

2025 Robeson County Safety Action Plan



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Terminology

Animal Involved Crashes: Crash type is recorded as an “Animal”.

Bicyclist-Involved Crashes: Crash type, “vehicle” type, or person type recorded as a bicycle involved in a crash with a motor vehicle.

Countermeasure: A proposed improvement that can be provided along a roadway or at an intersection that may address current safety concerns. A countermeasure usually has research that supports its use for a specific type of roadway segment or intersection.

Distracted Driver Crashes: Crash type where the crash report indicated the driver as inattentive or distracted (by devices or other factors) per NC laws.

Emphasis Area: A focus crash type. These are typically the most serious safety problems, defined by summary crash types including over-represented crash types or trends.

Fatality: Deaths resulting from injuries sustained in a specific crash on the roadway or related to vehicles within the number of months specified per NC reporting requirements.

Heavy Truck-Involved Crashes: The vehicle type involved in the crash are recorded as Truck/Trailer, Truck/Tractor, Tractor/Semi-Trailer, Tractor/Doubles, or Unknown Heavy Truck.

High Injury Network (HIN): Corridors or intersections identified using spatial analysis locating where people have been killed or seriously injured, most frequently, in roadway crashes.

Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP): A Federal-aid program with the goal of reducing fatalities and serious injury crashes on all public roadways. The NCDOT Traffic Safety Unit oversees project selection and programming for the HSIP.

Intersection-Related Crashes: Crash type recorded as being located at or associated with at-grade intersection.

Impairment-Related Crashes: Crash type where the crash report describes the drivers or other roadway users as confirmed or suspected of being under the influence of alcohol or a drug other than alcohol.

Motorcycle-Involved Crashes: Crash type, vehicle type or person type involved in the crash is recorded as a motorcycle.

Lane Departure Crashes: Crash type recorded as running off the road, rollover/overtake, striking fixed object, sideswipe in opposite directions, or head-on as a result of the driver departing from the travel lane.

Older Driver Crashes: Crash types that involve a driver over the age of 64.

Pedestrian-Involved Crashes: Crash type, “vehicle” type, or person type recorded as a pedestrian involved in a crash with a motor vehicle.

Safe System Approach (SSA): Framework that expects the crash reporting system and road network to be planned, designed, and operated to be forgiving of inevitable human mistakes; focuses on



minimizing severity of injury resulting from a crash; and improving response to crashes to reduce likelihood of death or serious injury.

Serious Injury: An injury, resulting from a roadway crash, that results in severe laceration, skeletal injuries, or long-term health outcomes.

Speed-Related Crashes: Crash type where contributing circumstances recorded relate to the driver exceeding the posted speed limit or driving too fast for conditions.

Unbelted Crashes: Crash type involving a driver or occupant recorded as not using a restraint (i.e., seat belt or car seat).

Young Driver Crashes: Crash types that involve a driver or roadway user between 15 and 24 years old.



Commitment to Improving Safety in Robeson County

Robeson County is home to many people who are passionate about saving lives and improving quality of life for this community. One example is the Robeson County Vision Zero Task Force. The Task Force began in 2017 and continues to meet and grow in 2025, pressing toward the county's goal of zero deaths on roadways. The Robeson County Safety Action Plan represents a new chapter for the work of the Task Force, building on a rich history and increasing awareness of roadway safety needs in the county.

Grady Hunt, a lifelong resident of Robeson County, committed his personal time to leading the Task Force between 2017 and 2025. In late 2017, the leadership of the N.C. Department of Transportation (NCDOT) approached Grady Hunt with a bold, but ambitious, goal for his home, Robeson County. The county had experienced a dramatic increase in traffic fatalities – from 37 deaths in 2016 to 53 dead the following year. The sobering reality was these deaths were mostly preventable: To many, those killed were friends, family, coworkers and school mates.

Other leaders at NCDOT, including Kevin Lacy (former NCDOT State Traffic Engineer), introduced Hunt to the concept on Vision Zero, which dates to the 1990s in Sweden and relies on a multiprong approach that included engineering, education and enforcement for driving down highway deaths. The NCDOT Secretary at the time, Jim Trogdon, encouraged Grady to form a countywide Vision Zero task force that would be a first of its kind in the state.

At the time, Hunt was serving as an at-large member representing Rural Transportation for the N.C. Board of Transportation, making this initiative a natural fit. And for many years, the Department's Division of Mobility and Safety has ranked Robeson County last, out of 100 counties in the state, for overall crashes, based on a variety of statistics.

Hunt, a well-known attorney in the county, handpicked and recruited several prominent officials to serve on the task force beginning in 2018 – people such the sheriff, the district attorney, and the UNC-Pembroke chancellor. Several other organizations were also represented on the group's kick-off meeting held on the Pembroke campus on Feb. 15, 2018. Since then, the task force has met numerous times to review various strategies and plans for reducing highway deaths. And in early 2025, the Department announced there had been a 36 percent reduction in traffic deaths in the county in 2024. Officials recognize the need for continued improvements to sustain these trends, aiming for the goal of eliminating all traffic deaths.

The Robeson County Safety Action Plan (RCSAP) states an aggressive goal, building on these recent successes, to reduce fatalities and serious injuries by half by 2035. NCDOT is committed to implementing the strategies identified in the RCSAP. The Robeson County Vision Zero Task Force will be a critical partner in recruiting new and old champions for improving the safety culture in Robeson County.



Introduction

In Robeson County between 2019 and 2025, approximately 41,374 crashes occurred on roadways, with 1,207 of those crashes seriously injuring drivers, passengers, pedestrians, and bicyclists. An additional 478 people in the community lost their lives due to a roadway crash.

Robeson County was the top-ranked county in North Carolina (2020-2023) as measured by the NCDOT based on factors including reported crashes, crash severity, crash rates based on population, registered vehicles and estimated vehicle miles traveled. Robeson County also had the highest county ranking for crash costs per person and vehicle – with roadway crashes costing each person living in Robeson County an average of about \$9500 annually. Trends have fluctuated, with a recent 36% reduction in fatalities between 2023 and 2024. However trends have changed, crashes in Robeson County have cost lives, valuable financial resources, and community members.

In early 2024, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) initiated the development of a comprehensive safety action plan for Robeson County. The team developed the safety plan leveraging robust data analysis and extensive community involvement. The NCDOT Transportation Mobility & Safety Division (TMSD) funded the Robeson County Safety Action Plan (RCSAP) to create a unified vision for how death and serious injury can be eliminated from roadways in the county.



Figure 1. Stakeholders for the Robeson County Safety Action Plan

The RCSAP planning process and recommendations were centered on the Safe System Approach. The Safe System Approach's principles introduce a paradigm shift in roadway safety, transitioning from a purely a reactive approach—implementing improvements after crashes occur—to a proactive



approach that anticipates human error. The Safe System Approach also acknowledges that responsibility is shared amongst all people who travel on, design or maintain roadways.

NCDOT had several goals for the Robeson County Safety Action Plan:

- › Describe strategies to achieve a significant reduction in fatalities and serious injuries in the county.
- › Raise awareness of transportation safety and risks.
- › Identify and prioritize highway safety improvement projects.
- › Ensure consistency with Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) and USDOT safety planning requirements.
- › Create inputs for future grant applications for priority projects.

Roadway Safety in Robeson County

About Robeson County

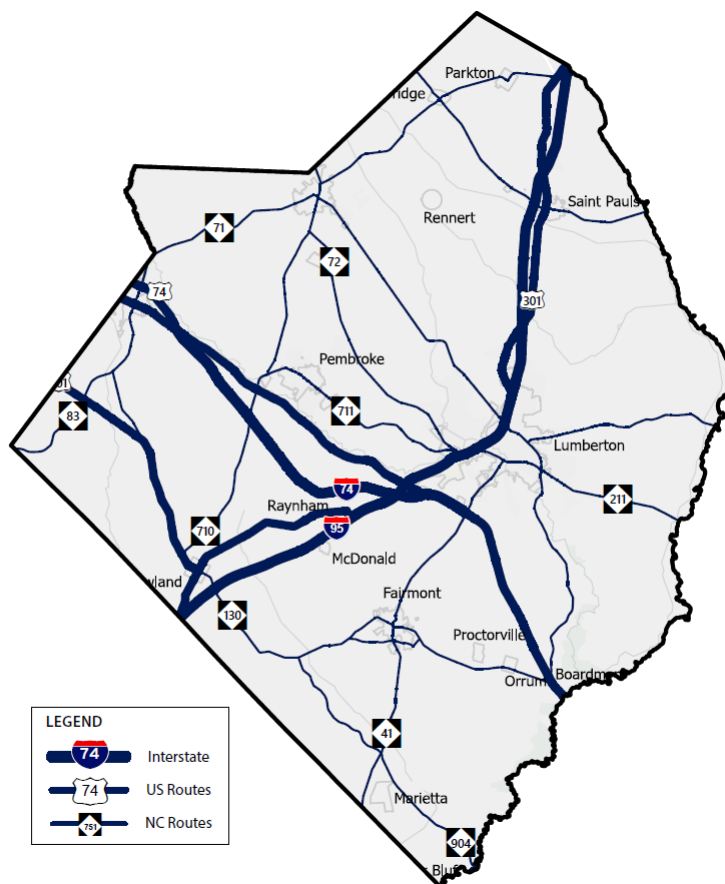


Figure 2. Major Roadways in Robeson County

Robeson County, North Carolina, has a population of approximately 116,438 (as of 2023 estimates). The county is diverse, with 39% of the population identifying as Native American (predominantly members of the Lumbee Tribe), 24% African American, 29% White, and 8% Hispanic. The county spans 947 square miles, making it the largest county in North Carolina by land area.

Major roadways in the county include I-95, US 74, and NC 711, with 15 incorporated communities and Lumberton serving as the county seat. The South East Area Transit System (SEATS) is Robeson County's transit program. SEATS has partnered with NCDOT to launch a pilot micro-transit service in Robeson County. Despite its large geographic and demographic diversity, Robeson faces ongoing

economic challenges, including a

poverty rate of 26.5% and an unemployment rate of 5.3%. The median household income is \$38,288, well below the state median of \$69,535. The county's economy relies heavily on agriculture, manufacturing, healthcare, and education.



The Robeson County school district has 36 schools that serve approximately 23,000 students. The county also hosts higher education institutions like UNC Pembroke and Robeson Community College. Healthcare services are provided by UNC Health Southeastern hospital in Lumberton, alongside clinics from the Robeson Health Care Corporation. Access to Level 1 trauma care (health centers that provide total care for injury) is limited for Robeson County, with the nearest North Carolina location in Raleigh. Level 2 and 3 trauma centers are located in the Wilmington, Fayetteville and Jacksonville areas for responding to severe injuries.

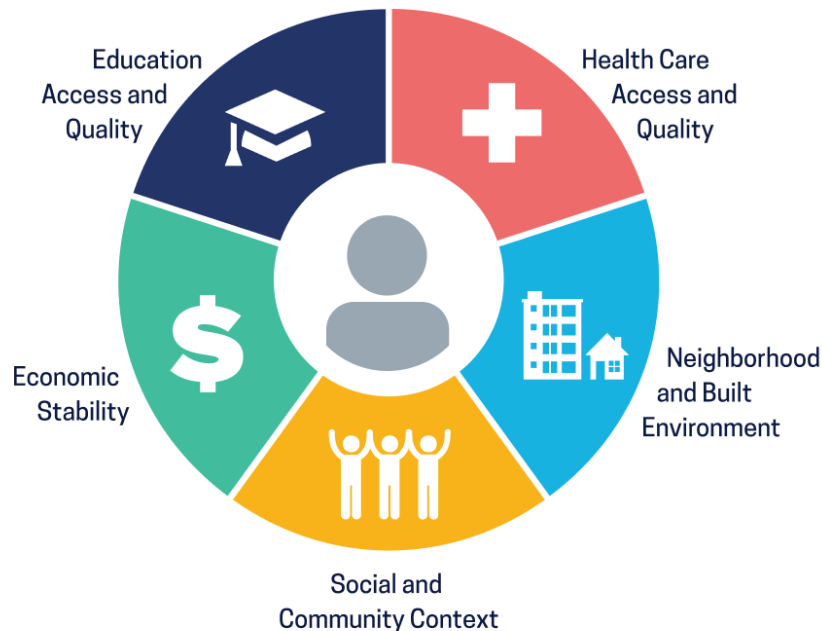


Figure 3. Social Determinants of Health

People in Robeson County experience poor health outcomes and have been severely affected by the opioid epidemic. The high poverty rate also contributes to limited access to reliable transportation, especially in rural areas where residents lack access to public transit, increasing the risk for severe crashes. Poverty, underemployment and limited access to transportation or health care are systemic factors that influence community health outcomes such as injuries resulting from crashes. This way of considering underlying or systemic factors is referred to as Social Determinants of Health and is especially applicable to developing strategies for addressing roadway safety in Robeson County.

Legacy of Improving Safety in Robeson County

The Robeson County Vision Zero task force, established in 2018, focuses on improvements made by NCDOT to address safety problems on the road and at intersections and on education initiatives to promote safer driver behavior. The task force is led by leaders in Robeson County – including representatives from law enforcement, the courts, UNC Pembroke, NCDOT and local governments. The task force has met on a semi-annual or quarterly basis since 2018 to share best practices and safety trends.

In 2019, NCDOT initiated a pilot program for mid-sized cities in North Carolina with higher-than-average rates of pedestrian fatalities. NCDOT led two pedestrian safety studies – one with the Town of Pembroke and one with the City of Lumberton. The studies combined crash and risk analysis to identify priority locations and intersections for further review, and the studies produced recommendations for priority locations. These studies are reviewed as part of other NCDOT projects, but a notable outcome was the successful award of a USDOT RAISE grant for 2nd Street (NC 72) in Lumberton. Using the recommendations from the Lumberton Pedestrian Safety Study, NCDOT and the City of Lumberton pursued and was awarded the grant in 2023. Improvements include a roundabout, road diet, additional and improved sidewalks, new pedestrian crossings, and streetscape enhancements.



Figure 4. Detailed map of the SAFE Lumberton RAISE grant project.

NCDOT has delivered dozens of standalone engineering projects to address specific safety problems in Robeson County. NCDOT leverages the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) - a core federal aid program - as a primary funding source for these projects. The NCDOT HSIP is not programmed using the prioritization (SPOT) criteria or process, but HSIP projects are financially accounted for in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and STI funding allocations. Annually, NCDOT identifies hundreds of locations for review and potential development into safety projects, typically focusing on intersections, sections, bicycle/pedestrian intersections, bicycle/pedestrian mid-block crossings, and bridges. NCDOT's Regional Traffic Engineers (RTEs) lead the review process and submit projects for funding quarterly. Selected projects are funded by the HSIP, or smaller scale projects for the Spot Safety (state funding) program.

Between 2019 and 2024, NCDOT has funded or completed at least 50 intersection projects, through the HSIP or Spot Safety program, across Robeson County. Many of these projects included converting to or installing an all-way stop at the intersection. Types of improvements at intersections included:

- All-way stops
- Conversion to T-intersections
- Install crosswalks and pedestrian signals
- Improve sight distance, skew angles and slip ramps
- Intersection warning signs
- Larger stop signs
- Alternative intersection (restricted turning movements)
- Install or convert signalized intersection to roundabout

Approximately 30 sections of roadway were also funded or improved through the HSIP or Spot Safety program between 2019 and 2024. Most of these safety projects include rumble strips, and several



were coordinated with maintenance projects or other companion funding. The types of projects or improvements included the following:

- Centerline / edge line rumble strips, enhanced pavement markings and raised markers
- cable median barrier
- new midblock or unsignalized crosswalks with refuge islands and/or RRFBs
- Complete Streets improvements, including a center two-way left turn lane, bike lanes, reduced conflict intersections
- Improved superelevation through curves
- Guardrail at culverts



Figure 5. Photo of a roadway reconfiguration safety project (Odum Street in Pembroke).

NCDOT continues to review new locations for improvements through the HSIP. More than 100 intersections and sections were identified for potential review in Robeson County by the HSIP 2025 list, meeting review warrants for Sections (considering all crash types), Intersections (considering all crash types), and Bicycle and Pedestrian Intersections. Most locations are outside of municipalities, located in more rural contexts.

Safety improvements are not limited to the HSIP or Spot Safety program in Robeson County. NCDOT Division 6 staff routinely coordinates with the Regional Traffic Engineer for the Sandhills region to identify opportunities for including safety improvements within routine maintenance projects, such as the Highway Maintenance Improvement Program.

The STIP represents the bulk of NCDOT's spending on transportation improvements in Robeson County. Several roundabouts have been constructed or are planned for construction as STIP projects by 2030. Unique to Robeson County, most of the roundabouts are located at rural intersections. One such example is located at Deep Branch Road and NC 710 outside of Pembroke. The project is converting the signalized intersection to a roundabout.



Figure 6. Roundabout located at Deep Branch Road and NC 710 outside of Pembroke.

The NCDOT Traffic Safety Unit reviews STIP projects, where the locations align with identified safety needs or HSIP review locations. Additional pedestrian crossing improvements at proposed signalized intersections and other intersection improvements are recommended to be included in the STIP project because of the review. One example is the planned widening of Fayetteville Road in Lumberton (STIP U-5797). Other STIP projects include large scale improvements to US 74 and I-95, as well as installation of broadband and other technology to improve signal operations and traffic incident response. Rail crossings have also been improved, to include new or improved gates or signs at crossings, along the CSX line in western Robeson County.

Expanding Awareness and Increasing Enforcement in Robeson County

Robeson County agencies have been consistent partners with and grant recipients of the North Carolina Governors Highway Safety Program (GHSP) to expand traffic safety enforcement and community education support programs. GHSP administers a call for and selects grant applications for financial support for law enforcement and public awareness campaigns. GHSP grants prioritize programs that aim to accomplish, but are not limited to, the following: increase driver and passenger restraints, reduce impaired driving, improve motorcyclist safety, address bicycle and pedestrian safety, and improve data systems.

Through financial support from GHSP, Robeson County has been leading new initiatives to support the people involved in traffic law violations. One example is the Robeson County impaired driving treatment court led by the Robeson County District Attorney's Office. Treatment courts are designed for low-level substance misuse offenders and have been demonstrated to reduce repeat offenses and increase their likelihood of rehabilitation. Treatment court integrates substance treatment, mandatory testing, and social services in supervised court settings. Robeson County District Attorney Matt Scott launched the treatment court several years ago and the court provides supplemental resources.



Another example is the GHSP grant-funded seat belt diversion program – first partnering with UNC Health Southeastern and now with other Robeson County organizations – called the “Saved by the Belt Occupant Protection Program.” The program allows first-time offenders the opportunity to have the offense of not following seat belt or car seat restraint laws dismissed if they participate in an education session.

The State Highway Patrol is a key partner in enforcing traffic safety laws in the county, particularly rural counties like Robeson. The SHP and local agencies are active partners in GHSP funded enforcement campaigns such as Booze it or Lose it and Click it or Ticket. Robeson County is served by Troop B, District 7 (B7) of the State Highway Patrol. The Robeson County B7 SHP District is further divided into three sub-areas. Area 1 includes the portion of the county south of US 74; Area 2 includes the section of the county north of US 74 and west of I-95; and Area 3 includes the section of the county east of I-95 and north of US 74. Area 2 includes the communities of Pembroke, Red Springs and the fast-growing communities near Lumber Bridge. Members of the State Highway Patrol described Area 2 as an area that receives a frequent number of crash reports and concentrations of traffic safety law citations.



Figure 8: Example social media post by City of Lumberton during Labor Day 2025 Booze It and Lose It enforcement campaign.



Figure 7: Example image or poster to educate people in Robeson County about the importance of wearing seat belts and using car restraints when driving.



Improving Safety Through Increased Access to Transportation and Community Health

NCDOT, the Lumber River Rural Transportation Planning Organization (Lumber River RPO) and Robeson County are updating the Robeson County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP). The Lumber River Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO) provides transportation planning services, including updates to CTPs, to Richmond and Scotland counties, in addition to the rural portions of Hoke and Robeson Counties. The Lumber River RPO also prioritizes projects for the STIP, facilitates public involvement, and provides transportation related information to local governments in the planning region.

The Robeson County CTP was last adopted by the NCDOT Board of Transportation in 2011. The CTP does not include the larger towns and cities in Robeson County (i.e., Lumberton, Pembroke, Maxton). The individual towns and cities develop separate CTPs for reference in the Robeson County CTP. The CTP identifies needs for transportation mobility and access countywide and for all modes of transportation. The needs are developed into proposed projects for inclusion in the STIP. As the RCSAP is implemented, larger scale safety projects, such as corridor improvements or roundabouts, will be recommended for amendment into the CTP for potential funding in the STIP.

Robeson County Emergency Medical Service (EMS) is one of the primary first responders to a crash where persons involved may have been severely injured. In 2023, Robeson County EMS received over 40,000 calls for service. Robeson County EMS works closely with other first responders such as local government emergency medical transport or paramedic services. Volunteer squads are no longer active in Robeson County to assist with extrication of crash victims from vehicles. As a result, Robeson County EMS and first responders have less access to the equipment and experienced personnel used for extrication when EMS is responding to a crash. Robeson County EMS is able to respond to crashes and transport victims to appropriate trauma centers via aircraft (if needed) in a timely manner. However, the agency may benefit from other equipment such as quick response vehicles with “whole blood” stored on the vehicle for crash-site blood transfusions. Other innovations such as increased use of drones could be used to investigate and help first responders quickly navigate to crash sites.

The South East Area Transit System (SEATS) has limited resources to offer transit services to rural residents of Robeson County. Recognizing the need for different or expanded transit service in the county, the organization PAWWS, Inc is leading a transportation initiative to provide on demand transit services to Robesonians to medical services, reduce risk for impaired driving, and improve safety in rural Robeson County. PAWWS is leading the Rides for Robeson service, piloting on-demand transportation in the Lumberton area starting in 2025.

Opioid misuse is a significant problem for people in Robeson County, contributing directly to death due to overdose and indirectly to risk for fatal vehicle crashes. The estimated overdose rate in Robeson County was 44.8 out of 100,000 residents (in 2024), compared with a statewide rate of 27.7. The Robeson Rural Communities Opioid Response Consortium (RCORP) convenes dozens of community-based, health and social service organizations serving Robeson County several times each year to discuss strategies for improving access to health care and preventing opioid misuse. The RCORP is a unique opportunity for supporting populations in Robeson County struggling with mental illness and substance misuse to transportation and traffic safety resources.



Crash Trends in Robeson County

What types of crashes are most frequent and severe in Robeson County?

The crash types that most frequently resulted in a fatal or serious injury in Robeson County between 2016 and 2024 included the following as shown in Figure 10, with the percent share shown in parentheses:

- Lane Departure (57%)
- Seat Belts & Car Seats (42%)
- Impaired Driver (25%)
- Speed (18%)
- Intersection (21%)
- Older Driver (15%)
- Motorcycle (11%)
- Younger Driver (10%)
- Pedestrian (9%)

Crashes involving animals, bicyclists and heavy trucks are not considered Focus Crash Types for Robeson County and are excluded from additional analysis due to the relatively small share of fatal and serious injury crashes or because these crash types are not higher in Robeson County in comparison with statewide averages.

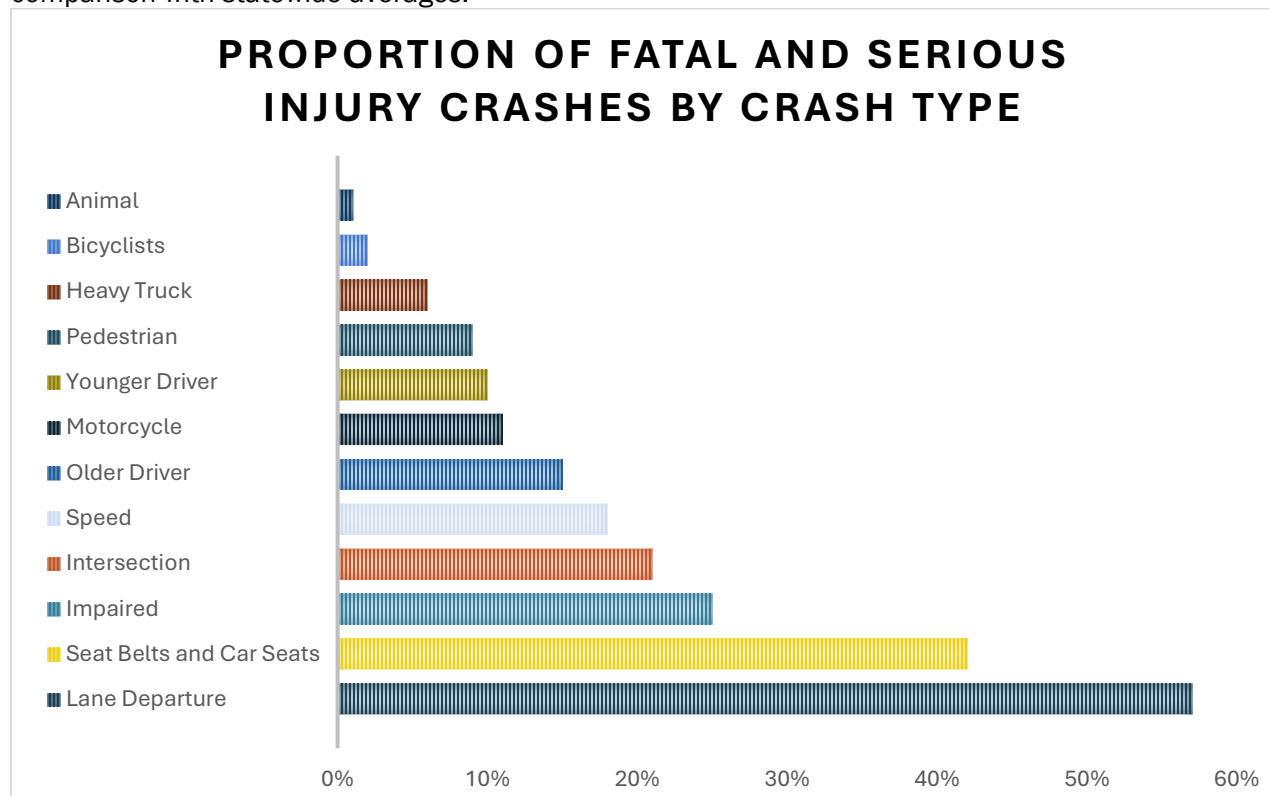


Figure 9. Proportion of Fatal and Serious Injury Crashes by Emphasis Area

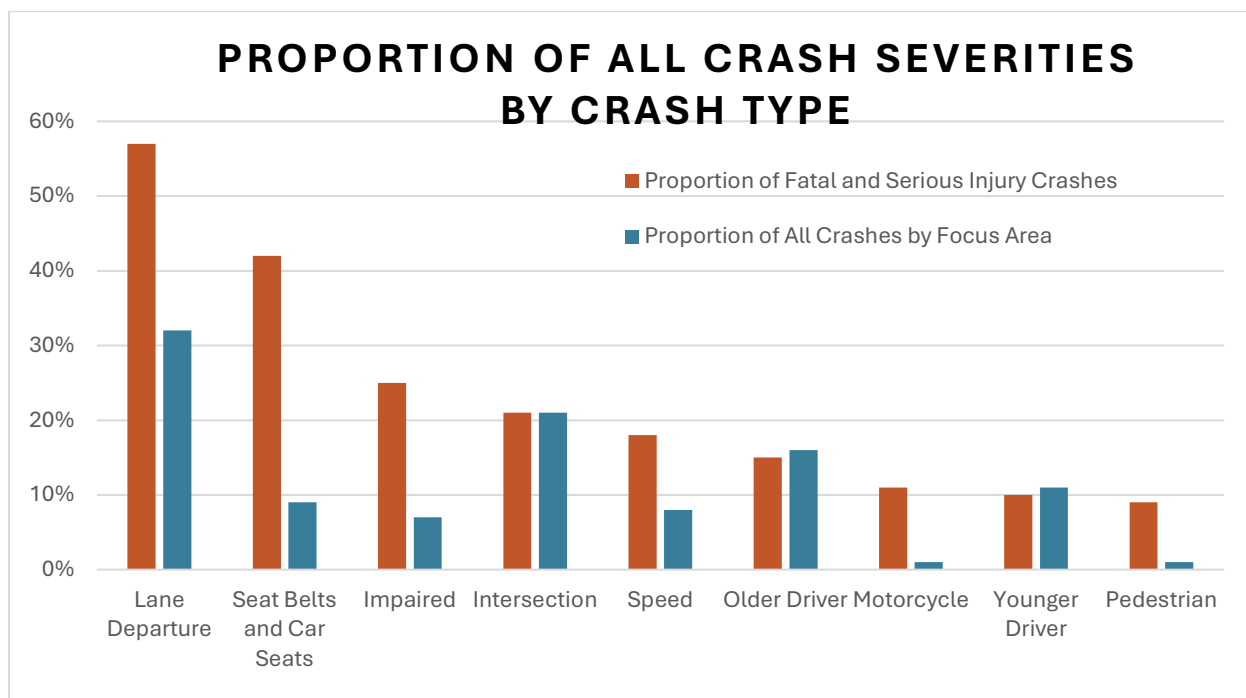


Figure 10. Focus Crash Types in Robeson County

Figure 11 and Table 1 compare shares of fatal and serious injury crashes to crashes of all injury severity. The biggest standouts are crashes involving lane departure, impaired driving or crashes involving lack of seat belt use.

Table 1. Proportion of Fatal and Serious Injury Crashes by Focus Area (2016-2024).

Focus Areas	Proportion of Fatal and Serious Injury Crashes	Proportion of All Crashes
Lane Departure	57%	32%
Seat Belts and Car Seats	42%	9%
Impaired	25%	7%
Intersection	21%	21%
Speed	18%	8%
Older Driver	15%	16%
Motorcycle	11%	1%
Younger Driver	10%	11%
Pedestrian	9%	1%



What are the historic trends for crash types in Robeson County?

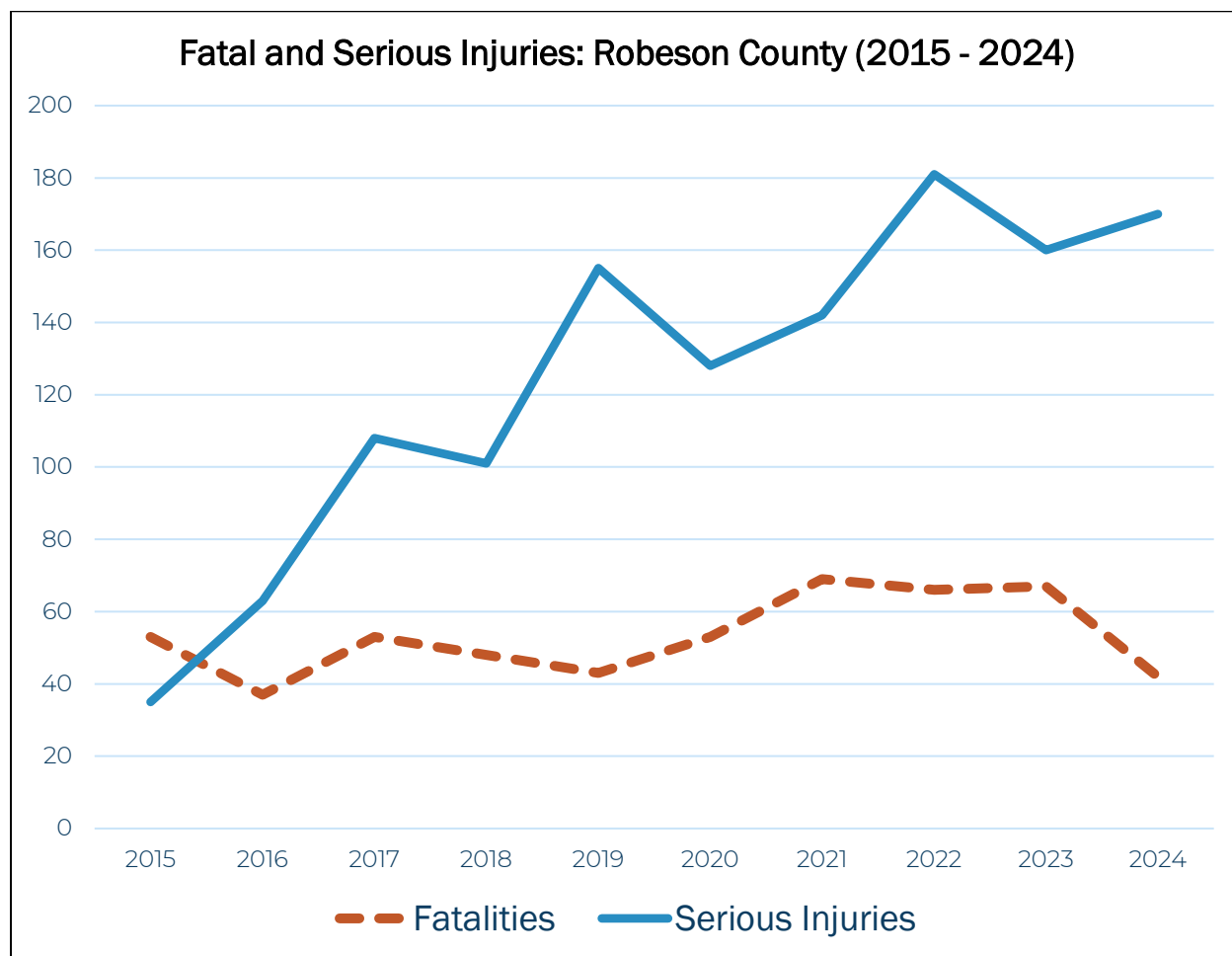


Figure 11. Trendlines showing fatal and serious injury crashes in Robeson County from 2015-2024.

As shown in Figure 12, more than 45,300 crashes were reported on roads in Robeson County between 2015 and 2024. Total crashes increased by about 27% over the ten-year period. 531 people were killed and an additional 1,243 were seriously injured in crashes between 2015 and 2024. The total number of people killed or seriously injured in crashes increased by 141% over the ten-year period. Fatalities have decreased overall since 2015, including a 39% decrease between the peaks in 2021 and 2024, and a 36% decrease between 2023 and 2024.

The crash types that saw the sharpest increases in fatal and serious injury crashes 2016 and 2024 were crashes related to intersections and seats belts and car seats. The crash types resulting in the largest reductions in fatal and serious injury crashes between 2016 and 2024 were crashes related to impaired driving and speed. Crashes related to impairment, lane departure, seat belts and speed



related crashes contributed to the sharp reduction in fatalities and serious injuries between 2023 and 2024. See Table 2 for more information on percent changes by focus crash type.

Table 2: Changes in Focus Crash Types 2016 – 2024; 2023-2024.

Focus Crash Type	2016 – 2024 % Change	2023-2024 % Change
Impaired	75%	- 14%
Intersection	176%	+ 18%
Lane Departure	100%	- 16%
Motorcycle	125%	+ 69%
Older Driver	240%	0%
Pedestrian	89%	+ 6%
Seat Belts/Car Seats	139%	- 31%
Speed	-9%	- 43%
Younger Driver	125%	+ 8%

Between 2016 and 2023, 42% of fatal and serious injury crashes in Robeson County involved persons not using a seat belt or car seat restraint. According to the 2024 North Carolina Observational Survey of Seat Belt, Robeson County drivers used seat belts at a rate of 84.95% - this is compared with a statewide seat belt rate of 93.1% of drivers observed in the survey. Since 2012, studies have observed seat belt usage rates steadily increasing in Robeson County.



Where do fatal and serious injury crashes occur most often?

82% of all fatal and serious injury crashes occurred in rural areas (outside of municipalities) in the County – almost entirely on two-lane undivided roads. More than half (52%) of fatal and serious injury crashes occurred on Secondary Routes (SR) which represent 46% of roadway mileage in the county. 27% of fatal and serious injury crashes occurred on NC routes which represent 7% of roadway mileage. See Figure 14 for more information about proportionate crash frequency by route classification.



I-95 represents about 2% of the roadway miles in the county but constitutes 9% of severe crashes. Between 2020 and 2024, about 2900 crashes occurred on the interstate in Robeson County, including 19 fatal and 43 serious injury crashes. These are alarming issues for safety on I-95; but the overall crash rate for I-95 is slightly below the statewide interstate crash rate. The severity index is slightly above other interstates statewide (3.86 vs 3.65) but is 15% lower than the statewide severity rate for all system routes (4.44). Considering the volume of traffic travelling on I-95 annually, the rates of serious injury and fatal crashes are relatively low. Severe and fatal crashes have occurred along I-95 during construction, and the NCDOT Open Roads team has worked diligently to manage crash sites, provide quick response to crash victims and discuss ways to prevent similar crashes in the future. The State Highway Patrol, other first responders, NCDOT and the construction team meet regularly to improve coordination.

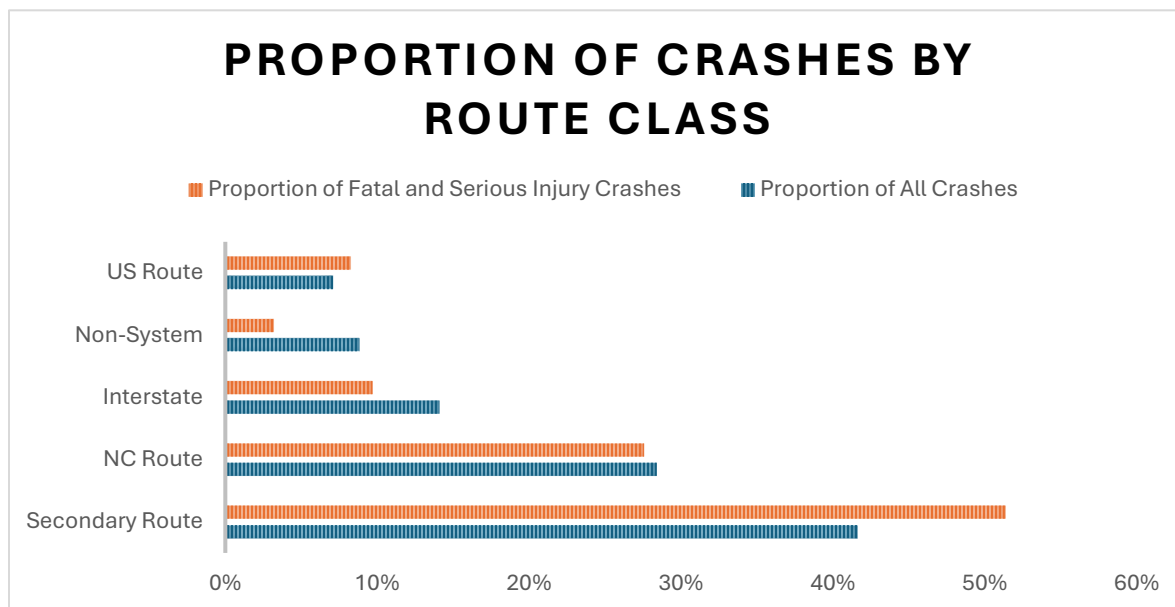


Figure 12. Proportion of Crashes by Route Class in Robeson County



When are fatal and serious injuries most prevalent in Robeson County?

Fatal and serious injury crashes peaked between 9 pm and 10 pm (8% of total fatal and serious injury crashes occurring over an average of 24 hours). Impairment, lane departure, pedestrian, seat belts and car seats, speed, and younger driver related serious injury and fatal crashes also peaked during the 9 pm-10 pm hour.

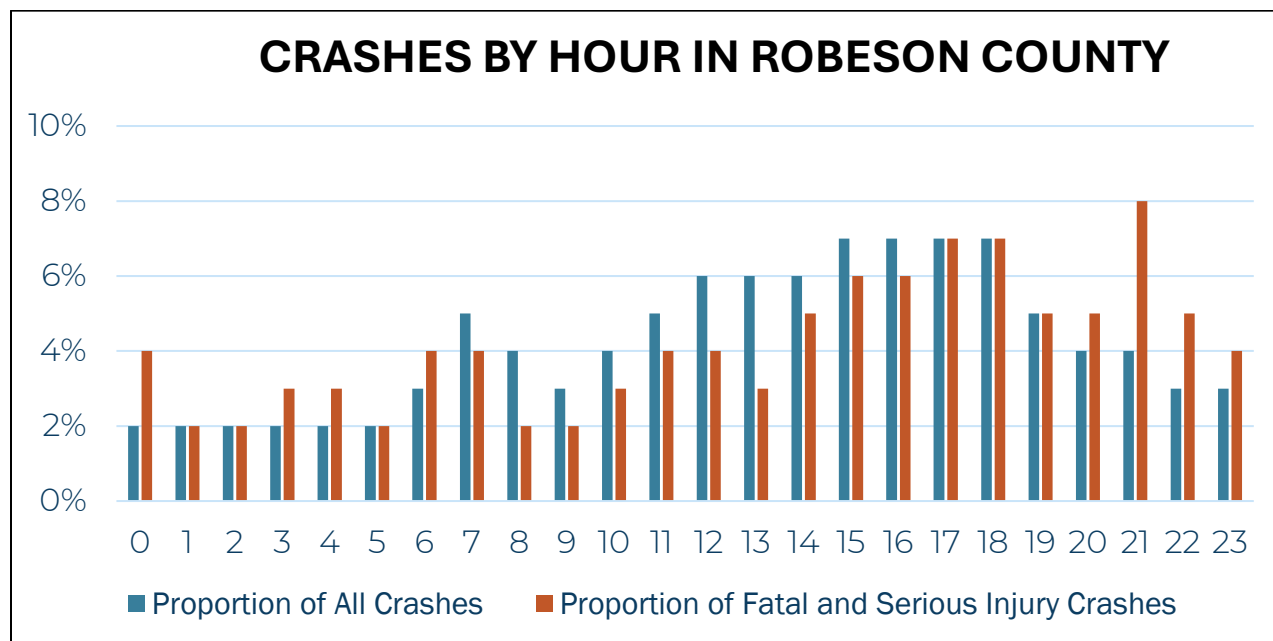


Figure 13: Crashes by Time of Day

March, May, November and December have higher proportions of fatal and serious injury crashes than other months of the year. Weekend days (Friday-Sunday) account for approximately 48% of fatal and serious injury crashes in the county across the average week.

Who was most impacted by serious and fatal crashes?

Crash data doesn't exist in a vacuum—it reflects the people and communities most affected. By examining the demographics of those involved in serious and fatal crashes, we can better understand which populations are at greatest risk and how factors like age, race, and socioeconomic status contribute to roadway safety disparities.

Robeson County's population is younger than the state average, with 21% of residents under age 14, compared to 18% statewide. Interestingly, despite this higher share, the crash rate for children under 14 is lower than the statewide total population crash rate. However, the data shifts dramatically when looking at youth aged 15 to 24. This group makes up 15% of Robeson County's population, slightly above the 14% statewide share, yet their involvement in crashes is disproportionately high. The fatal and serious injury crash rate for this age group is 18.4 per 1,000 population, nearly three times the statewide rate of 4.9 per 1,000. Overall, people aged 25-64 represented the highest rate of people involved in fatal and serious injury crashes (17 persons per 1,000 population).

Males represented 64.8% of persons involved in a fatal or serious injury crash, despite representing only 49% of the total population of Robeson County. Fatal and serious injury crash rates for males



involved in crashes in Robeson County was 16.8 per 1,000 population, compared with the statewide rate of 4.9 per 1,000 total population.

Race and ethnicity also reveal troubling disparities. Native Americans in Robeson County have the highest crash rate, at 13.8 per 1,000 population, followed by White (13.2), Black (11.7), and Hispanic (9.1) populations—all of which exceed the statewide average of 4.9 persons per 1,000 population.

Finally, the geography of these crashes often aligns with underlying socioeconomic vulnerability. 70% of fatal and serious injury crashes occurred in areas the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) designates as socially vulnerable, which closely mirrors the 72% of the county's population living in such areas. Similarly, 56% of these crashes happened in communities with household incomes in the bottom 20th percentile, where 58% of the population resides.

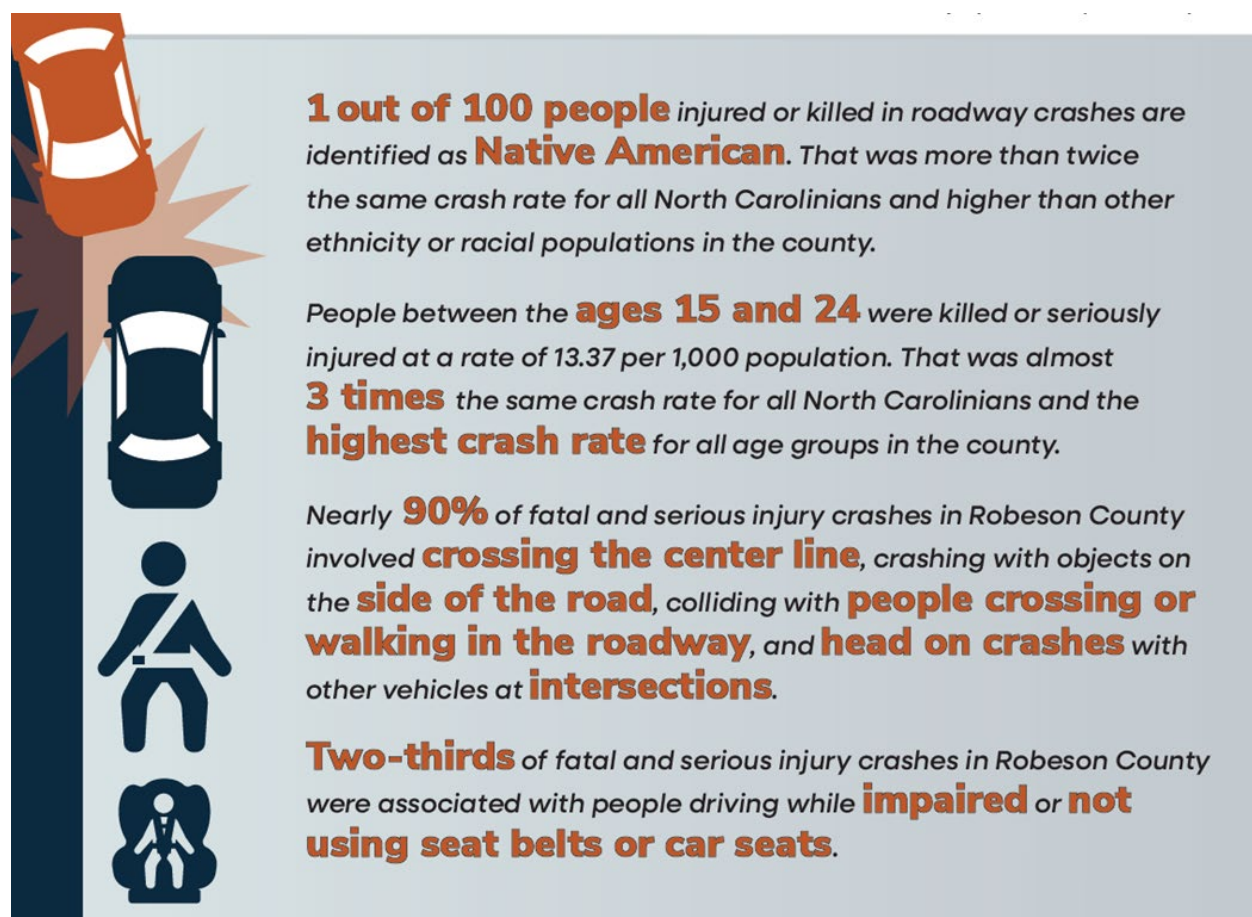


Figure 14. Infographic used to discuss key data points for Robeson County crash data.



High Injury Networks

The RCSAP developed a set of High Injury Networks (HINs) to highlight roads and intersections classified as high injury areas based on a scoring system that considers the frequency and severity of historic crashes. The HIN was developed using two sets of crash data from the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) to produce the High Injury Network (HIN):

- All crash data from the NCDOT enterprise crash database (2016-2024)
- Bicycle and pedestrian-specific crash data available via NCDOT's Open Data Portal (2013-2022)¹

The HIN was created using an equivalent property damage only (EPDO) approach to determine a severity weighting for crashes. This approach is consistent with a Safe System Approach by emphasizing fatal and serious injury crashes over other severities.² Locations with a higher EPDO score tend to have more severe crashes than those with a lower score. All segments and intersections in the region have a score, using a methodology called equivalent property damage only (EPDO). This uses crash costs to weigh the importance of crashes, with fatal and serious injury crashes being the highest weighted by far.

The HIN segments and corridors represent the top 3% of routes in the county where the history of crashes was most frequent and severe, while the intersections represent the top 1% most problematic areas. The following are the High Injury Network (HIN) products for the RCSAP:

High Injury Intersections (HII) for all crashes These represent 5% of all intersections and capture 38% of all fatal and serious injury crashes at intersections in the region.

High Injury Networks (HIN) or segments for all crashes This represents 1% of all roadway miles and accounts for 39% of all fatal and serious injury crashes between intersections.

HIN for bicycle and pedestrian crashes only This represents 5% of non-interstate mileage in the region captures 59% of all bicycle-pedestrian fatal and serious injury crashes between intersections.

HII for bicycle and pedestrian crashes These represent 5% of all intersections and account for 50% of bicycle-pedestrian fatal and serious injury crashes between intersections.

Coincidentally, all STIP intersection projects under construction or programmed for construction in the next five years overlap with HIN or high injury intersections. Excluding US 74 and I-95 as partially or fully access controlled highways from the HIN, roads such as NC 71, NC 710, NC 211, NC 130, NC 904, NC 41, NC 72, NC 20, US 301, and US 501 comprise the majority of the HIN in Robeson County.

¹ <https://ncdot.maps.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=b4fcdc266d054a1ca075b60715f88aef>

² <https://www.transportation.gov/NRSS/SafeSystem>

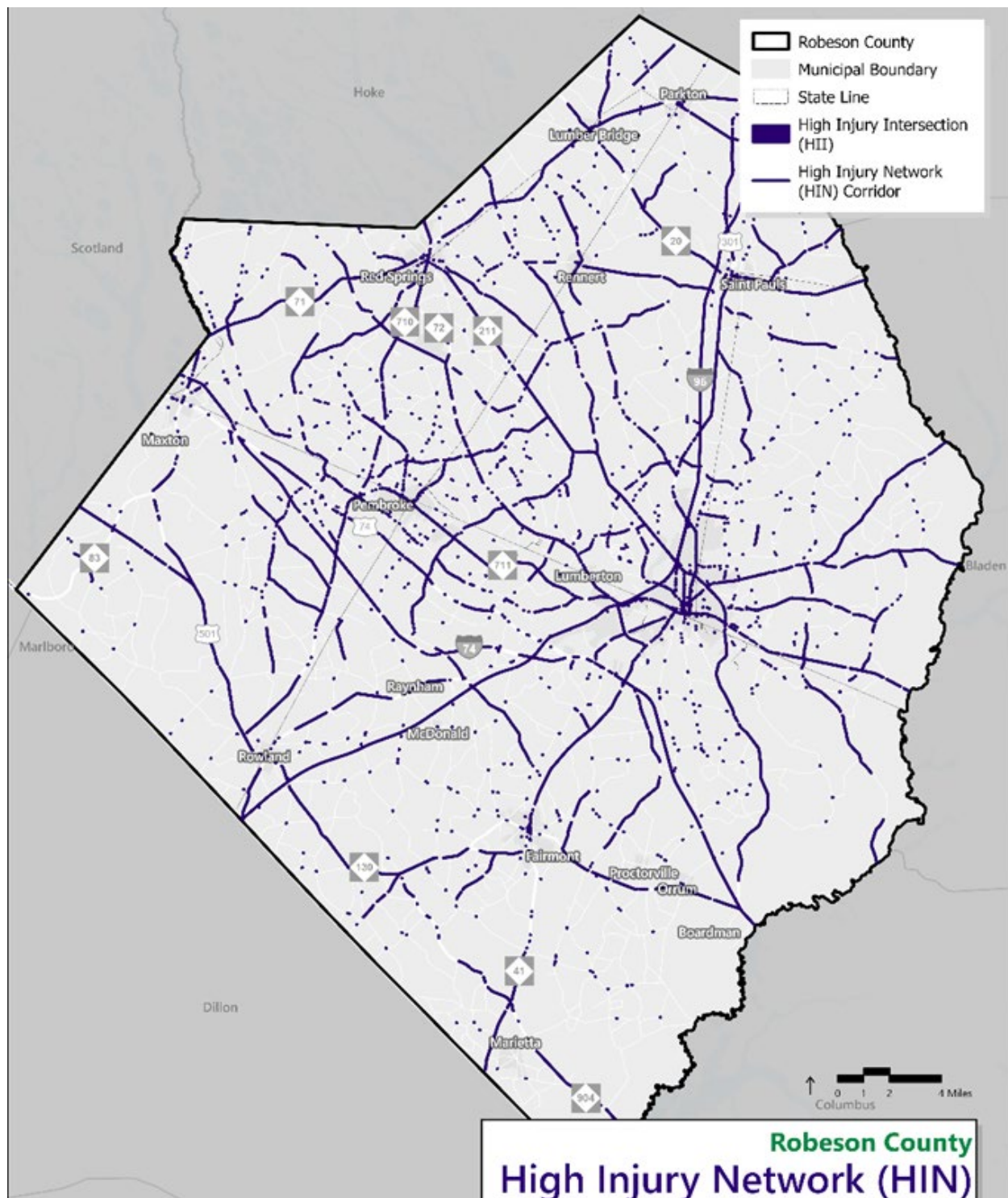


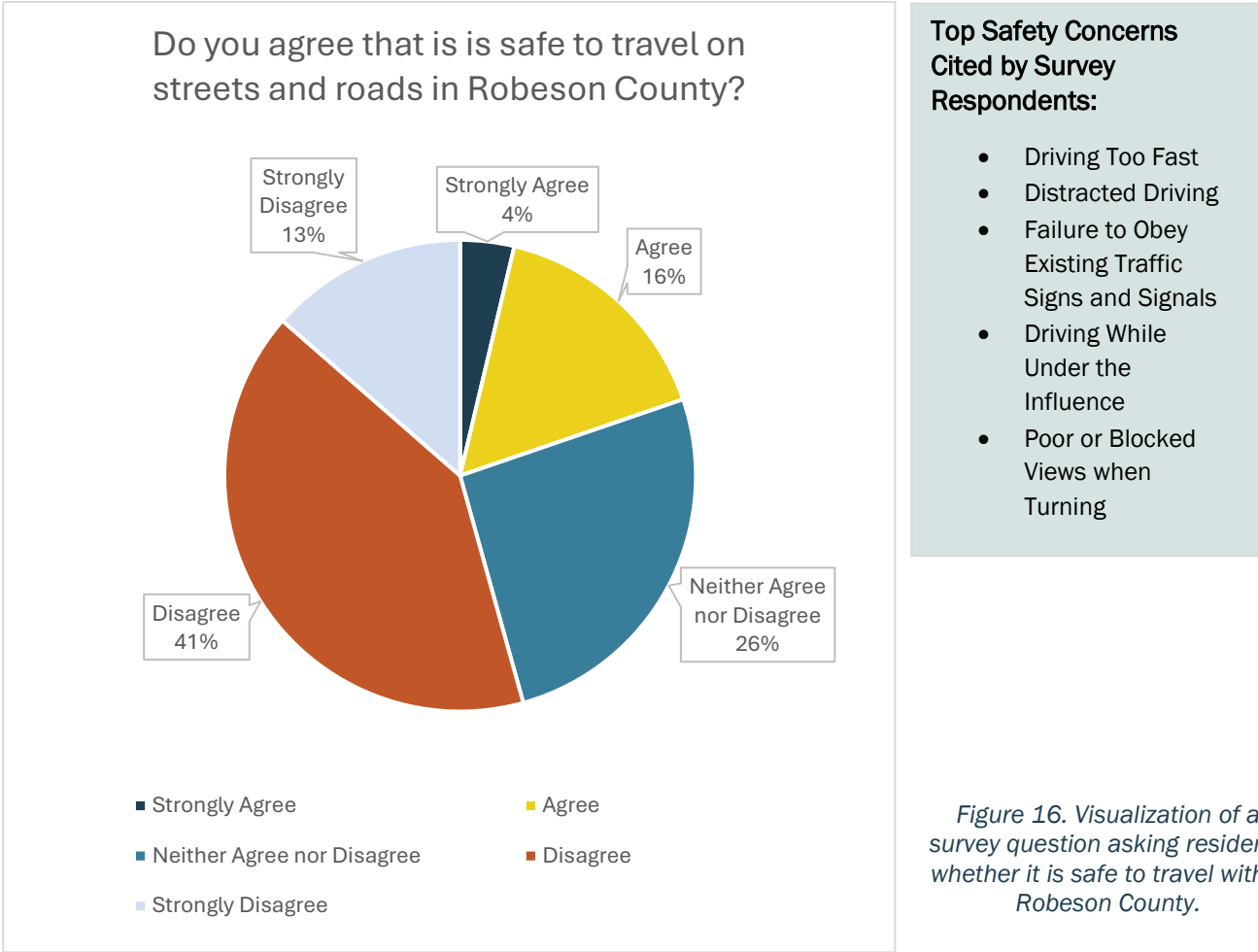
Figure 15: High Injury Network map for Robeson County. This map includes the top 3% of road segments and top 1% of intersections in the county where the history of crashes was most frequent and severe.



Public Engagement

A critical part of improving roadway safety in Robeson County isn't just analyzing crash data; it's listening to the people who live, work, and travel in the county every day. Through meetings, surveys, community events, and one-on-one conversations, residents, stakeholders, and community leaders shared their firsthand experiences and insights. From concerns about dangerous intersections to the need for better pedestrian infrastructure or education for young drivers, the voices of Robeson County shaped every stage of this effort.

Survey Results



The RCSAP team launched a community survey that consisted of six questions. Five focused on transportation safety and mobility, the final question was a demographic question, posed to identify who responded to the survey. The survey was open from Tuesday, April 16, 2024, to Wednesday, August 21, 2024. During this time, 156 responses were gathered.



Comments from the open response survey questions were categorized into the following themes:

- **Visibility and Roadway Maintenance**
Respondents expressed concerns about road maintenance needs like potholes, inadequate lighting at night or during rain, overgrown weeds, and ditches.
- **Transportation Infrastructure Improvements**
Respondents discussed how infrastructure upgrades- such as additional sidewalk and lighting - could support better traffic flow, intersection safety and pedestrian and cyclist safety.
- **Driver / Bicyclist / Pedestrian Behavior and Education**
Respondents shared an overall lack of awareness about road safety and traffic laws, such as laws regulating tailgating, illegal passing, distracted and reckless driving.
- **Traffic Safety**
Respondents commented on the lack or prevalence of law enforcement to manage speeding, illegal maneuvers, and pedestrian safety.
- **Public Health and Medical Care**
Respondents explained how the lack of access to transportation, public health and medical care services increased concerns about safety. Respondents discussed how people experiencing homelessness lack access to trauma care following a crash.

Public Engagement & Stakeholder Outreach

The RCSAP team conducted a number of local meetings, led information sessions and presentations to organizations working in the county, and met with residents at community events. Table 3 is a summary of community events and presentations led by the RSCSAP team and NCDOT.

Table 3. Public Engagement & Stakeholder Outreach

Event	Place	Date
Stakeholder Workshop	Pembroke	May 9th, 2024
Robeson County Municipal Association Meeting	Pembroke	May 28 th , 2024
NCDOT Open Roads Meeting	Lumberton	June 19 th , 2024
Lumbee Homecoming Vendor Booth	Pembroke	July 6 th , 2024
Red Springs Community Center Community Meeting	Red Springs	July 16 th , 2024
African American Cultural Center Community Meeting	Lumberton	July 30 th , 2024
Presentations to Lumber River RPO (TCC and TAC)	Pembroke	October 15 th , November 4 th , 2024
Presentation to Robeson Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP)	Pembroke	October 23 rd , 2024
Meeting with Lumbee Tribe Staff	Pembroke	October 15 th , 2024
NC Youth Violence Prevention Coalition	Lumberton	November 4 th , 2024
Community Stakeholder Interviews	Virtual	Multiple
PAWS Meetings – Transportation Plan	Virtual	Multiple
Interview with State Highway Patrol – Robeson District	Lumberton	December 13th, 2024
Interview with Robeson County EMS	Lumberton	February 14 th , 2025
Robeson County Vision Zero Task Force	Lumberton	June 26 th , 2025



There were three public community events held in which residents participated in an open community forum designed to hear personal experiences with traffic safety in their area. Concerns were documented, and the Division 6 NCDOT representative shared additional information about proposed improvements in the area.

Local Government Presentations

The safety action planning process was presented to several municipalities in Robeson County. This was done to provide the RCSAP’s timeline, goals, and next steps. Residents in attendance at these meetings were also able to provide feedback on safety in their community and how the RCSAP can aid in creating a culture of safety for everyone. Concerns raised included safety issues at night, driver’s education for youth, and maintenance of infrastructure.

Table 4. Local Government Presentations in Robeson County

Place	Date
Town of Pembroke	March 3 rd , 2025
Town of Red Springs	March 4 th , 2025
Town of Lumberton	April 7 th , 2025
Town of Fairmont	April 15 th , 2025
Lumber River Rural Planning Organization	July and September 2025



Figure 17: Photos from Stakeholder Engagement Meetings (top left: Fairmont Town Board meeting; bottom left: Robeson County Stakeholder Workshop; right: Social media post advertising the survey.



Advancing Toward Zero in Robeson County

The RCSAP prioritizes a public health approach to safety, considering the complexity of challenges facing people who live, travel and work in Robeson County. The goals include the following:

- Reduce fatalities and reduce serious injury crashes by half by 2035.
- Manage speeds and high-risk behaviors.
- Adopt a safe systems approach for sustained impact.
- Empower people and communities to affect safety culture.
- Implement widespread systemic improvements.

As part of its continued commitment to eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries, the Robeson County Vision Zero Task Force (RC VZ TF) convened on June 26, 2025, in Lumberton to take the next steps toward action. This important meeting brought together local leaders, transportation professionals, law enforcement, health officials, and community advocates—each playing a vital role in advancing safer roads for all.

During the meeting, the Task Force reviewed the draft strategies developed through data analysis and community input, assessing their relevance, feasibility, and potential impact. Members engaged in a focused discussion around priority actions and implementation timelines, recognizing the urgent need for meaningful, measurable progress.

As a result of this collaborative effort, the Task Force identified a set of near, mid, and long-term strategies—those that are most ready for immediate implementation and have the highest potential to reduce fatal and serious injury crashes in the short term. These near-term actions reflect both local priorities and proven practices, and they will serve as the foundation for Robeson County's Vision Zero rollout in the months ahead.



Figure 18: Photo from Robeson County Vision Zero Task Force meeting.



GOAL: MANAGE SPEEDS AND HIGH-RISK BEHAVIORS

If all drivers and occupants of vehicles used seat belts and car seat restraints and impaired driving was eradicated, at least half of the serious injury and fatalities resulting from crashes in Robeson County would be eliminated.

Seat belt usage is a well-documented, long-term issue for Robeson County. NCDOT is committed to increasing use of seat belts and car seats. Robeson County has seen some success, including the seat belt diversion program. The program has been challenged on finding sustainable long-term resources. NCDOT will work with key stakeholders in Robeson County to identify potential opportunities for improved staffing and resources to help the program become sustainable.

Supporting young and new drivers with targeted education has also been a long-standing need in Robeson County. At the same time, law enforcement agencies continue to face staffing constraints that limit their capacity to offer additional outreach or training. Early driver education is key to Robesonians shaping safe driving habits. Building on existing partnerships, NCDOT will explore opportunities with local law enforcement and community organizations to strengthen educational efforts for young drivers, while identifying ways to ease the burden on limited enforcement staff.

Substance misuse has become a growing concern in Robeson County, particularly as it relates to impairment-related crashes. While alcohol impairment remains a known issue, the role of other substances—such as opioids and cannabis—is still to be fully determined. NCDOT acknowledges the emerging need for more comprehensive substance screening to better understand the impact on roadway safety. In collaboration with law enforcement and public health partners, NCDOT will explore strategies to improve testing capabilities and data collection, helping to inform future prevention and enforcement efforts.

Near Term Strategies

- Develop coordinated enforcement and education efforts focusing on impaired driving.
- Pilot innovative drug testing technologies as part of targeted enforcement campaigns for impaired driving.
- Provide targeted information about "safe ride" options available to populations with disproportionate rates of substance misuse.

Mid Term Strategies

- Work with legislators to increase flexibility in state laws for using automated enforcement technology.
- Identify more resources and technical support for drivers' education programs.
- Establish a permanent "Safety City" course for drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages and licensure.
- Identify counties and/or tribal areas in the U.S. with similar safety trends with seat belt use, and investigate opportunities to learn from peer agencies about best practices for improving passenger restraint.

Long Term strategies

- Implement targeted, proactive and sustained enforcement in areas where compliance is expected to be low for using passenger restraints.
- Continue seat belt diversion programs that educate offenders on the importance of seat belt use as an alternative to fines.
- Implement programs to provide car seats or vouchers for low-income families.



GOAL: EMPOWER PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES TO AFFECT SAFETY CULTURE

Despite pervasive poverty in Robeson County, local governments and organizations are well-positioned to receive and manage grants designed to improve crash response, increase funding for engineering improvements, expand access to safe transportation services, increase community acceptance of safe driving behaviors.

Economic challenges such as poverty and unemployment continue to affect many residents in Robeson County, creating barriers to legal and insured vehicle operation. Unlicensed and uninsured drivers pose safety and legal concerns on local roadways. Working alongside community partners, NCDOT will explore supportive strategies—such as outreach, education, and diversion programs—to help more residents access the resources they need to drive legally and safely.

While crash response times in Robeson County are generally considered acceptable, many residents face limited access to immediate trauma care and critical post-crash support services. This includes both emergency medical interventions at trauma centers and access to mental, emotional, or spiritual care following serious roadway incidents. NCDOT acknowledges that timely and comprehensive post-crash care is a vital component of traffic safety and recovery. Moving forward, NCDOT will engage with healthcare providers, emergency services, and community organizations to explore opportunities for improving access to trauma care and strengthening support systems for crash victims and their families.

Robeson County also benefits from a strong network of social, health, and community education organizations that are well-positioned to support local safety initiatives. Many of these organizations have experience administering grants and leading programs that address public health and community well-being. Non-governmental organizations can expand their work to include administering grants or donations used to implement traffic safety projects, improved access to equipment for emergency response, and sustained law enforcement for issues such as seat belt usage and impaired driving. NCDOT recognizes the value of these local partners and will continue to seek opportunities to collaborate on grant-funded efforts that advance roadway safety and community engagement across the county.

Near Term Strategies

- Support Robeson County Transportation Plan pilot (Rides for Robeson) and explore opportunities for expanding services county wide.

Mid Term Strategies

- Encourage and support youth-led programs that use dramatic and interactive methods to promote traffic safety awareness and education.
- Organize annual safety forums or community meetings led by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) to discuss safety strategies, progress, and community concerns.
- Coordinate with Emergency Medical Service (EMS) providers, other first responders, and UNC Health Southeastern Hospital to identify needs and improve medical response at the scene of severe crash events.
- Partner with local clergy to create a post-crash counseling program for families and victims of severe or fatal traffic crashes.





Long Term Strategies

- Develop and maintain interactive data dashboards for Robeson County to monitor and analyze traffic safety metrics.
- Discuss formation of an independent not-for-profit Robeson County Traffic Safety Center to facilitate forums, charitable donations, and community outreach.
- Provide financial incentives or subsidies for low-income drivers to obtain insurance and licensure.
- Partner with grant-funded initiatives and community organizations to disseminate targeted health and safety messages to populations disproportionately impacted by severe crashes.



Figure 19: The Survivor Expression & Empowerment through Interactive Theater (SEE-IT) program is a program offered through the North Carolina Youth Violence Prevention Center in Robeson County. The program could be a resource for using interactive theater to bring youth together and act out narratives about traffic safety.



GOAL: IMPLEMENT WIDESPREAD SYSTEMIC IMPROVEMENTS

Rumble strips, All-Way Stop intersections, and pedestrian WALK phases at signalized intersections are low-cost countermeasures that can be implemented across the system and have a significant reduction of lane departure, pedestrian and intersection crashes.

Although NC Routes, such as NC 71 and NC 41, make up just 7% of the total roadway system in Robeson County, they account for 27% of all fatal and serious injury crashes. This disproportionate impact highlights the need for focused safety improvements along these corridors. NCDOT will prioritize data-driven strategies to address high-risk areas on NC Routes and will work with local partners to identify targeted infrastructure and enforcement measures aimed at reducing severe crashes on these critical routes.

Since 2016, Robeson County has experienced a more than 175% increase in intersection-related crashes resulting in death or serious injury. This alarming trend underscores the urgent need for targeted safety interventions at high-risk intersections. In response, NCDOT will work closely with local agencies and stakeholders to identify priority locations and implement strategies such as All Way Stop intersections, roundabouts, improved signal timing, visibility enhancements, and public education campaigns to reduce the frequency and severity of intersection crashes.

Lane departure crashes account for nearly 60% of all fatal and serious injury crashes in Robeson County, with over 85% occurring primarily on rural, two-lane Secondary Routes (SR). Many signs, pavement markings, and signal infrastructure in remote areas across Robeson County are outdated or less visible than standard markings and signs. NCDOT recognizes the importance of maintaining clear, uniform traffic control devices and will assess current conditions, prioritize upgrades, and implement improvements targeted engineering countermeasures, such as enhanced pavement markings, rumble strips, and improved signage along sections of rural, Secondary Routes where crash history or conditions present elevated risk for lane departure crashes.

Pedestrians and bicyclists are present across all roadway contexts in Robeson County, and crashes involving these road users that result in death or serious injury are disproportionately high on NC Routes. This over-representation identifies a need for focused pedestrian and bicyclist safety improvements in residential areas or commercial centers where pedestrian and bicycle activity overlap with higher-speed roadways such as NC Routes. NCDOT will work with local stakeholders to implement improvements, such as enhanced crossings, lighting, and speed management to improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Near Term Strategies

- Conduct safety reviews or corridor studies along NC routes.
- Continue to apply an integrated project development approach for maintenance projects to include safety improvements, such as rumble strips and safety edge treatments, where feasible.
- Pilot new innovations, such as lighting in rural areas or pedestrian zones, in areas with high crash rates for Lane Departure and Pedestrians.
- Create a method and screen intersections for potential roundabout implementation.
- Continue to evaluate statutory speed limits on Secondary Routes.

Mid Term Strategies

- Develop and maintain a curve geometry inventory county-wide.



- Identify and develop curve delineation projects - including features such as high-visibility pavement markings, shoulder widening, curve signing, cleared obstructions in the roadside, and curve reconstruction.
- Develop community-wide studies for bicycle and pedestrian safety in towns with high rates of pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities or significant coverage of the pedestrian-bicycle High Injury Network.
- Continue allocating NCDOT funding for updating signing and pavement markings county-wide.
- Evaluate corridors in developed areas for potential Road Diet implementation to shorten crossing distances and reduce severe crashes.
- Assess reflective condition of warning and advisory signs and pavement markings county-wide.

Long Term Strategies

- Develop and maintain inventories for pedestrian signal phasing and sidewalk presence in high-risk areas.
- Install marked crosswalks, warning signs and lighting in rural areas where pedestrians may be expected based on surrounding context.
- Improve all existing signals in developed areas to include pedestrian/WALK phasing, marked crosswalks, LPI (leading pedestrian interval) and other intersection improvements.
- Identify sidewalk projects for roads identified as high-risk for pedestrian crashes, and integrate into long-range transportation plans.

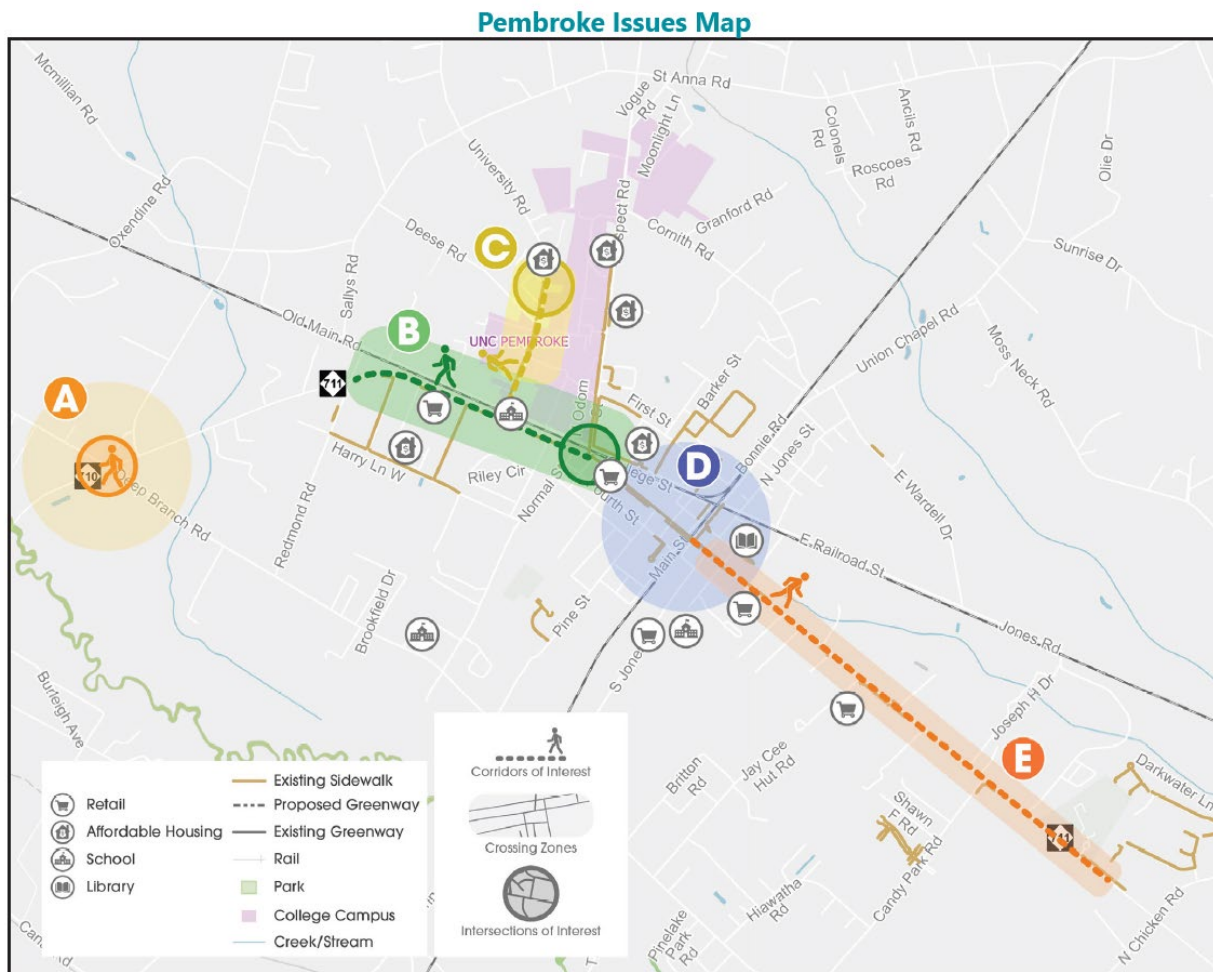


Figure 20: The 2019 Pembroke Pedestrian Safety Study is an example of a plan created for a town in Robeson County that has high rates of pedestrian and/or bicycle crashes and fatalities. This map was produced for the Pembroke Pedestrian Safety Study to highlight areas reviewed for pedestrian safety project improvements.



GOAL: ADOPT A SAFE SYSTEMS APPROACH FOR SUSTAINED IMPACT

Robeson County residents increasingly champion safety improvements, and local leaders are eager to collaborate and share information about transportation safety.

Residents of Robeson County have expressed strong interest in being informed about planned roadway safety projects. This interest reflects a growing community support for transportation safety and a desire for greater transparency and engagement. NCDOT recognizes the importance of keeping the public informed and involved and will work to enhance communication strategies—through public meetings, digital platforms, and local partnerships.

There is a continued need to more fully integrate safety improvements into all transportation projects and planning efforts across Robeson County. NCDOT is committed to embedding safety as a core element in project design, development, and implementation, and will work with regional and local partners to ensure that every transportation improvement is reviewed for safety needs.

Funding is limited for larger scale safety improvements, such as roundabouts and sidewalk improvements. These larger-scale, capital needs will require funding through programs like the STIP and from competitive grants offered from the USDOT. NCDOT will monitor future grant opportunities to implement more costly projects and coordinate with local partners with include safety countermeasures in all future proposals for the STIP.

Near Term Strategies

- Regularly report on the outcomes of safety project evaluation studies to stakeholders and community organizations.
- Create or work with the existing Vision Zero Task Force, including local agency representatives, to track implementation of the Robeson County Safety Plan.

Mid Term Strategies

- Perform Road Safety Assessments (RSA) for all proposed, large-scale NCDOT transportation projects.
- Create a Robeson County Safety in All Projects policy.
- Continue coordination with the Lumber River RPO and local governments to include safety improvements in future SPOT and STIP project submittals.

Long Term Strategies

- Provide County and municipal leadership with information about safety problems, expected outcomes of planned projects, and opportunities to prioritize needs in local government budgets and policies.
- Secure and leverage grants to construct large scale, higher cost countermeasures.
- Offer specialized training programs for local agencies to enhance their ability to effectively deliver safety projects.
- Partner with local agencies to create projects in downtown centers that improve safety and enhance quality of life.



Implementation and Monitoring

Eligible programs and activities are subject to change annually based on state and federal guidance and funding. Federal grants are primarily funded through apportionments to NCDOT or as discretionary and competitive grants awarded directly to local or state agencies. These grants may require a state or local match. Eligible grant recipients may include law enforcement, state agencies, tribal organizations, universities, non-profit organizations, medical organizations, and local governments. NCDOT will continue to monitor federal grant opportunities for future application to implement the RCSAP.

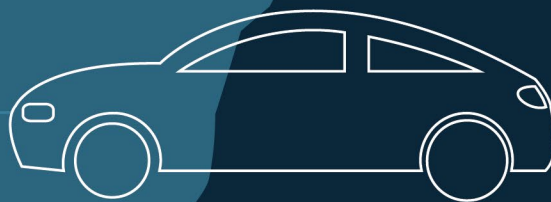
STAKEHOLDER ROLES



Figure 21. Roles of stakeholders needed to implement the Robeson County Safety Action Plan.

NCDOT Traffic Safety Unit funded and will continue to be a primary champion for the RCSAP, and the HSIP will continue to serve as a primary funding program for low-cost safety improvements in the county. NCDOT Division 6 is the lead for implementing engineering improvements in Robeson County, including the integration of safety enhancements in maintenance projects and STIP projects.

Following the completion and acceptance of the RCSAP, the Traffic Safety Unit will develop an implementation plan for the RCSAP, including tools for developing safety projects and engagement with organizations in Robeson County. NCDOT will continue to support and facilitate Robeson County Vision Zero Task Force meetings. The Task Force will continue to serve as a forum for stakeholders who are working in Robeson County to improve traffic safety. NCDOT will provide regular updates to the Task Force on traffic safety trends in the County, and the Task Force will monitor implementation of the RCSAP.



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Want to learn more?

Visit <https://ncvisionzero.org/robeson-county-vision-zero/>