

Oregon Transportation Safety Committee
February 08, 2023
CONSENT CALENDAR

1. **Approve the minutes of the January 11, 2023 Committee meeting**
2. **Review 2023 grant adjustments to the 2023 Highway Safety Plan: N/A**

<u>Project #</u>	<u>Project Name</u>	<u>Project Total</u>
M8DD-23-20-05	Distracted Driving Statewide	\$60,000 405(e)

This grant adjustment is to add to a line item to include "Research", 7a from Distracted Driving "Presentations" to Distracted Driving "Presentations and Research". OSU and I are partnering to research several aspects and crash rates before and after cell phone coverage areas. We began this project in 2015 in partnership with ODOT Research after the crash of Alexxys Therwhanger, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5C2YNUuU4EM>. Her story is here: <https://www.oregon.gov/odot/Safety/Pages/Distracted.aspx>. She crashed coming out of a cell phone coverage area, we assume her notifications distracted her causing her crash as she was a constant user of her cell phone. The OSU student conducting this research graduated and the project was not completed. We would like to restart this study using newer and additional data and software to show coverage/crashes. We have met with Tony Knudson, ODOT Research, to discuss this project as they have an agreement for research with OSU, so I can run the funding through them, I just have to give them an EA, 23M8DD20-005. This research will be larger than planned for in 2015, now we are looking at crashes, but also looking at how the lack of cell phone coverage can impact EMS and law enforcement.

OSU's narrative:

Technological advances in communications and increasing popularity of social media applications (e.g., Instagram, Meta, Tik Tok) have led to the widespread use of cellphones in motor vehicles. In the United States, there are over 300 million smartphone users and 360 million are expected to be in service by 2040 (Statista 2023). Although smartphones are useful technological tools that provide several benefits from directional maps to traffic advisory information, they may distract drivers who use them. As defined by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), distraction is a specific type of inattention that occurs when drivers divert their attention from the driving task to focus on some other activity instead. NHTSA (2021) reported that nine percent of fatal crashes, 15 percent of injury crashes and 15 percent of all police-reported motor vehicle crashes in the US in 2019 were due to distraction-affected crashes. NHTSA also reported that 6 percent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2019 were reported as distracted and of these nine percent of drivers 15 to 20 years of age represented the largest proportion of drivers who were distracted at the time of the fatal crashes. Oregon is no different, from 2016 to 2020 there were over 15,000 crashes resulting in 186 fatalities and roughly 24,000 injuries caused by crashes involving distracted drivers in the State (all ages) (ODOT 2023). These numbers will only continue to grow as the popularity of social media applications continues to grow and the need of users to be connected.

Hence the objective of this study is to focus on the statistical and spatial risk associated with cellular phones and injury severity. Although there have been several efforts to better understand the risk associated with cellphone use while driving, the relationship between distracted driving crash factors, crash severity and spatial location are still not completely

understood. A reason for this stems from the availability of sufficient data to capture the complex interactions of multiple factors under a single framework for various spatial attributes. For example, in Oregon a well-documented incident of young adult Alexxys Therwhanger, age 19, was killed in a car crash on February 19th, 2016, while she was driving home in Eastern Oregon. Eastern Oregon is very rural with spotty cell coverage which is travelled by tens of thousands of tourists as well as residents traveling to and from the coast/western part of the state. On her way home to Eastern Oregon, Alexxys was using her cell phone and lost control of her car, colliding with an oncoming vehicle and severely injuring two other people. Oregon State Police (OSP) officers determined that Alexxys used her phone once back in cell phone coverage (had lost reception for some time) prior to crashing. She was texting, reading, and reposting to Facebook (now known as Meta) a popular social media application. Lack of information on cellphone coverage locations in the State of Oregon and the risk that poses to roadway users creates challenges for safety professionals who are tasked to develop mitigation strategies.

Therefore, this study will aim at better understanding the risks associated with the initial loss of reception and upon re-entering cell phone coverage areas in Oregon through a statistical and spatial analysis framework. Additionally, this study will seek to develop a set of recommendations based on evidence gained through the spatial relationship between crashes and cellphone coverage areas utilizing the statistical and spatial analysis framework. Safety data from the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), Federal Communications Commission (FCC), geographic information systems (GIS), and other private data the researchers have used in the past will be utilized. The information collected through this study would be valuable and important data for transportation safety, law enforcement, public health and EMS practitioners to assist in determining, and possibly designing and developing distracted driving interventions/countermeasures. Some possible interventions considered would consist of but are not limited to pullouts, signage, increased enforcement, education. To the best of knowledge of the researchers, this proposed study is a first.

Reference:

Statista. Statista Digital Market Insights, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/201182/forecast-of-smartphone-users-in-the-us/>. Accessed 2023.
 NHSTA (2021). Distracted Driving 2019. ODOT. Distracted Driving. <https://www.oregon.gov/odot/safety/pages/distracted.aspx>. Accessed 2023

<u>Project #</u>	<u>Project Name</u>	<u>Project Total</u>
EM-23-24-01 DDD	2023 Rural EMS Training	\$72,000 (+\$50,000) 402

Given the success of our pilot program in 2022, the rapid filling of the emergency responder PHTLS courses in early 2023 with the available ODOT/DMV-TSO mini-grant funds, ongoing requests for additional classes in 2023, and host sites waiting to hold this training, more funding is necessary to (1) deliver additional PHTLS classes for rural Oregon emergency responders, and (2) train more PHTLS certified instructors to (a) enable the delivery of more PHTLS classes and (b) increase the size of the classes to get more emergency responders trained to help victims or rural roadway crashes.

Increasing interest to hold PHTLS courses has fueled our need to ramp up this effort. Not only is it critical training, it is also helping to support the EMS workforce by delivering nationally accredited continuing education (CE) to rural EMS providers (EMSPs) that otherwise would not

receive this training. The crucial CE hours are enabling rural EMSPs to maintain their licenses and continue responding to rural crashes in their communities.

This is for rural and frontier EMS training for EMS employees/volunteers responding to motor vehicle crashes. The intent is to accomplish three full 2-day and two hybrid (virtual and in-person) 1-day classes and training four new instructors. This training will support creating four new instructors. The additional funds will fund this already approved project from April through September 2023, as the current funding will be used by March 2023.

This project is aligned with the Transportation Safety Action Plan, Action 6.15.1 Recruit, train, and retain EMS first responders in urban, rural, and sparsely populated areas statewide.

3. Approve new projects to the 2023 Highway Safety Plan:

<u>Project #</u>	<u>Project Name</u>	<u>New Project Total</u>
PS-23-68-01 AAA	Houseless Listening Sessions for Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety	\$7,000 402

The Street Trust will host three listening sessions in 2023FFY - one in Central Portland, one in East Portland, and one in Washington County - with people experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness. Through these sessions, the goal is to better understand how to engage with people experiencing housing insecurity and people already unhoused in regard to pedestrian safety. Safety education as well as resources will be provided to the participants. Quantitative and qualitative data from these sessions will be analyzed and reported with a summary of results and recommendations to inform future ODOT programming.