



## The Case for Free Mandatory Extended Traffic Education for All

by: Wes Webb, Kalispell

There is an intuition held by nearly every parent and driver who has undergone formal traffic education. That their training reduced their risk of being involved in vehicle crashes. In 2015, measurable confirmation of this intuition came to light, and the implications of those measures are significant. According to a study from the University of Nebraska, Traffic Education Programs reduce the risk of fatal teen driving crashes by 16% (Reed, 2015). From a personal perspective, one might immediately think of the value traffic education will have for the young people in their own family, and rightly so. However, when one considers the total national cost of fatal vehicle crashes involving teens, the positive impact of traffic education becomes astounding.

While the cost of human life is not reducible to a price, the economic impact of a loss of life can be calculated. The CDC estimates that the economic impact of teen driving fatalities nationwide totals 40.7 billion dollars (CDC, 2020). To measure this cost against the impacts of the Nebraska traffic education programs, we must consider another fact. While numbers vary by state, at the time of the Nebraska study approximately 53% of teens did not undergo formal traffic education (Reed, 2015). At minimum, the fact that nearly half of the eligible population of Nebraska teens stands to reduce their risk of fatal traffic accident by 16% indicates a massive opportunity, and other states are likely in similar circumstances, including Montana. Even a conservative estimate of the economic impact of traffic education would indicate that if implemented everywhere for everyone, it could save the nation *billions of dollars*.

Now, the cost of fatal teen vehicle accidents has been lowered before, most recently by the widespread adoption of Graduated Drivers Licensing Programs across the country. In Montana, this reduction was especially large, where the introduction of the GDL program led to a 59%

reduction in serious injuries caused by teen driving accidents in the first 10 years (OPI, 2016). This occurred for a simple reason. GDL laws increased the training and practice required of young drivers on top of existing traffic education programs.

Yet, taking the impact of larger amounts of training and practice for teen drivers to its logical conclusion remains to be seen in any state, with traffic education programs on the whole left inconsistent and insufficient. Just last year, an article in Newsweek lambasted nearly every state in the union for failing to invest adequately in formalized training, showing unfavorable performance attributes in the USA in comparison to Australia and other European countries (Lingeman, 2022). The fact remains that more can be done to save the public the lives of their children. We have made strides before. We must take another.

Our task is to create an increase in the amount of driver training and practice that *all teens receive*. *What that looks like is a matter of political negotiation, but there are two things that are certain. Firstly, more practice and training needs to be delivered to each teen, and secondly, the cost of providing that training is a highly effective investment when compared to the cost of the current teen traffic accidents. As our intuitions are confirmed as true, we become responsible to act upon that truth, together. In order to save the public the financial and social costs of teen driver traffic crashes of all types, traffic education that requires extended training and practice must be mandated for all teens nationwide.*

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## MTEA President's Message

### *MTEA President's Message: Riley Ramsey (2023-2024)*

To all the wonderful Traffic Education instructors who take their jobs seriously and try to create solutions and changes for the safety of our roadways, I wanted to share some encouragement in the line of dealing with the State of Montana on issues we all face as educators and concerned citizens. I know that many of you have found opportunities for improvement when it comes to working with MVD, changing paperwork options in TEDRS or for license applications, updating curriculum, streamlining processes, and other items of concern to make the safety of our students and our jobs better.



Aside from being a teacher, I have also been a bus driver since March of 2010. Almost everyday for the past few school years, I have been driving a highway that has been deemed quite deadly because of its concentration of vehicle crashes. I reached out to MDT (on their Facebook business messenger/chat platform) about a specific item that I found concerning, and I wanted to share the transaction with you.

**My Message to MDT: I want to share a concern with you to pass along to the necessary party. I am a bus driver as well as a traffic education instructor. I drive Highway 212 from Crow agency to Busby twice daily for my route. Heading back from Busby to Crow, westbound lane, around milepost 13, there is a long sweeping curve to the left that leaves passing ability to the westbound travelers. Toward the beginning of that curve, there is a major line of sight issue, making it unsafe to pass. This area should be a double line a little before this curve, in my opinion. Many people do not use sound judgment, reasoning, or planning nowadays, and if somebody is oncoming at 70 to 90 mph as some do out there, there could be a disastrous wreck. I wanted to practice due diligence in letting you know. Just a couple days ago, someone passed me as well as about three other vehicles at one time clear through that curve. I know for a fact he could not see well enough ahead of him to execute that pass. I cannot see ahead enough, even in the bus.**

**MDT's Response (through Facebook Messenger): "Hi Riley: Thank you for your comment and commitment to traffic safety. After reviewing the curve in question, MDT concurs that the passing sight distance for westbound traffic is limited on this curve which would see safety benefit from the addition of a no passing zone. MDT will make the appropriate changes to signing and pavement markings as schedule and weather allows.**

**Please note that no passing zones are only striped on sections of highway where there is not adequate sight distance for a driver to begin a passing maneuver, abort the passing maneuver, and return to the proper lane. This distance is significantly shorter compared to the distance needed to safely execute a passing maneuver. Therefore, just because a section of highway is striped to allow passing doesn't necessarily mean there is adequate sight distance to perform a passing maneuver."**

I found it pleasing that they immediately responded in favor, and then went on to note a basic general statement of their protocol for no-passing zones. I believe the latter was to establish a written stance on safety and to cover their bases concerning this situation.

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MTEA News is published by the Montana Traffic Education Association in the fall, winter, and spring. MTEA, PO Box 637, Conrad, MT 59425. Jim Carroll, Executive Secretary, (406) 278-7856. MTEA News is mailed to members and published at [MTEAOnline.org](http://MTEAOnline.org). The spring issue is mailed to all traffic educators in Montana as an invitation to the annual traffic education conference. Submissions can be emailed to: [sgrogan@forsyth.k12.mt.us](mailto:sgrogan@forsyth.k12.mt.us). Articles are due 10/1; 12/1; 3/1.

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I hope you find this encouraging and that it inspires you to face these challenges head-on. If approached in the correct way, using some appropriate academic language in the field, and coming across as professional, this type of result can truly happen.

Thank you for all you continue to do in this line of work and for our students. Keep looking up!

*Riley*

## MTEA Executive Board Meeting

### November 12, 2023 (google meet format)

- Minutes, financial reports, correspondence, board, and membership reports were reviewed.
- An OPI report was provided.
- The newsletter and webpage were discussed.
- Nominations for President-Elect and board appointments were made.
- Planning for the 2024 conference took place, which included possible speakers/sessions, auction, door prizes, and service awards.

The next meeting was scheduled for January 28th and will utilize “google meet”. Anyone having items for discussion or to obtain the meeting link, should contact Riley Ramsey, President, or Jim Carroll, Executive Secretary.

## Outstanding Traffic Education Teacher of the Year Award

Since 1988, MTEA has routinely honored an outstanding Traffic Education teacher with an annual Teacher of the Year (TOY) award presented at MTEA’s spring conference. Any active teacher who has devoted a good part of their teaching career to traffic education is eligible to apply for the award. Teachers can self-nominate or be nominated by someone who is familiar with their traffic education work. The deadline for the nomination form is March 1st, so don’t delay!

Download the two-page nomination form from the website at MTEAOnline.org (which includes a section that is completed by the candidate). Members of the selection committee will then review the application. For more information, contact Jim Carroll, Executive Secretary.

**MONTANA'S MOVE OVER LAW REQUIRES**

DRIVERS APPROACHING A STATIONARY EMERGENCY, TOWING, OR MAINTENANCE/CONSTRUCTION VEHICLE TO SLOW DOWN TO THE TEMPORARY POSTED SPEED LIMIT. IF NO TEMPORARY SPEED LIMIT IS POSTED THE DRIVER IS REQUIRED TO:

- SLOW BY 20 MPH BELOW THE POSTED SPEED LIMIT ON THE INTERSTATE IF ABLE TO MOVE LANES. (OR HALF THE POSTED SPEED IF NOT ABLE TO MOVE LANES)
- SLOW BY 30 MPH BELOW THE POSTED SPEED ON A STATE HIGHWAY OR COUNTY ROAD IF ABLE TO MOVE LANES. (OR HALF THE POSTED SPEED LIMIT IF NOT ABLE TO MOVE LANES)
- BY HALF THE POSTED SPEED LIMIT ON ANY OTHER ROADS.

ON A MULTI LANE HIGHWAY, DRIVERS ARE REQUIRED TO MOVE TO A LANE NOT ADJACENT TO THE STATIONARY AUTHORIZED VEHICLE.

OR MOVE OVER AS FAR AS SAFELY POSSIBLE UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

WHEN A DRIVER FAILS TO FOLLOW THE LAW, THEY COMMIT RECKLESS ENDANGERMENT OF PERSONNEL

HIGHWAY/UTILITY
 FIRE
 EMS
 POLICE
 TOWING

**WHAT TO DO when you see a stationary vehicle with flashing lights**

- 1 SLOW DOWN**
- 2 CHANGE LANES SAFELY**

**MAXIMUM FINES AND PENALTIES:**

\$10,000
 1 YEAR FOR IMPRISONMENT

**IT'S NOT A COURTESY IT'S THE LAW**

www.facebook.com/moveovermontana

## MT House Bill 470 In Effect

This year, Montana's legislators have made important improvements to the state's Move Over Law, which went into effect on October 1, 2023.

The updated law brings significant changes:

1. **Clearer Speed Rules:** The law now includes specific speed guidelines and language regarding how drivers should slow down when approaching and passing authorized vehicles.
2. **Utility Workers Included:** The law has been expanded to include utility workers, ensuring they receive the same level of protection as other roadside professionals when working along Montana's roadways.

These changes aim to provide a more straightforward understanding of a driver's responsibilities and extend safety measures to utility workers.

It's essential to note that fines and penalties for non-compliance with this law remain unchanged, as does the charge of Reckless Endangerment if a driver fails to follow these important safety measures.

The full bill can be read here: [68th Legislature 2023 HB470](#)

*Merry Christmas*



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*Return Service Requested*



## 2024 Montana Traffic Education Conference April 28-30 - Great Falls Heritage Inn

Look for more detailed conference information in the spring newsletter and on the MTEA website at [www.mteaonline.org](http://www.mteaonline.org).

The 2024 ADTSEA conference will be held July 21-24 in Albany, New York. The conference will provide you with a wealth of information and an opportunity to network with other professionals from across the United States. Remember, MTEA has a scholarship program that will provide up to \$500 per member to offset conference costs. Even if you can't attend, at least consider joining your national organization. For more information, check it out at

**ADTSEA**  
American Driver & Traffic Safety Education Association

[www.adtsea.org](http://www.adtsea.org).