

Purpose

The purpose of the Cooper Jones Active Transportation Safety Council (CJATSC) Study Team is to review and discuss observations made from detailed case materials of fatal crashes involving bicyclists, walkers or people using other forms of active transportation to identify modifiable risks and protective factors that if present or absent could prevent future fatalities.

Review and discussion of case materials are organized around modifiable risk factors within the [Safe System Approach](#). Within each Safe System Element, modifiable risk and protective factors are identified across the [Spectrum of Prevention](#) framework.

The observations reported by the Fatality Case Review Study Team are not the official recommendations of the CJATSC. The Study Team submits a summary of their observations to the CJATSC for consideration when developing actionable recommendations. The official recommendations of the CJATSC are published in their Annual Report and are found at <https://wtsc.wa.gov/programs-priorities/active-transportation-safety-council/>.

Scope of Review

Meeting Date:	Monday, November 13, 2023
Case Selection Topic for Review:	Pedestrian Fatalities in Yakima County 2021-2022
Case Selection Criteria:	Eleven pedestrian fatalities occurred in Yakima County between 2021-2022. All cases were included in the review.

Data Context

Data regarding the eleven pedestrian fatalities that occurred in Yakima County between 2021-2022 were extracted from the following WTSC data dashboards:

- <https://wtsc.wa.gov/dashboards/active-transportation-user-fatalities/>
- <https://wtsc.wa.gov/dashboards/aian-tribal-dashboard/>

Data was extracted using the following filters:

- Years: 2021-2022
- County: Yakima
- Fatal Person Type: Pedestrian

Data Summary

The following data was collected for this review in October 2023.

Pedestrian Traffic Fatalities in Yakima County 2021-2022 (11 deaths):

- There were four Native American pedestrian fatalities, one of which involved a hit and run driver.
- Pedestrian fatalities were a range of ages with no clear concentration by age group.
- Six pedestrian fatalities were female and five were male.
- Seven of the pedestrian fatalities occurred during darkness.
- Two deaths involved medium/heavy trucks and one death involved a motorcycle.
- Few driver-related factors were identified in these deaths, one impaired driver and one speeding driver.
- Eight of the pedestrian fatalities were positive for alcohol and/or drugs.
- Five pedestrians were noted as in the roadway improper, two were noted as crossing improper, and one was distracted.

Pedestrian Fatal Crashes in Yakima County 2021-2022 (11 crashes):

- Seven fatalities occurred on roadways with a posted speed greater than 45 mph and three fatalities occurred on roadways with a posted speed 30-45 mph.

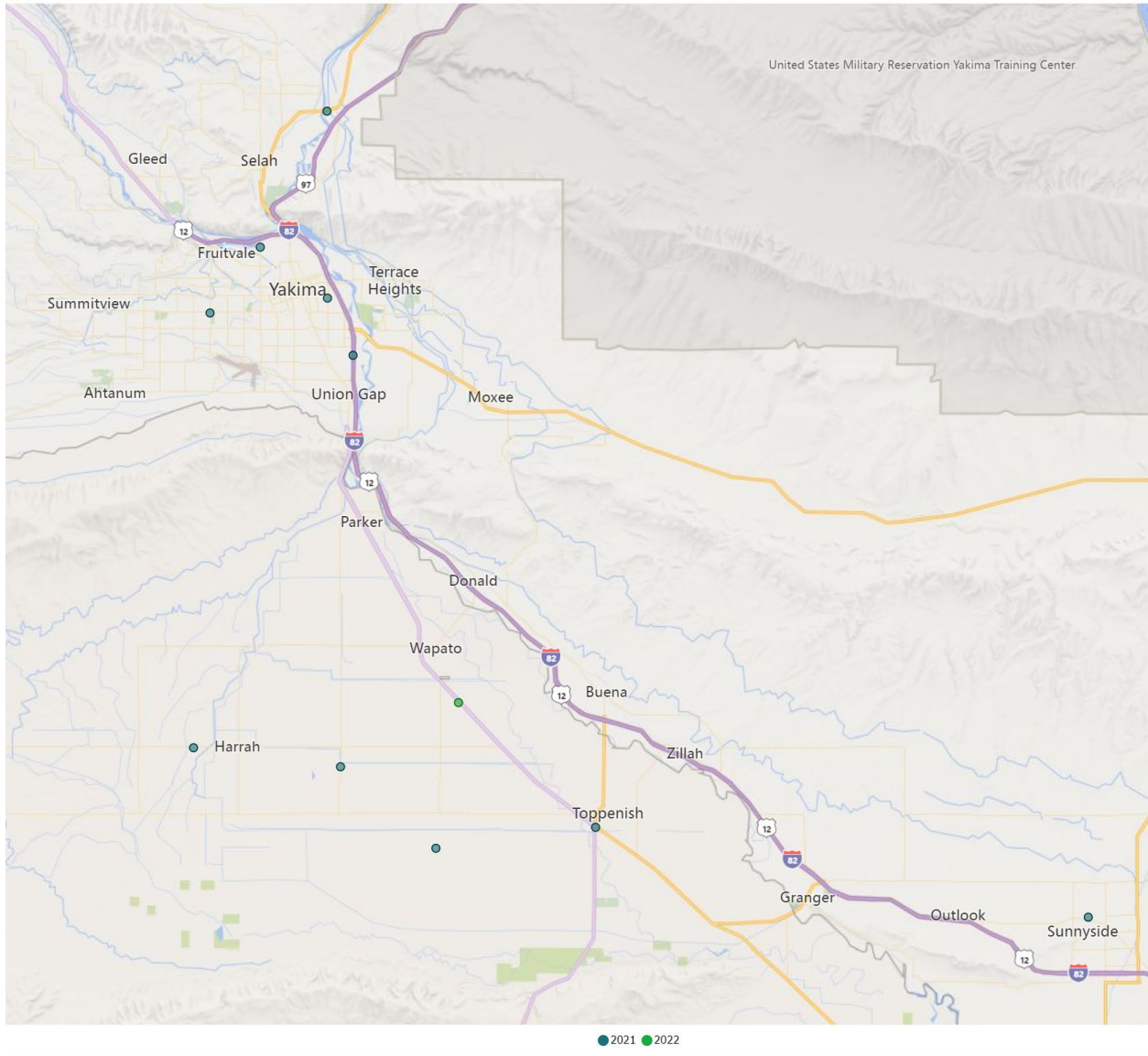
Pedestrian Fatalities in Yakima County 2021-2022 Occurring on Yakama Nation Reservation:

- Five fatalities occurred on the Yakama Nation Reservation, four of which were noted as Native American and one as white.
- Three female pedestrian fatalities and two male pedestrian fatalities.
- One case involved an alcohol and drug impaired driver (poly-drug driver).
- Three pedestrian fatalities were aged 18-30, and one was aged 76-80.

Pedestrian Fatal Crashes in Yakima County 2021-2022 Occurring on Yakama Nation Reservation:

- Four crashes involved a single vehicle and one involved multiple vehicles.
- Two crashes occurred on a state route or U.S. highway on the reservation.
- These crashes occurred during the darkest months.

Map of Pedestrian Fatalities in Yakima County 2021-2022



Observations

The observations from case reviews presented in this report are based on the discussion of the factors involved in the individual cases randomly selected for review by the team.

Safe Road Users

1. Drivers' and pedestrians' DOL records showed a history of citations occurring in previous years leading up to fatal incidents. Consider the following:
 - a. Partner with DOL and conduct a study of driving records to determine if they are a predictor of serious injury or death.
 - b. Research what is required for a person to get their license back after a third-degree suspension for failing to pay fines and fees.
 - c. Require license recertification or training after a certain number of moving violations involving high risk factors that lead to fatal crashes.
 - i. Consider income disparities and providing funding so people dealing with poverty can still recertify or receive training.
 - ii. The recertification process should not be punitive, but rather focused on helping people keep their license.
2. Pedestrians and other vulnerable road users may have never driven or had a driver's license so may not intrinsically understand driver behavior, rules of the road, or best practices. Consider the following:
 - a. Research whether training exists and is provided to people that don't drive or get a driver's license.
 - b. Educate people about the risk of distractions (using ear buds or texting) while entering crosswalks, crossing roadways, and being around traffic.
3. Occupants attempting to repair a vehicle in or next to the roadway create risk to safety. Consider the following:
 - a. Educate people about what to do when their vehicle breaks down: to stay in the vehicle until help arrives, to steer vehicle off the roadway as much as possible, to use hazard lights and other tools to signal caution to other drivers, etc.
 - b. Educate people of what to do when observing a vehicle breakdown in or near roadway: to use caution and move over or slow down.
 - c. Inform people about battery operated flares which can be easier to access and use than traditional flares, include info about creating ease of access (store them under the driver seat) and to only use if safe to briefly leave the vehicle on shoulder or out of the way of traffic.
4. People may call 911 to report a person in the roadway or person acting in a manner that may put them in danger near a roadway, but no law enforcement responds to call due to staff shortages and prioritization of emergency responses (dispatch may not even inform patrol of calls). Consider the following:
 - a. Where possible, utilize incident response teams other than law enforcement (crisis response, WSDOT, etc.) to get endangered people out of roadway and the assistance they may need (e.g., substance abuse, mental health resources, etc.).
 - b. Support initiatives that provide law enforcement with more staff to address shortages and improve response time.

5. Friends and family of driver had opportunity to intervene and prevent impaired person from driving. Consider the following:
 - a. Promote bystander intervention education and training so family and friends are empowered to stop an impaired person from driving and do not ride in the vehicle with an impaired driver.
6. People may act based on what they assume they have the “right” to do (e.g., driver turns right on red, or person enters crosswalk at intersection). Consider the following:
 - a. Educate people about the importance of using situational awareness to guide actions: triple-check before entering crosswalk or intersection; slow down versus being in a hurry to get through intersections before light changes; always be on lookout for vehicles or pedestrians.
7. Mental health impacts safety on roadways, from substance abuse to suicidal ideation. Consider the following:
 - a. Substance use treatment should include surveillance for suicidal ideation. In communities where both suicide and substance use disorder rates are high, messaging about suicide prevention might include access to cars as well as to guns.
 - b. Educate the public about fentanyl including fentanyl mixed with other substances (e.g., marijuana that may be unknowingly laced with fentanyl).
 - c. Partner with organizations that provide substance abuse services and promote active transportation safety.
8. People may lose driving skills as they age.
 - a. At certain points, need to assess whether a person should be driving. Research how this is currently done and identify gaps.
 - b. If skills are improved by practice, then that should be the messaging for seniors. For example, don’t limit driving at night to special circumstances but keep practicing so the skill is not lost or don’t drive at night at all.
 - c. Need more transportation options, especially in rural areas, to assist seniors’ mobility to essential errands and social activities to support them in giving up driving.
 - d. Educate people about signs of dementia and when to stop driving or limit driving alone.
9. Reckless operation of motorcycles increases the risk of fatal crashes. Consider the following:
 - a. Audit endorsements to ensure the training is adequate.
 - b. Conduct proactive myth busting to counter what is taught or promoted on social media (riding fast, using center lane as passing lane, misperception of using revving noise to notify people of presence, etc.).
10. Right turns on red create safety issues for pedestrians. Consider training drivers to not only look at traffic control lights, but also pedestrians crossing alerts.

Safe Vehicles

1. Sun shining directly into windshield can impact visibility for drivers. Consider requiring manufacturers to polarize windshields (i.e., glasses that become tinted in bright light) to reduce brightness and reflection of dash onto windshield.
2. Vehicles stalled on roadway due to being out of gas create risk for people attempting to refill from a gas can while on or near roadways. Consider requiring vehicles to have refueling mechanisms only on the right side of vehicles.

Safe Speeds

1. Vehicles often travel faster than posted speed limits and/or travel at the posted speed limit even when conditions, such as limited visibility, warrant slowing down. Consider expanding the use of variable speed limits to more locations and for other conditions such as darkness.

Safe Roads

1. Roads and adjacent infrastructure (e.g., sidewalks, crosswalks, etc.) designed to accommodate commercial and large vehicles may result in poorly designed intersections and crosswalks for pedestrian safety. Consider the following:
 - a. Research what practices are currently in place at state to local level to address conflict between designing roadways for vehicles AND pedestrians, identify and address gaps.
 - b. Encourage planners and engineers to create specific routes for larger vehicles that aren't integrated with pedestrians.
2. As noted under Safe Road Users, right turns on red create situations where cars and pedestrians assume right-of-way. Drivers don't look at pedestrian notification (red hand stop, green person walk). Consider the following:
 - a. A notification system integrated with traffic control systems to alert *drivers* of pedestrians in crosswalks at intersections – especially where right turn is permitted on red.
 - b. Review Seattle's implementation of "No Turn On Red" at traffic signals in the downtown business district passed (passed summer of 2023).
 - c. Continue to follow and support Washington legislature bills related to prohibition of right turns on red lights in sensitive areas.
3. Roads in rural areas and on tribal lands may lack infrastructure improvements necessary to support multi-modal travel. Consider the following:
 - a. Research and gather data on pedestrian traffic on roads in rural and tribal lands to support updating infrastructure to include pedestrian travel.
 - b. Support the ability for municipal and tribal public works departments to increase funding for active transportation user infrastructure improvements.
4. Low visibility conditions (i.e., heavy rain or fog, nighttime, etc.) increase the risk of fatal crashes. Consider the following:
 - a. Continue to explore policy and funding to improve lighting on roadways and use of light meters by law enforcement investigating fatal crash.

Post-Crash Care

1. As noted under Safe Road Users, a person could be both impaired and suicidal. The stigma associated with behavioral health issues and suicide may mean traffic fatalities are an underreported source of suicide. Consider including psychological autopsies to determine if person(s) in fatal crash was suicidal.
2. Polydrug positive tox reports may include drugs administered as part of post-crash care. Considering including EMS and hospital records to help review team determine when drugs are a factor in the crash.

3. Rural areas have limited resources when it comes to collision investigations. Consider supporting development of multi-agency collision investigation units, especially for Yakima County.

Summary of Considerations

The Fatal Case Review Study Team is referring the following actions to the CJATSC for discussion by all members and consideration for further research, applicability, and evidence base to develop Study Teams, white papers, policy, and recommendations of the CJATSC to prevent death and serious injury among active transportation users.

- The CJATSC may consider the following as an official recommendation to include in the CJATSC 2024 Annual Report: “Support tribal communities with innovative data collection approaches, such as the Yakama Tribe’s use of AIWaysion Mobile Unit for Sensing Traffic (MUST), to capture comprehensive road use and traffic information to justify and measure active transportation user infrastructure improvements on tribal roads.”