



MEMORANDUM

TO: Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council Board of Directors
FROM: Matt Ransom, Executive Director
DATE: June 25, 2019 
SUBJECT: **Regional Traffic Safety Data**

BACKGROUND

Safety for all modes of travel is an important component of the metropolitan transportation planning process. Keeping people safe as they travel to their destinations has long been a priority for Washington State, this region, and its local jurisdictions. Efforts to improve the safety of our residents by reducing the frequency and severity of crashes can result from analysis of the collision data and an understanding of why collisions happen. Providing collision information has long been included in RTC’s safety planning process.

The goal of RTC’s safety process has been the same as that of Target Zero, Washington’s Strategic Highway Safety Plan, to reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries to zero by 2030. The loss for every person killed or injured in traffic crashes is enormous and unacceptable. That is why Washington State and the region have adopted Target Zero.

At the March 5, 2019 RTC Board meeting there was a request to have additional information to further understand the data behind the safety performance targets. The purpose of this memorandum is to report on the most recent Clark County collision data and the trends revealed by the data.

TARGET ZERO PLAN

The Washington State Strategic Highway Safety Plan (2016) establishes Target Zero as the traffic safety goal, and identifies highway safety strategies and implementation measures for the next three to four years. Target Zero is intended to unite organizations and agencies toward a common goal, which is to end traffic deaths and injuries by 2030. The Plan helps coordinate traffic safety programs, better align multi-agency priorities and strategies, raise public awareness and understanding of unsafe driving behaviors, and build a common approach to traffic safety efforts across Washington State.

A fundamental element of the Plan is that it is data driven, identifying the critical factors that contribute to fatal and serious injury crashes on Washington's roads. The plan then uses those factors to identify proven, recommended strategies along with new ones for reducing traffic deaths and serious injuries in a number of common areas.

The Target Zero Plan prioritizes traffic safety needs and objectives, identifies proven and effective strategies, sets timelines for decreasing traffic deaths and disabling injuries, guides government investment in traffic safety, and encourages agency partnerships that make the best use of government resources.

UNITED STATES AND WASHINGTON STATE TRENDS

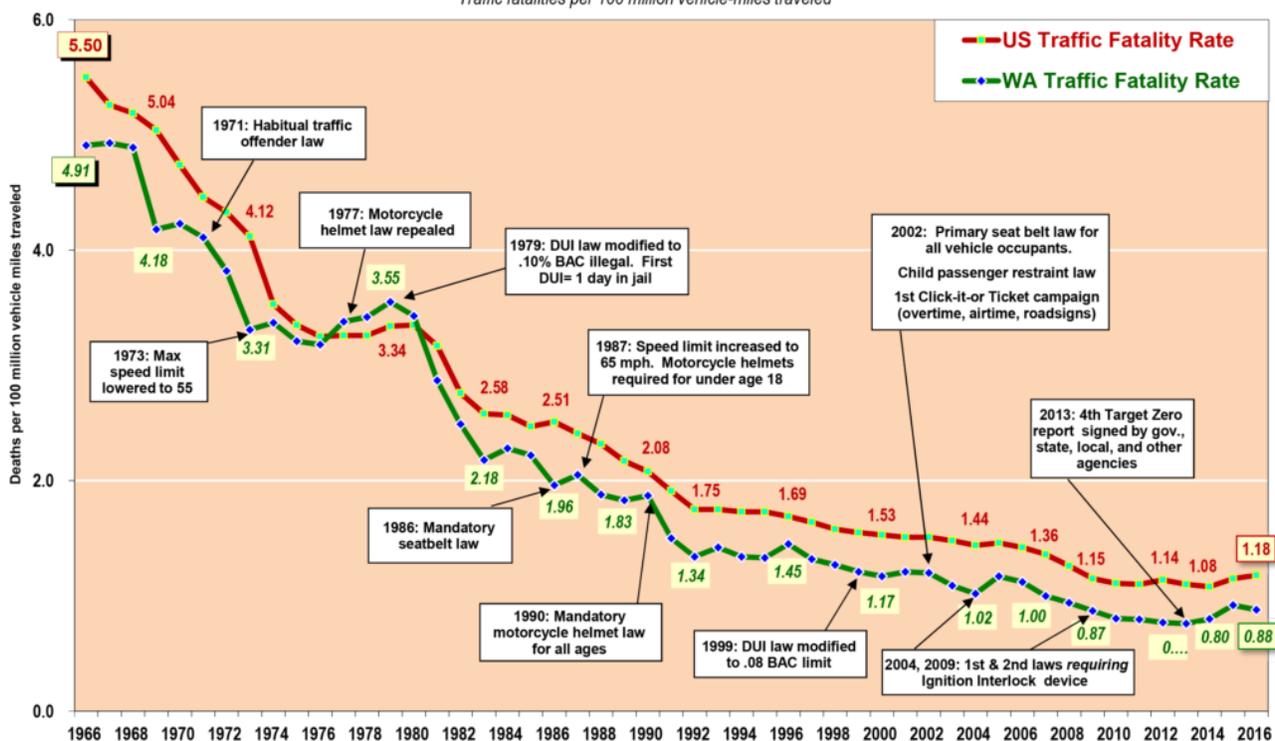
Over the past 50 years, national and statewide safety trends had shown significant reduction in fatalities and serious injuries resulting from traffic collisions. The follow graphic shows how fatality rates have declined over the last 50 years and specifically highlights change in Washington State laws that have affected fatality rates:

Traffic Fatality Rates*, 1966-2016

U.S. and Washington State

By Year and Major Traffic-Safety Laws

*Traffic fatalities per 100 million vehicle-miles traveled



Source: FARS, WSP, WSDOT, and NHTSA

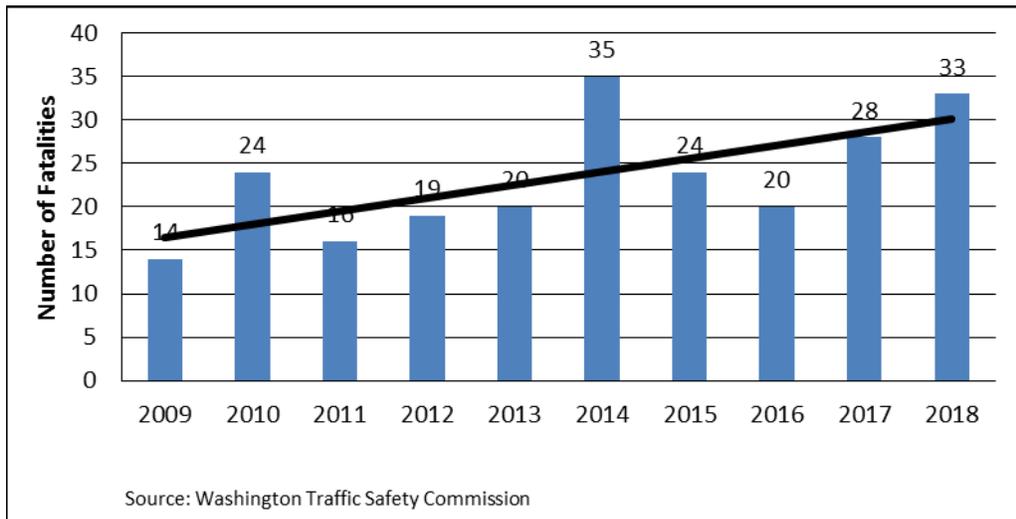
CLARK COUNTY TRENDS

However, in the last few years this downward trend in traffic collisions has reversed with the number of fatalities and serious injuries now trending upward. Clark County’s collision data has followed the national and state trend, with fatalities increasing since 2013. Part of this reversal in trends is believed to come from the improving economy and an increase of population, which has led to more individuals driving more miles for both work and pleasure. Others believe increased distracted driving and more lenient enforcement of traffic regulations is leading to increased fatalities and serious injuries.

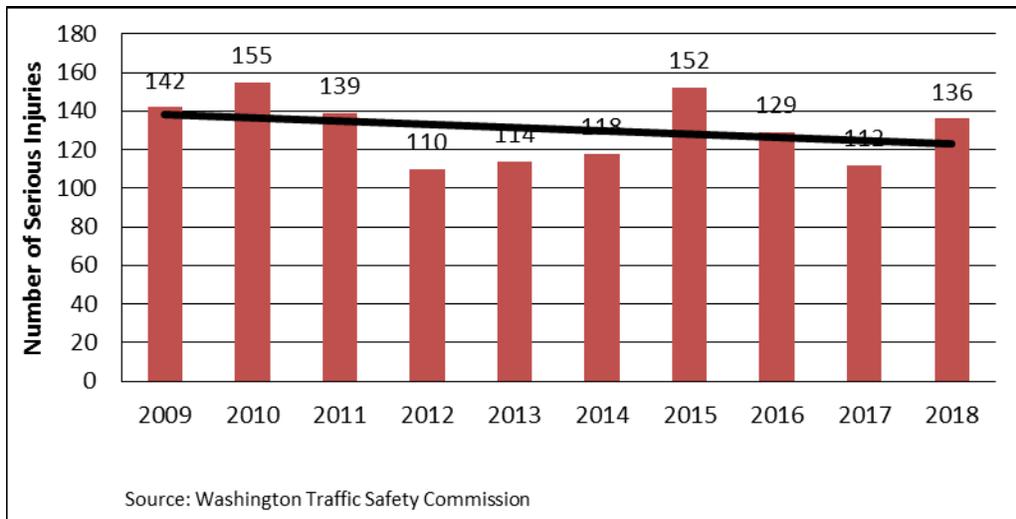
Using the most recent available safety data, from 2009 to 2018, Clark County has seen a significant increase in fatalities, while serious injuries have seen a slight decrease. The following

two figures display trends for both fatalities and serious injuries within Clark County between the years 2009 and 2018.

Clark County Fatalities, 2009-2018



Clark County Serious Injuries, 2009-2018



CLARK COUNTY COLLISION FACTORS

Regional traffic safety priorities have been set based upon the most frequently cited contributing factors. More than one factor is commonly involved in most collisions. This results in each fatal and serious injury collision being represented under multiple factors. The factors in fatal and serious traffic collisions are grouped into three Priority Levels within Target Zero based on the percentage of traffic fatalities and serious injuries associated with each factor. Clark County factors are the same as the state factors, although the percentage for each factor varies slightly.

| Clark County 2016-2018 | Fatalities | | Serious Injuries | |
|--------------------------------|-------------|------------|------------------|------------|
| | # of People | % of Total | # of People | % of Total |
| Priority Level One | | | | |
| Impaired Driver Involved | 39 | 52.7% | 75 | 21.9% |
| Speeding Involved | 33 | 44.6% | 93 | 27.2% |
| Young Driver 16-25 Involved | 27 | 36.5% | 153 | 44.7% |
| Run Off the Road | 27 | 36.5% | 79 | 23.1% |
| Intersection Related | 20 | 27.0% | 132 | 38.6% |
| Priority Level Two | | | | |
| Unrestrained Vehicle Occupants | 19 | 25.7% | 24 | 7.0% |
| Unlicensed Driver Involved | 18 | 24.3% | 0 | 0.0% |
| Distracted Driver-Involved | 16 | 21.6% | 90 | 26.3% |
| Pedestrian | 14 | 18.9% | 56 | 16.4% |
| Motorcyclist | 13 | 17.6% | 60 | 17.5% |
| Opposite Direction (Head-on) | 8 | 10.8% | 26 | 7.6% |
| Priority Level Three | | | | |
| Older Driver 75+ Involved | 7 | 9.5% | 16 | 4.7% |
| Heavy Truck Involved | 4 | 5.4% | 18 | 5.3% |
| Drowsy Driver Involved | 1 | 1.4% | 10 | 2.9% |
| Bicyclists | 1 | 1.4% | 9 | 2.6% |
| Work Zone | 0 | 0.0% | 7 | 2.0% |
| Wildlife | 0 | 0.0% | 2 | 0.6% |
| School Bus Involved | 0 | 0.0% | 1 | 0.3% |
| Vehicle-Train | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% |
| • Total | 74 | | 342 | |

Recognition that reduction in collisions cannot be resolved by engineering alone, the Target Zero Plan focuses on the Five E's, with the addition of Leadership and Policy strategies:

- *Education.* Give road-users the information to make good choices, such as driving unimpaired, wearing a seatbelt, and avoiding distractions.

- *Enforcement.* Use data-driven analysis to help law enforcement officers pinpoint and address locations with a high number of behavior-driven fatal and serious-injury crashes, such as speeding and impairment.
- *Engineering.* Design roads and roadsides using practical solutions to reduce crashes, or to reduce the severity of crashes if they do occur.
- *Emergency Medical Services (EMS).* Provide high-quality and rapid medical response to injury crashes.
- *Leadership/Policy.* Change laws, agency rules, or policies to support safer roads and driving.