

110th Purdue Road School Emphasizes Safety

Safety was the watchword at the 110th annual Purdue Road School Transportation Conference and Expo on March 12 and 13 at Purdue University.

FOCUS ON SAFETY

The entire opening session was devoted to motorist and work-zone safety, along with the official launch of our [Buckle Up Phone Down](#) campaign.

During his introductory speech, Commissioner Mike Smith detailed the Buckle Up Phone Down movement, our new agency-wide effort to save lives by urging motorists to fasten their seatbelts and put their phones down, to the 3,332 Road School attendees. He told the crowd that only 6% of Hoosiers are unrestrained drivers but that this group represents more than 50% of roadway fatalities in Indiana. Smith also said at least 30% of fatal crashes in Indiana are attributed to distracted driving.

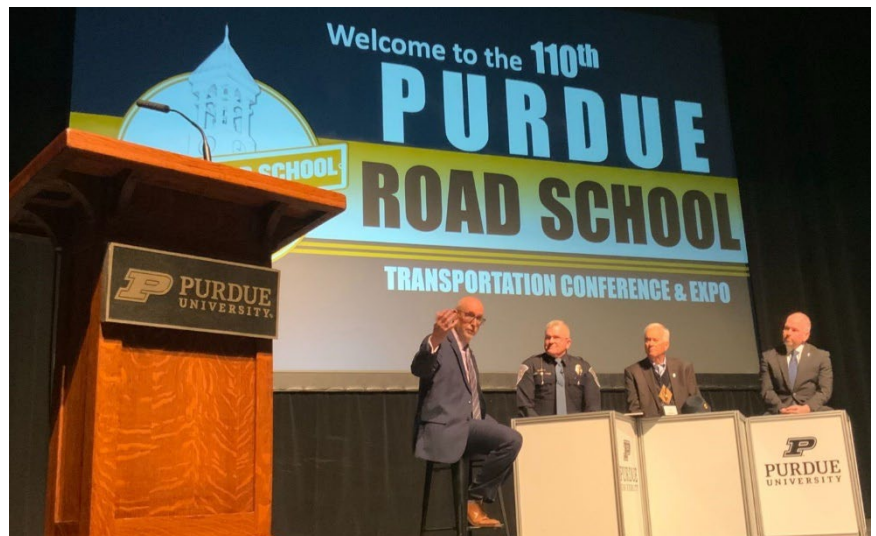
“We are taking a data-driven and line-in-the sand approach to project safety selection,” Smith said.

He added that INDOT has identified the most dangerous intersections in the state in our network, the most dangerous non-interstate corridors in the state, and high-frequency interstate corridors to address. Smith proclaimed that INDOT will take some form of action on every one of these corridors by the end of April.

After Smith’s speech, he joined Indiana State Police Superintendent Doug Carter and former Westfield Mayor Andy Cook for an opening-session panel discussion on roadway safety. Smith and Cook shared emotional stories about how the roadway deaths of family members have affected their lives. When asked to list the two common denominators of drivers involved in crashes that he has seen in his long law enforcement career, Carter said, “People are selfish and distracted.”

Moderator Richard Hedgecock, the president of Indiana Constructors Inc., said, “With traffic deaths one of the top five causes of fatalities in the nation, there is a public health epidemic. We’re the ones who are going to solve it.”

Smith agreed stating: “The call to action is all hands-on deck. I beg, plead, and expect every person in this room and in our industry to take an approach to our projects to include a safety-first mindset. I’m asking that



After Commissioner Mike Smith’s speech (left photo), a panel discussion takes place with (from left, top photo) moderator Richard Hedgecock, Indiana State Police’s Doug Carter, former Westfield Mayor Andy Cook, and Smith.

we make it cultural that we look for safety in every one of our projects.”



A great majority of attendees vowed to Smith that they would join the movement by visiting our new campaign website BUPDIN.com and spreading the word to friends and family by talk, text, or tweet. When they exited the opening-session theater, they signed a huge vinyl banner (*photo, left*) to take the Buckle Up Phone Down pledge. Also at the INDOT-hosted BUPD table, conference-goers picked up Buckle Up Phone Down swag and had their photos taken in front of another Buckle Up



The Crawfordsville District's Blaker Dollier (from left) and Megan DeLucenay.

Phone Down banner.

To watch a 75-minute video of the opening session, click [here](#).

During the rest of Road School, INDOT employees, private-company colleagues, and other transportation professionals collaborated to jointly hold 215 technical sessions in 18 tracks to educate attendees about the latest transportation-related best practices, technology, trends, and more.

Among the 3,332 Road School registrants were 566 INDOT employees. Of those agency staff members, 96 presented or moderated during the technical sessions. For a list of those employees, click [here](#).

Road School attracted presenters or moderators from four other departments of transportation (Kentucky, Michigan, Montana, and West Virginia), the Federal Highway Administration, and four out-of-state universities.