



**IOWA**  
**OLDER DRIVERS**  
**FORUM**  
June 19-20, 2002

## **OVERVIEW**

The Iowa Safety Management System (SMS) held the *Safe Mobility Decisions for Older Drivers Forum* in 2002 to raise public awareness, identify key safety improvement strategies, and to develop resources that help older drivers make safer mobility decisions. The forum also provided opportunities for Iowa's senior citizens to share their concerns and suggestions regarding safe mobility with Iowa policy makers and service providers.

Nearly 200 Iowans—half of them senior citizens—gathered to discuss the sciences of aging, driving, and roadway design coupled with Iowa demographics, senior services, and crash statistics. State, local, and federal transportation and senior-related professionals participated in reporting and discussions addressing a range of factors and resources relating to safe mobility decisions.

A new video for older drivers and a decisions resource book for drivers or those who care about them are being developed as a part of this effort. A post forum report will provide a summary of what was learned and what strategies Iowans hope to see implemented to reduce the risk of fatalities and injuries to our older drivers.

## **THE DEVELOPMENT**

Beginning in mid-2001, highway safety partners from SMS member entities joined to include an eclectic group of additional stakeholders for the event who assisted with funding, exhibits, presentations, and information. Besides typical highway safety entities, committee members worked with a range of senior service providers including local transit and congregate meal groups, statewide area agencies on aging, the Iowa AARP, Iowa State University Extension, the University of Iowa's Center on Aging, Public Policy Center, and Assistive Technology Program. Presenters were recruited to give both national and Iowa perspectives on older driver concerns.

## THE OUTCOME

### Public Awareness Success:

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) sponsored the amazing 90-year old Art Linkletter as a keynote speaker to draw attendance and the news media attention needed to help raise public awareness. Stories of Art encouraging seniors to “think about their choices and to give up the keys when its time” were carried by the Associated Press and picked up on radio, in print, and on Internet news sites. The Governor’s Traffic Safety Bureau, (GTSB), the University of Iowa, and other SMS members and friends also contributed resources and time to make this a successful event. Iowa seniors left committed to taking their concerns back to their communities and their public policy leaders.

### Educational and Resource Materials to be made available:

- “Choice Not Chances” Video produced by the DOT office of Driver Services with SMS funding support, detailing driving concerns with aging, testimonials from older drivers’ families. This is licensing focused for license examiners to use with their public education presentations. (Kim Snook, DOT and others)
- *The Graying Of Iowa And The Nation – What The Data Tells Us* (Bob Thompson, GTSB and others)
- *The Graying of Iowa – Older Drivers: Their increasing Numbers, Their experience on Iowa Roads and the Implications of Declining Capabilities* (Scott Falb, DOT and others)
- A draft “decision guide” of information and suggested contacts was presented at the forum and will be revised. *Resources For Wise Choices: Strategies For Older Drivers And Those Who Care About Them* (Mary Stahlhut, SMS and others)
- “On the Road Again” Video introducing our driving history and raising the question of how to address driving capacity changes with aging. This will be revised and made available to those wishing to raise general public awareness and discussion in local settings. (Mike Coon, Tracey Bramble and Mary Stahlhut, DOT)
- Web site access to all materials produced is anticipated.

### Forum Proceedings Report and Potential Safety Plan:

An executive summary of the forum content and input from attendees will be prepared for presentation to appropriate authorities. More detail will also be available on the SMS website: [www.iowaSMS.org](http://www.iowaSMS.org) web site.

This forum is also part of a response to the NHTSA recommendation that states develop older driver-focused plans to address roadway infrastructure, driver competency, education, public transportation services, vehicle design, and research. Iowa SMS is promoting a multi-disciplinary approach that will involve all the “Es” of highway safety—Engineering, Enforcement, Education, Emergency Services, and Everyone else in developing Iowa’s plan.

### Follow-Up Steps in Progress:

- AARP, community colleges, SMS, and DOT will be exploring future driver education programs focused on aging drivers.
- SMS has requested additional funding from the Traffic Safety Improvement Program for regional follow-up events
- All of the products presented in early form at the forum will be revised and made available with input from a growing audience of stakeholders.
- Iowa DOT licensing offices have renewed their commitment to expanding outreach to older drivers and related stakeholders. DOT is building additional resources and outreach with entities such as the Iowa Alzheimer's Association and the University of Iowa Program for Assistive Technology.
- Iowa DOT Engineering professionals have identified and proposed implementation of several improvements that may be especially beneficial to older drivers. These may begin as roadways are scheduled to undergo development or maintenance.

## **Top Requests From Seniors and Others Attending The Forum:**

### **Traffic Laws and Enforcement**

Improve headlamp standards, use, and enforcement;  
Continue and step up enforcement of speed and aggressive driving laws;  
Enforce intersection functions that protect older drivers and pedestrians.

### **Vehicle Design**

Little can be done by states to impact manufacturing standards but these concerns about headlamps, mirrors and interior configurations were recorded

### **Licensing**

Continue and enhance DL communication and outreach education,  
Consider licensing policy or law changes,

### **Public Awareness, and Driver Education of Older Driver Concerns**

Change the culture, educate the driver

### **Roadways:**

Pavement Markings And Delineation; Shoulders; Intersections; Improve driver cues from signs, Signals and lighting; Roadway design features;  
Plan with aging population in mind

### **Traffic Laws and Enforcement**

Improve headlamp standards, use, and enforcement;  
Continue and step up enforcement of speed and aggressive driving laws;  
Enforce intersection functions that protect older drivers and pedestrians.

#### **Continue and step up enforcement of driving laws and behaviors that cause conflict between older drivers and others:**

- Keep 65mph speed limit
- Use speed enforcement cameras
- Use red-light-running cameras
- More stop sign enforcement
- Better enforcement of speed laws
- Don't allow right-turn-on-red at pedestrian areas
- Ban having handicapped parking permit (or any others) - not up on the rear view mirror while driving and enforce it

#### **Improve headlamp standards, use, and enforcement:**

- Headlights on when wipers are on
- Inspect headlight height and direction
- Ban xenon headlamps
- Outlaw neon lights on the bottoms of cars
- Issue tickets for those who drive with a Handicapped Parking permit (or others) hanging on their vehicle's rear view mirror.

### **Vehicle Design**

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- Standardize headlamp design to reduce blinding and glare impacts on other drivers
- Standardize door handle locations
- Louder turn signals
- Wider/Larger mirrors

## **Licensing**

Continue and enhance DL communication and outreach education,  
Consider licensing policy or law changes,

### **Continue and enhance DOT Drivers License communication and outreach education**

- Further educate state and county drivers license and senior services staff
- Make “decision-making guides” available in Driver License stations, Area Agencies on Aging, medical and vision doctors, pharmacists, etc.
- Ask at renewal if the driver has taken a driving course
- Distribute the new older driver video broadly (Area Agencies on Aging, Senior Centers, and run on DL station waiting room screens)
- Add 55 Alive or other older driver course information to older driver video
- Add an “Older Driver” information link to the DOT Web page
- Use more proactive approaches or materials explaining older driver testing and assessment options
- Mail out older driver awareness materials with license renewal reminders
- Strengthen messages to “never drive with a handicapped parking permit hanging from a vehicle’s rear view mirror.”

### **Consider licensing policy or law changes such as**

- Voluntary or mandatory education after a given age or for all experienced drivers (Suggestions ranged from viewing a videotape before renewal to periodically taking a refresher course)
- Voluntary or mandatory testing and assessment (Suggestions range from a short review and quiz on the Iowa Driver’s Manual to mandatory driving tests or other driving specific assessments of physical and mental capacity)
- Re-evaluate Iowa’s written test and oral test options for drivers “out-of-practice” taking tests

## **Public Awareness, and Driver Education of Older Driver Concerns**

Change the culture, educate the driver

### **Change the culture with public awareness of changing driver challenges and decisions faced with aging**

- Hold regional 1-day follow-up sessions of this forum to reach more lowans
- Include aging driver facts in young driver classes
- Promote awareness for younger seniors (50-60)
- Encourage business and industry to be more active in safe driving programs with employees of all ages
- Produce a public television public awareness educational program
- Raise awareness of public transit systems available and their use
- Publicize 888-AARP-NOW for Older Driver training available in Iowa
- Publicize that some insurance companies offer rate reductions for taking driving safety courses
- When new roadways are opened or others changed- clearly mark and explain what changes have been made and how to navigate.
- Publish or air "how to" instructions for crossing/entering 4-lane divided expressways and other tasks identified as high risk for older drivers
- Renew emphasis on defensive driving and seat belt use.

### **Educate the driver to compensate for changes and make appropriate decisions**

- Repeat this Older Driver Forum regionally as a one-day annual event
- Publish the forum report broadly as an education tool
- Publish and promote the "Decision Resource guides" Make these available in Driver License stations, Area Agencies on Aging, doctor's offices, etc.
- Create more community based programs - same as this forum, but focused on local, county, area problems
- Develop one combined, unified aging driver education course with pooled resources rather than 4 or 5 competing
- Make sure that older driver courses are available in all areas of Iowa
- Insert older driver information in beginning driver education classes
- Provide funding for Local DOT staff to conduct education / refresher programs.
- Aggressively advise drivers that their handicapped parking permit should not be hanging when they are driving
- Offer low cost mature driver education classes - talk with private driver education instructors
- Work with colleges to develop and offer older driver education as a lifestyle enrichment class
- Invest state and local dollars in this effort
- Share materials across different professions, organizations, and geographic areas.
- Produce a public television older driver educational program
- Produce a public education program on use of turn signals.

### **Roadways:**

Pavement Markings And Delineation; Shoulders; Intersections; Improve Driver Cues From Signs, Signals And Lighting; Roadway Design Features; Plan With Aging Population In Mind

These items were most often mentioned as improvements that older drivers need and other drivers would benefit from:

#### **Improve pavement markings and deliniation:**

- Brighten markings with wet-reflective tape, raised pavement markers or special paints
- Maintain edge and center line markings with more durable materials or more frequent application
- Widen four-inch pavement markings to 6" or wider (29+ states already have)
- Install plow-able raised pavement markings on curves of 2-lane roads or other specific applications locations

#### **Improve shoulders:**

- Widen shoulders
- Pave shoulders (minimum 24", ideal six feet)
- Install appropriate rumble strips

#### **Improve intersections:**

- Differentiate better between 2 and 4-way stops
- Use dilemma zone protection at high-speed intersections when warranted
- Use more protected left turn signals
- Destination lighting at rural intersections

#### **Improve driver cues from signs, signals, and lighting:**

- When new roadways are opened or others changed- clearly mark and explain what changes have been made and how to navigate.
- Use better lane/route designation (word or a diagram on a sign)
- Use more advanced street name signs
- Use larger visual signals

#### **Improve roadway design features:**

- Use more and longer left-turn lanes
- Use more and longer right-turn lanes
- Install shoulder rumble strips
- Install centerline rumble strips

#### **Plan for an aging population:**

- Involve local traffic engineers and city planners in local decision-making regarding streets and highways.
- Solicit local input from senior groups. Seniors should volunteer for city planning committees