



Highlights of [GAO-06-916](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

In 2004, over 5,000 people died on our nation's roads in crashes involving large trucks. The Department of Transportation's (DOT) Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) operates truck safety programs, including Share the Road Safely (STRS), which has a goal to improve driving behavior around large trucks. At congressional direction, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) assumed responsibility for funding STRS in 2004, but returned STRS to FMCSA in 2006. The current transportation authorization bill requested GAO to update its 2003 evaluation of STRS. This report (1) describes the STRS initiatives DOT has implemented since 2003 and their design, (2) reviews evaluations of STRS initiatives, and (3) assesses DOT's plans for the future of STRS. GAO interviewed DOT and state officials, and reviewed program plans and evaluations.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Transportation develop a strategy for expanding TACT-like initiatives, and determine the best method for using DOT's resources and expertise to modify driver behavior. DOT officials clarified and updated information in a draft of this report and generally agreed with the recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-916.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Katherine Siggerud at (202) 512-2834 or siggerudk@gao.gov.

TRUCK SAFETY

Share the Road Safely Pilot Initiative Showed Promise, but the Program's Future Success Is Uncertain

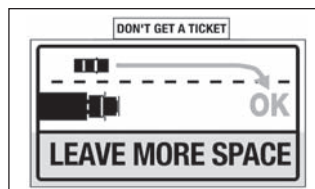
What GAO Found

During 2004 and 2005, Share the Road Safely funding was used to implement one initiative, a pilot in Washington State that focused on aggressive driving behaviors near or by large trucks. Known as Ticketing Aggressive Cars and Trucks (TACT), it combined education, such as highway message signs, and high-visibility law enforcement to reduce aggressive driving. TACT received about \$892,000 in federal and state funds. TACT was generally modeled on successful behavior modification programs, including Click It or Ticket (a program to encourage safety belt use), but was more complex to implement than past initiatives since many behaviors constitute aggressive driving and Washington State lacked a single aggressive driving law. In addition, NHTSA sought to demonstrate to FMCSA staff how to operate similar initiatives in the future. To this end, FMCSA sent a liaison to NHTSA as requested by Congress. Lastly, initiatives that were a part of STRS in 2003 were still pursued by FMCSA, but were not funded.

DOT and Washington State officials conducted an evaluation of TACT that demonstrated that the initiative was successful and well-designed. The evaluation found that TACT significantly reduced the number and severity of unsafe driving acts near or by trucks. While the evaluation did not assess changes in crashes, improved driver behavior should logically lead to fewer crashes, injuries, and fatalities. GAO found that TACT's design of combining education with law enforcement better lent itself to reaching agency goals of fatality reduction than previous STRS initiatives that were purely educational.

FMCSA plans to expand development of new TACT-like initiatives, but lacks resources and experience to do so. In addition, FMCSA plans to spend most of its 2006 STRS funds on educational initiatives, which lack information showing whether they improve driver behavior. In terms of TACT expansion, FMCSA is currently developing a TACT-like pilot in Pennsylvania and plans to roll out initiatives similar to TACT nationally by 2009. FMCSA, however, has few people dedicated to education and outreach and lacks NHTSA's experience with behavior modification initiatives. While FMCSA designated a liaison to learn about TACT-like initiatives, GAO continues to have concerns about FMCSA's limited experience with these initiatives. NHTSA has considerable experience with such initiatives, but its role in STRS is still evolving. Finally, FMCSA plans to spend the majority of its fiscal year 2006 STRS funds on initiatives that do not have evaluations showing their impacts.

Highway Message Sign and Law Enforcement Used in the Washington State Pilot Initiative



Sources: Washington Traffic Safety Commission and the KOMO television station.