

Executive Summary
Public Opinion Survey of
Highway Safety Improvement Goals and Strategies
Found in
The Iowa Safety Management System
Iowa Highway Strategic Highway Safety Plan

Survey Conducted by
Center for Social and Behavioral Research
University of Northern Iowa

Gene Lutz

Melvin Gonnerman, Jr.

Mary E. Losch

With the assistance of

Amy Drymon

Stephanie Ingram

Sarah Stoever

For

The Iowa Safety Management System (SMS)
Coordinating Committee



Introduction

The executive summary reports the key findings of the *Iowa Strategic Highway Safety Plan Goals and Strategies: Statewide survey of Adults* (2000) report commissioned by the Iowa Safety Management system (SMS).

Survey Focus

This survey was commissioned by the Iowa Safety Management System (SMS) to help gauge the level of public support for a number of potential traffic safety strategies. The major content of the survey is drawn from the *1999 SMS Iowa Strategic Highway Safety Plan* addressing a wide range of highway safety concerns in 25 emphasis areas.

It is not the intent of this survey for respondents to judge or measure performance of any traffic safety related entity or program. Further, respondents were not asked to prioritize traffic safety strategies with other kinds of highway improvement needs.

The results of this survey will assist in prioritizing the expenditures of traffic safety improvement funds and may identify potential changes in state law and department policies, standards, and programs.

Sponsoring Entity

The Safety Management System (SMS) was established in 1995 to address Highway Safety from a multi-disciplinary perspective that involves Engineering, Enforcement, Education, and Emergency Response. The SMS Coordinating Committee seeks to build coalitions between related safety partners, to identify unmet highway safety needs, and alternative “tools” to address these unmet needs.

Member entities include:

- State agencies such as the Department of Health, The Department of Public Safety (State Patrol and Governor’s Traffic Safety Bureau), The Department of Elder Affairs, and The Department of Transportation
- Organizations representing local law enforcement, engineering, and municipal planning
- Private sector groups such as AARP, AAA Auto Club, State Farm Insurance, railroad representatives and many others

Methodology

- The survey population consisted of Iowa residents at least 18 years of age. The sampling frame was adult Iowans living in households with residential phone lines.
- Data collection began on March 9, 2000, and concluded on May 9, 2000.
- Respondents were contacted by telephone using a random digit dialing (RDD) methodology, and all data were collected via a computer-assisted telephone

- interviewing (CATI) system at the Center for Social and Behavioral Research at the University of Northern Iowa.
- Using a random sample of telephone numbers drawn by Genesys Sampling Systems, a total of 4,078 telephone numbers were dialed and yielded 1,008 complete interviews.
 - The margin of error for this sample is 3.2%.

Survey Content

The Iowa Strategic Highway Safety Plan contains several main “groups” of highway safety concerns. (Drivers, Special Users, Highways, and Emergency Response)

General Goals for improving highway safety are listed within these groups.
(See page 8.)

- Respondents were asked to assign a “high, medium, or low” emphasis to each goal over the next five years, (i.e. “Reduce Aggressive Driving”)

Specific Strategies as potential ways to achieve the goals are listed within these goals.
(See page 9.)

- Respondents were asked whether they would support or not support each specific strategy, (i.e. “Use videotape cameras at intersections to reduce the practice of running red lights.”)

The sequence of questions within the groups, goals, and strategies were randomized within each level. Some complex or technical subjects in the plan were not included in the survey.

Overview of the findings

The results of this survey suggest that there is considerable agreement between the content of the Iowa Strategic Highway Safety Plan and public opinion concerning Iowa Traffic safety.

- The majority of the respondents reported moderate or high emphasis should be placed on each of the main goals in the next five years.
- There was also considerable support for implementing the specific strategies aimed at achieving these goals. In fact, nearly all of the proposed strategies received support by the majority of those surveyed.

Top Ranking Driver-Related Goals And Strategies

Goal: Reduce Drunk Or Substance Impaired Driving:

80% of respondents identified Reduce Drunk Or Substance Impaired Driving for high emphasis over the next five years. (See Figure 1, page 8.)

Strategies:

- 54.4% of respondents would support the strategy of Iowa lowering the BAC from .10 to .08. (See Figure 4, page 9.)
- The strategy for Iowa lowering the BAC from .10 to .08 ranked first in priority among 8 suggested driver-related strategies. (Refer to page 15 in full report.)

Goal: Reduce Aggressive Driving:

75% of respondents identified Reduce Aggressive Driving for high emphasis over the next five years. (See Figure 1, page 8.)

Strategies: (See Figure 4, page 9.)

- 92% of respondents support the strategy of practicing more vigorous enforcement to stop aggressive driving.
- 90% of respondents support the strategy of Iowa making aggressive driving illegal.

Reduce Red Light Running Strategies (pages 34-38 in full report)

- 78% of respondents support the strategy of using videotape cameras at intersections to reduce the practice of running red lights.
- 79% of respondents support the strategy of enacting legislation to permit giving traffic tickets based on videotape evidence for running red lights.
- The majority of respondents reported that red light violations based on videotape evidence should be considered civil (56.1%) rather than criminal (37.8%) violations.

Goals: Ensure Driver Capacity

66% of respondents identified Ensure Physical And Mental Competency For All Drivers for high emphasis over the next five years. (See Figure 1, page 8.)

55% of respondents identified Ensure Older Drivers Are Able To Drive Safely for high emphasis over the next five years. (See Figure 1, page 8.)

Strategies: (See Figure 4, page 9.)

- 92% of respondents would support the strategy of greater efforts to stop suspended or revoked drivers from driving. (There are many causes for revocation/suspension related to capacity or violations.)
- 84% of respondents support the strategy of improving how physical and mental health is measured when renewing all driver licenses.
- 72% of respondents support the strategy of required insurance discounts for older drivers who complete a certified driver education refresher course.

Other Driver-Related Goals And Strategies

Goal: Enhance Graduated Licensing For Young Drivers

63% of respondents identified Enhance Graduated Licensing For Young Drivers for high emphasis over the next five years. (See Figure 1, page 8.)

Goal: Promote Focused Driving

61% of respondents identified Promote Focused Driving (to prevent distracted or drowsy driving) for high emphasis over the next five years. (See Figure 1, page 8.)

Strategies: (See Figure 4, page 9.)

- 74% of respondents support the strategy of prohibiting cell phone use while driving.
- 70% of respondents support the strategy of adding more paved shoulders with rumble strips

Goal: Increase Seat Belt Use

54% of respondents identified Increase Seat Belt Use for high emphasis over the next five years. (See Figure 1, page 8.)

Special User Goals And Strategies

Goals: Make Commercial Truck Travel Safer

52% of respondents identified Make Commercial Truck Travel Safer for high emphasis over the next five years. (See Figure 2, page 8.)

Other Special User Goals: (See Figure 2, page 8.)

These “special user” safety improvement goal areas all ranked below 50% in high emphasis responses:

| | | | |
|------------|-----|-----------------------|-----|
| Bicycle | 48% | Train-vehicle crashes | 46% |
| Motorcycle | 47% | Farm vehicle | 41% |
| Pedestrian | 47% | Bus | 37% |

Special User Strategies: (See Figure 5, page 9.)

- 88% of respondents support “Increase truck and driver inspections.”
- 85% of respondents support “Review guidelines for driver rest periods.”
- 77% of respondents support “Require motorcycle helmet use.”
- 65% of respondents support “Increase motorcycle training.”
- 49% of respondents support “Motorcycle licenses based on skill.”

Highway Design Goals And Strategies

Highway Design Goals: (See Figure 3, page 8.)

Respondents preference for High Emphasis over the next 5 years:

- 64% Improve Design And Use Of Construction Zones
- 61% Improve Design And Operation Of Intersections
- 57% Increase Rumble Strip And Warning Devices
- 52% Improve Roadways And Signs For Older Drivers

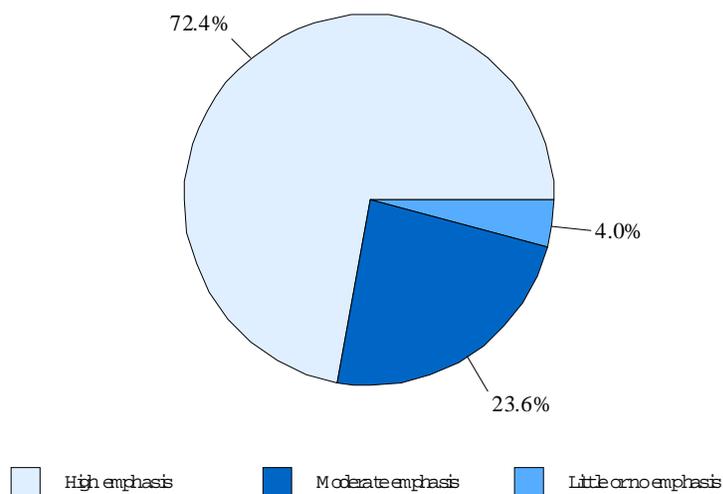
Highway Design Strategies: (See Figure 6, page 9.)

- 84% of respondents support “Provide wider pavement markings”
- 69% of respondents support “Use video cameras to monitor motorist speeds in construction zones”
- 66% of respondents support “Provide paved shoulders”
- 64% of respondents support “Design shorter construction zones”

Emergency Services Goals

Over 95% of those surveyed reported that improving emergency rescue and medical services to crash victims should receive high or moderate emphasis in the next five years.

Diagram 1.



Statistical Issues and Sample Demographics

- The margin of error for this sample is 3.2%.
- Of the 1008 adults interviewed, 94.9% reported having valid Iowa driver licenses.
- Of those with a valid or suspended driver's license, the vast majority (94.2%) had a regular operator's license. One in ten (10.2%) had a motorcycle or motorcycle instruction permit. No other types of licenses or permits were reported by at least 10% of the respondents.
- Nearly two-thirds (65.9%) of those with any driver's license reported that they had no restrictions. The most common restriction was for vision (32.3%), which required respondent to wear glasses or contact lenses while driving.
- Cars (82.4%), pickups or light vans (50.6%), and sports utility vehicles –SUVs-, (13.8%) were the most frequently reported types of vehicles driven by the respondent or members of the respondent's household.
- The median number of miles respondents reported driving per year was 13,000.
- Of the 71.4% of respondents who reported working for wages/salary, the median number of miles traveled round-trip commuting to work or daily traveling was 15.
- Regular use of a public bus was reported by 2.7% of respondents.
- In 12.0% of the households, at least one child aged 5 to 17 rode a school bus to school.

Summary

The findings highlighted in this Executive Summary indicate that adult Iowans believe that the goals in the Iowa Strategic Highway Safety Plan should receive considerable emphasis in Iowa's efforts to improve traffic safety. Although there are numerous ways in which these goals might be accomplished, most of the strategies in the Iowa Highways Strategic Highway Safety Plan that were included in this survey were supported by a majority of respondents.

Contact References

Contact the Iowa Safety Management System at safety.engineering@dot.state.ia.us for additional information concerning the Iowa Strategic Highway Safety Plan or the content of the survey.

Contact the Center for Social and Behavioral Research at research@csbr.csbs.uni.edu for additional information concerning the survey methodology or data analysis.

Endnote

The response rate was calculated using the RR4 formula, and the cooperation rate was calculated using the COOP3 formula. Both formulas are from the American Association for Public Opinion Research (1998). Standard definitions: final dispositions of case codes and outcome rates for RDD telephone surveys and in-person household surveys. Ann Arbor Michigan: AAPOR.

Highway Safety Goals Low, Medium, or High Emphasis Over the Next 5 Years

Figure 1. Driver Related Goals: Emphasis

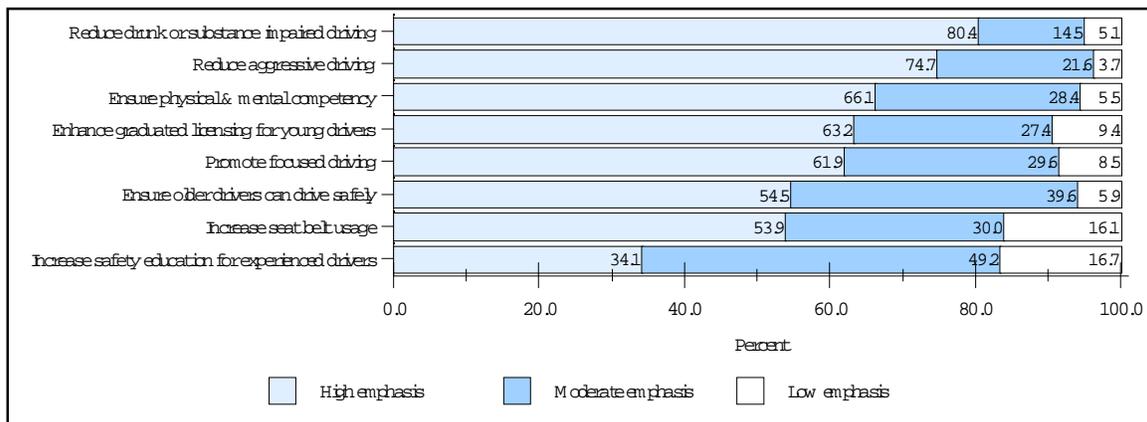


Figure 2. Special User Goals: Emphasis

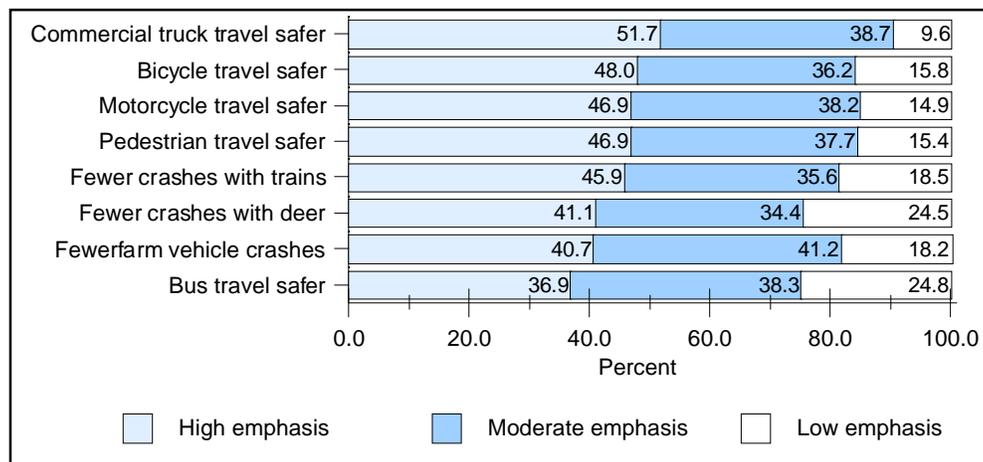
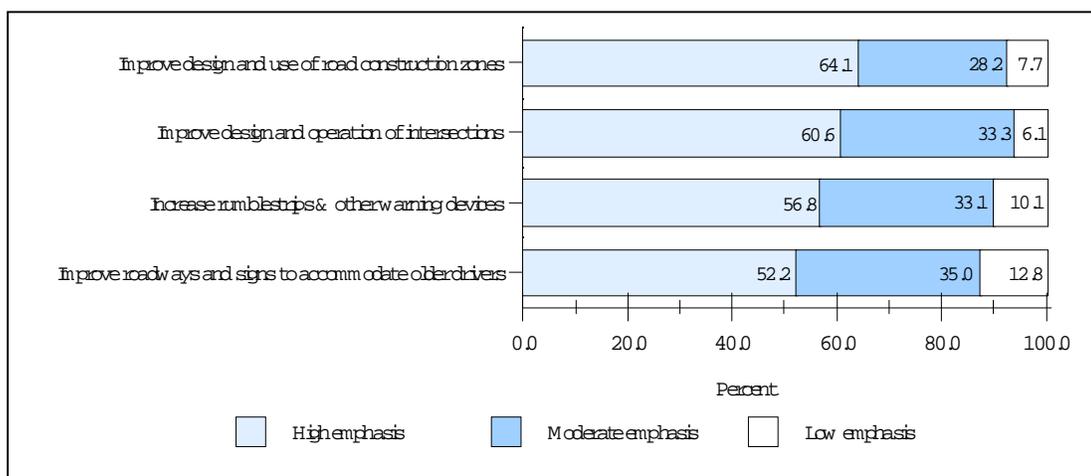


Figure 3. Highway Design Goals: Emphasis



Highway Safety Strategies

Respondent Support for Specific Strategies

Figure 4. Driver-related Strategies: Support

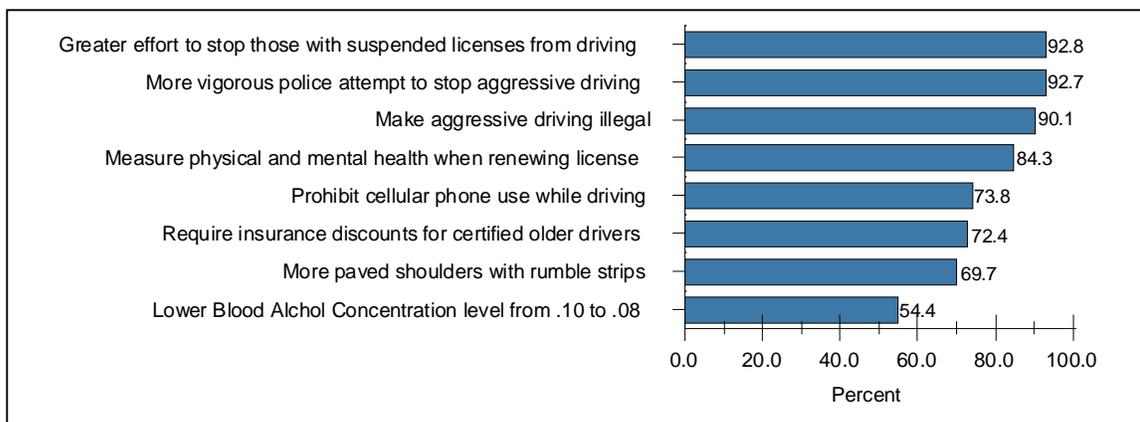


Figure 5. Special User Strategies: Support

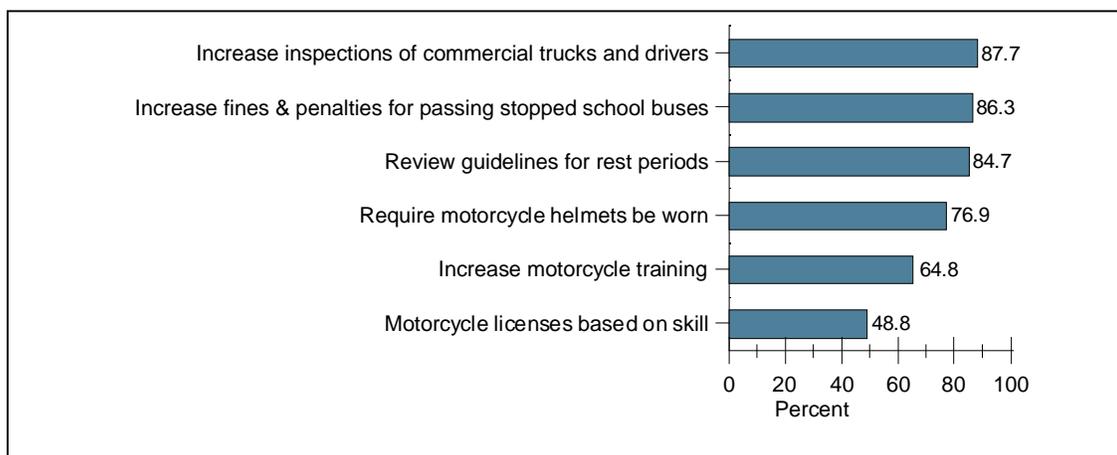


Figure 6. Highway Design Strategies: Support

