2008 SAFER ROADS CONFERENCE

Summary from the 2008 Safer Roads Conference

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Based on reports from the technical sessions from
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This summary of the conference is reported against the themes raised by stakeholders and the two opening keynote speakers. The summary has been further condensed into suggestions for topics that papers should address for the next Safer Roads Conference which are included in the accompanying Power Point Presentation.

CASUALTY STATISTICS

Engineers are lifesavers. Need to remember this when paperwork seems overwhelming or progress too difficult.

Progress is being made in reducing casualties but there remains more to do; arguably we are too tolerant of death and injury on roads

Terminology – use “crashes” not “accidents”

Need to challenge assumptions on our traditional methods – are they really effective?

CONTRIBUTION OF DRIVER / VEHICLE / INFRASTRUCTURE

Easy to focus on Infrastructure – it’s what we do

There is an argument for drivers taking more responsibility –> more emphasis on education + enforcement

Don't want to see reduction in effort Infrastructure – but require gains elsewhere - must recognise importance of interaction

Work with other stakeholders –British Horse Society and British Motorcycle Federation offered input. Several presenters stressed collaboration with Police – benefits both in prevention and lessons learned

Some examples of this: Ginny Clarke - lenses for HGVs to reduce sideswipe crashes + young drivers cd

Also Alliance partnership in New Zealand – good example of engaging multiple stakeholders to deliver successful outcome

POLITICAL AGENDA

Highway projects compete for funding against other socially valuable needs

Perception – we are not winning argument on funding – but why?

Some elements of risk are "affordably removable" according to keynote presentation

Jim Barton Q: do we set the bar too high with skid policy? Presenters replied "NO". We believe the approach is a good one and Cassandra Simpson & Mark Owen showed two approaches to assessing benefits

Perhaps need to present argument in different way

Targets here to stay: Highways Agency saw as positive focus (Graham Bowskill and Ginny Clarke) but danger of loosing sight of wider picture

Media can be a negative influence – coverage of early life friction not helpful. Must work out how use media in a positive way – better marketing of what we do - in 3 years time let's see good papers including media involvement

NEED TO CONSIDER DIFFERENT TYPES OF ROAD USER

Their perceptions and needs differ - whole carriageway width important

Several good examples: good work on friction of white lines in Italy

BHS/CSS guidance on design for equestrians is being implemented

Johan Grunland paper gave a very detailed analysis of rolling in commercial vehicles, induced by poor edge profile - developed method to identify problem locations

But – we had no answer to John Smart Q: understanding interaction of motorcycle tyre + rumble strip – more work needed

Also difficult if needs contradictory – saw example of high friction surfacing applied on a bend presented that had a good outcome for cars but bad for trucks

FOCUS ON INJURIES, NOT CRASHES

Needs more debate

Colin Brodie showed considering injuries led to different conclusions about bend accidents

But others challenge the approach – any non-fatal crash seen as a near miss

Probably need a combination of approaches

ROAD USERS WANT SMOOTH, EVEN, GRIPPY SURFACE

Lots of progress in skid resistance area – complex topic but developing better ways of monitoring, adjusting seasonal effects, better location referencing

Seeing more robust implementation of procedures for managing skid resistance, that are increasingly being adapted to different needs – good BUT danger of developing too many different approaches – users need consistent performance

Is there a need for UK national standard that covers wider application than currently?

All great – as far as it goes - but very focussed on skid resistance of nearside wheelpath

Stakeholders don't want be aware of surface – no bumps, potholes, loose chippings, or white line or manholes where braking + cornering. Cyclists, motorcyclists, pedestrians use different parts of the carriageway

And perhaps we shouldn't use HFS if letting it deteriorate until large areas missing

Scope to improve detection of local defects – new RAV in exhibition has great potential

Needs work to get most out of data – seen from Michel Gothie the power of combining data streams

FORGIVING ENVIRONMENT when leave road

Stakeholders suggested segregate users; remove poles + trees; manage speed

Ginny Clarke: M42 active traffic management trial shows promising safety results – benefits of users being in a managed environment

Otherwise not heard too much in this area

Another area for debate – cutting down trees so perceived "boy racers" don't crash into them may not be popular with many responsible drivers that enjoy leafy lanes – links with earlier theme

SUSTAINABILITY

Topic discussed extensively during conference, although not raised specifically by stakeholders

2 areas – **Our use of resources + whether our systems are robust to climate change**

Use of resources: Might like PSV to be good guide but in practice limitations in predicting in-service performance. Not a surprise – known for 20 years.

Good practice emerging – several presentations showed systematic gathering of local knowledge of what works for local authorities (Andy Stevenson, Terry Boyle) – examples of where bigger agencies could learn

Conference been great opportunity to share this knowledge

More to do – understand how aggregate size, texture, skid resistance contribute to safe road surface and how to get maximum benefit from every cubic m of high PSV stone – through optimum combination of sizes

Wehner-Schulze equipment promising – particularly in testing the effect of different components of asphalt mixture

Know disadvantage of overspecifying PSV and of increasing against haulage distances when local source not suitable – but no method available for weighing the alternatives

Use of water for surveys already issue in Australia –> need to moderate consumption and/or prioritise testing appropriately

Other side of sustainability is more focus on durability, including workmanship

Climate change – already hearing effects of multiple dry summers in decreasing skid resistance – expectation this will continue and influence more of the world – can we maintain same standard in face of changing environment? If not then how do we manage the risk?