



- It is incumbent on the TSC coordinator/chairperson to have a process in place that informs them of all fatalities within the county. There are a variety of methods that can be used depending on a number of factors (number of law enforcement agencies, is coordinator also law enforcement).
  - Fatality crashes are to be reviewed quarterly. However, if the crash occurred too close to the meeting date, the review can be/should be moved to the next quarter, if all of the needed information is not yet available.
- When preparing the quarterly meeting agenda, each fatality/serious injury crash to be reviewed should be listed on the agenda. The law enforcement agency that investigated each crash should be requested to be represented at the meeting and prepared to share relevant information on that crash.
  - It is recommended that the coordinator send that law enforcement agency/officer the TSC LE Fatality Review Outline in advance of the meeting so they are prepared to share the needed information (rather than trying to locate the information in the police reports during the meeting – allows for more efficient use of time)
  - If the investigating agency cannot be represented at the meeting, the coordinator and/or another designated person from the TSC should be tasked with obtaining at a minimum the MV4000 so that the needed information is available for the review.
- When conducting the crash review at the quarterly meeting, it is recommended that the commission members receive the TSC Fatality Discussion Guide to facilitate both an objective and subjective review of the crash.
  - If information on a particular crash is sensitive in nature, and/or the crash is still under investigation, the coordinator may consider excusing members of the public (if any are in attendance) and directing members of the TSC that information shared is confidential in nature and cannot be shared outside of the meeting. Sensitive crash information should not be included in meeting minutes.
- During the review of each crash, the location of the crash should be displayed via Community Maps (or other suitable program).
  - Show crash history/trends for that location, if any.
  - Use satellite view and street view to visually review the crash location.
  - Avoid the temptation to focus strictly on infrastructure issues without looking at contributing behavioral factors.

# Addendum C

## Traffic Safety Commission - Fatality Review Law Enforcement Outline

1. Date and time of crash

*If applicable, include - dark/dusk/lighted/etc.*

2. Location of crash

*Intersection/non-intersection, curve/hill/flat, roadway condition*

3. #Vehicles involved

*include type(s) of vehicles*

4. #Fatalities (and injuries)

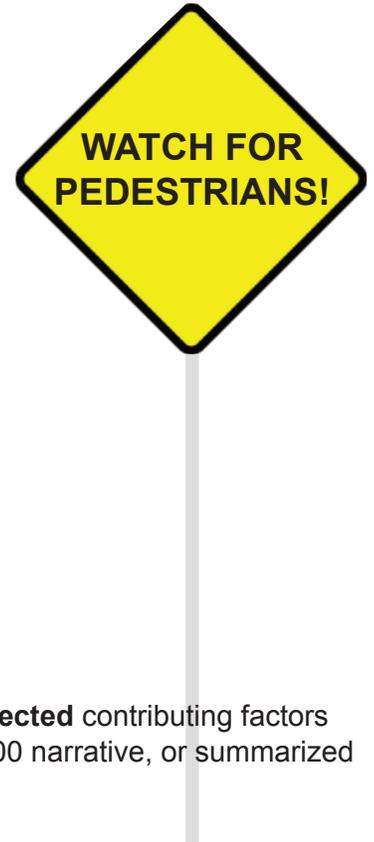
5. Age/seat location/restraint use of occupants

*Trapped/ejected*

6. Known or suspected impairment involved

7. Then provide a general summary of the crash, highlighting known or **suspected** contributing factors involved in the crash. This summary can be taken directly from the MV4000 narrative, or summarized in your own words.

8. Include any information regarding history of the crash location and/or area, if applicable.



### Note:

**346.70 (4)** Police and traffic agencies to report.

**(h)** Every law enforcement agency investigating or receiving a report of a traffic accident as described in sub. [\(1\)](#) shall forward a copy of the report of the accident to the county traffic safety commission or to the person designated to maintain spot maps under s. [83.013 \(1\) \(a\)](#) in the county where the accident occurred when the accident occurred on a county or town road or on a street where the population of the city, village or town is less than 5,000. For traffic accidents occurring within a city or village with a population of 5,000 or more, the law enforcement agency investigating or receiving a report shall forward a copy of the report of the accident to the city or village where the accident occurred.

# Addendum D

## Traffic Safety Commission – Fatality Review Discussion Guide

1. Are there any/other infrastructure or engineering issues that may have contributed to the crash, e.g. no sidewalk, no stop sign or traffic light, steep hill grade, narrow shoulder width, etc.?
2. Does anybody know of any other property damage, personal injury or complaints/citations at this location?
3. Are there nearby businesses, recreational facilities or types of housing that result in a unique population or traffic pattern, e.g. school k-12, college/university, senior/long-term care or assisted living, multi-family housing, shopping area, library, park/recreational facility, etc.
4. What does the group believe are the main factors that contributed to the **crash**?
5. What does the group believe are the key factors that contributed to the **death**?
6. Are any of these factors modifiable?
7. Are there any recommendations from the Traffic Safety Commission to prevent death or injury from similar causes or circumstances?
8. What are the action steps to carry out the recommendations and what is the role of member organizations?