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New report identifies Nevada roadways/intersections with highest rate of serious crashes

State traffic fatalities claim nearly 400 lives annually

Traffic crashes remain a major source of fatalities in Nevada, despite a decrease in 2007, according to a new report released March 20 by TRIP, a national nonprofit transportation research group based in Washington, D.C.

The report, "Getting Home Safely: An Analysis of Highway Safety in Nevada," examines traffic safety in the Silver State and includes a list of sections of state roadways and intersections with the highest rate of serious traffic crashes. According to the TRIP report, an average of 398 people were killed each year on the state's roads between 2003 and 2007. Traffic fatalities in Nevada dropped to 371 in 2007 after increasing for three straight years, from 367 in 2003 to 431 in 2006. Despite the recent drop in the number of annual traffic fatalities in the state, with Nevada's population and vehicle travel increasing at the fastest rate in the nation, traffic fatalities are at risk of increasing again unless the state is able to improve traffic safety.

The TRIP report identified a section of S.R. 159 in Clark County as having the highest rate of serious traffic crashes from 2003 to 2006. Nine fatalities and 72 injury-causing crashes occurred on this section of roadway. Other road sections and intersections listed among the state's top 20 in terms of fatal and injury-causing traffic crashes include highways and intersections in Carson City, Clark, Douglas, Churchill, Washoe, Lyon and Storey counties.

Michael Geeser, AAA Nevada spokesman, said, "We can save lives and reduce the number of serious traffic crashes by making needed improvements to Nevada's roads and bridges. Adequate transportation funding to keep our roads in good condition will help save lives and allow our economy to flourish."

In 2006 there were 17.3 traffic fatalities per 100,000 persons in Nevada, higher than the national average of 14.2 traffic fatalities per 100,000 persons. In 2007, the rate of traffic fatalities per 100,000 persons in Nevada dropped to 14.5.

Traffic crashes take a tremendous economic toll on a community, in addition to the suffering and grief that they cause to those injured or killed and their loved ones.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the economic cost of vehicle crashes in Nevada was \$2.2 billion in 2007—an average of \$876 per resident. These costs include medical costs, lost economic and household productivity, psychological or emotional trauma, property damage and travel delays.

Numerous roadway safety improvements can be made to reduce serious crashes and traffic fatalities in Nevada. These improvements can include one or more of the following: including rumble strips on road shoulders and medians, improving signage and pavement/lane markings, installing lighting and guardrails, adding or paving shoulders, removing or shielding obstacles, adding median barriers, reducing the angle of roadway curves, widening lanes and adding passing lanes.

"Additional funding for needed highway safety improvements could prevent Nevada's traffic fatality rate from worsening. Even simple safety improvements to roads and bridges can help save a significant number of lives," said William M. Wilkins, TRIP's executive director.

Additional findings of the TRIP report:

- From 1990 to 2006, Nevada's population more than doubled, from 1.2 million to 2.5 million people—an increase of 108% and the fastest rate of population growth in the nation.
- From 1990 to 2005, vehicle miles of travel in Nevada increased by 103%, from approximately 10 billion annual vehicle miles of travel to approximately 22 billion, the fastest rate of growth in the nation.
- From 2006 to 2007 the number of traffic fatalities in Clark County decreased from 286 to 245, while fatalities in Washoe County increased from 32 to 46.
- Factors that contribute to fatal and serious traffic crashes in Nevada include the safety design of the actual roadway, human behavior (speeding, drug and alcohol use, safety belt use, drowsiness or distraction), the safety features of the vehicle and the medical care of the victims.