



▶▶ GETTING TO VISION ZERO
MASS ROAD
SAFETY SUMMIT '25

About This Report

Fundación MAPFRE's long-standing global commitment to injury prevention and road safety is reflected in its sponsorship of the second annual Getting to Vision Zero: Massachusetts Road Safety Summit.

Working alongside our tremendous partners at Massachusetts Department of Transportation (**MassDOT**) and the **Massachusetts Municipal Association**, Fundación MAPFRE is helping to advance the Commonwealth's Vision Zero goal. We know that eliminating roadway fatalities and serious injuries requires a comprehensive, collaborative approach that blends education, advocacy, policy, enforcement, technology, engineering, and partnership across state, local, and federal levels, and depends on public and private investment.

Leaders from across the state gathered on October 30 at the UMass Club in Boston to discuss the myriad issues and strategies that will make our roadways safer. This report explores the ideas from those dynamic conversations, highlighting the momentum and shared determination driving road safety forward in Massachusetts.



SUMMIT UNDERSCORES LOCAL ROADS' OUTSIZED SAFETY CHALLENGES



Road safety is a global challenge, often understood as the domain of federal or state policy debates. But it is municipal leaders who are forced to confront the consequences every day — and who must carry out the solutions. Locally owned roadways account for just 44% of total miles driven in Massachusetts, but 50% of traffic fatalities and 64% of serious injuries.

Those outsized figures were shared by Carrie Lavallee, chief engineer and deputy administrator at the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), in her keynote address at the second-annual Getting to Vision Zero: Mass. Road Safety Summit in October 2025. She told a crowd of municipal, state, and private-sector leaders that they must collaborate if Massachusetts is to achieve its Vision Zero goal of eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries.

“Safety is not something that can be delivered from the top down,” she said. “The majority of safety challenges and the greatest opportunities for improvement are found on these locally owned roads.”

This year’s Mass Road Safety Summit followed the inaugural event in 2024, which brought together experts and practitioners from Massachusetts and Europe to explore concepts and insights in pursuit of the global Vision Zero movement.

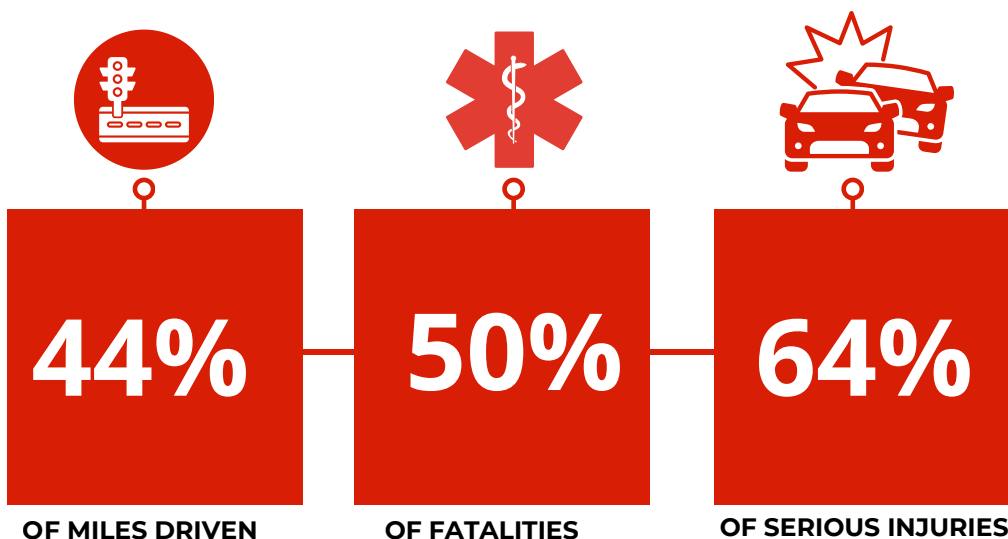
While the 2024 event was built on an international exchange of ideas, the 2025 Summit focused on action close to home. How can local leaders, in partnership with state, federal, and private-sector partners, take tangible steps to improve safety on the roads that are so central to their communities?

After all, MAPFRE USA Executive Vice President, General Counsel, and Secretary Mark Pasko said in the Summit's opening remarks, local officials are the ones with "their fingers on the pulse."

Massachusetts is a U.S. leader in roadway safety. Its 4.9 traffic deaths per 100,000 residents in 2023 was the lowest rate in the nation and a standout figure compared to the national rate of 12.2, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

But the Commonwealth has seen uneven success in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and is now facing new challenges on its roadways. Driving that rate even lower will take action and expertise across disciplines – including finding funding, building community trust, enforcing traffic laws, and further bolstering the partnership between state and local officials.

LOCALLY OWNED ROADWAYS IN MASSACHUSETTS ACCOUNT FOR:





These themes came to life throughout the day's four panel discussions, each of which explored a different dimension of how state, local, and private-sector leaders can improve safety outcomes:

Funding Safer Streets – From SS4A to Local Action, featuring moderator Jascha Franklin-Hodge, Chief of Streets, City of Boston; Brad Rawson, Director of Mobility, City of Somerville; Laurie Scarbrough, Senior Transportation Planning Engineer, Franklin Regional Council of Governments; and Alex Garbier, Senior Engineering Associate, Kittleson & Associates.

Changing Perceptions at the Local Level, featuring moderator Jeff Larason, Program Director for Highway Safety Communications, Travelers Marketing; Moises Rodrigues, Brockton Mayor-elect; Kocayne Givner, Holyoke City Councilor; and Chris Lee, Boston University Senior Lecturer and AdLab Faculty Advisor.

Smart Enforcement for Safer Roads, featuring moderator Chief Michael J. Bradley, Jr. (Ret.), Executive Director, Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association; Lt. Sean Reardon, Massachusetts State Police; and Chief John G. LeLacheur, Beverly Police Department.

Collaborating for Safer Roads: State, City & Town Partnership, featuring moderator Derek Krevat, Manager of Municipal Planning & Support, MassDOT; Dakota DelSignore, Traffic Safety Engineer, MassDOT; Shaojie Qiu, Traffic Safety Engineer, MassDOT; and Evelyn Densmore, Traffic Safety Engineer, MassDOT.

PROGRESS WILL ONLY COME WITH COLLABORATION



**"This is not
something that can
be done
independently from
any of the
stakeholders in this
process."**

Jaime Tamayo,
Chief Representative of
Fundación MAPFRE in the
United States and President &
CEO of MAPFRE USA

This report is not just a summary of the day's discussions, but a selection of ideas, policies, and challenges that state and municipal leaders are working to solve in communities across the Commonwealth.

Of course, in Massachusetts, no two municipalities are alike. The differences between a small rural town in Franklin County and a major urban center like Boston – both in the specific challenges they face and in the resources and staff capacity available to address them – are so vast that they feel separated by much more than 110 miles. But their goals are the same: to make the roads safer for Massachusetts motorists, cyclists, pedestrians, passengers, and all other users.

The Road Safety Summit made clear that this progress will only come with collaboration and partnership focused on identifying and implementing real, proven solutions.

As Jaime Tamayo, Chief Representative of Fundación MAPFRE in the United States and President & CEO of MAPFRE USA, said in the Summit's closing remarks: "This is not something that can be done independently from any of the stakeholders in this process."

FUNDING SAFER STREETS – FROM SS4A TO LOCAL ACTION

Building and improving infrastructure takes money, and it has been a whipsaw decade for transportation funding.

Federal funding increased dramatically with the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021, including funding for municipal and county governments through programs like the Safe Streets and Roads For All (SS4A) grants. But by 2025, inflation and tariffs have taken their toll on project affordability, while projects approved under the previous federal administration are, in some cases, seeing their funding altered or stripped away outright.

“As we all know in municipal government funding, as much as we’d like it to be consistent and predictable, it’s not always,” said Boston Chief of Streets Jascha Franklin-Hodge.

Franklin-Hodge moderated the Summit’s opening panel, which focused on the funding landscape for safety projects facing municipal officials – and how to best navigate it. That kind of discussion can’t be limited to the mere availability of funds, and this one wasn’t.



**JASCHA FRANKLIN-HODGE,
CITY OF BOSTON CHIEF OF STREETS**

Panelists representing city government close to the urban core, county government in rural Massachusetts, and private-sector engineering emphasized the importance of being prepared so that when funding is available, cities and towns can compete and succeed in turning a concept into a tangible safety improvement.

“Planning is critical for safety,” said Alex Garbier, a senior engineering associate at Kittleson & Associates. “You have to do the groundwork for when funding becomes available, or when something terrible happens. Having a plan allows you to galvanize action.”

That was the City of Somerville’s experience. Three pedestrian fatalities in the 2010s catalyzed the city to prioritize its road safety plan, which ultimately included a comprehensive bicycle network. In 2023, the city was awarded a nearly \$4 million SS4A federal grant to implement it.



Panelists representing city government close to the urban core, county government in rural Massachusetts, and private-sector engineering emphasized the importance of being prepared so that when funding is available, cities and towns can compete and succeed in turning a concept into a tangible safety improvement.

These types of funds can be hard to come by in Massachusetts, because the Commonwealth is in some ways a victim of its own success. As a leader in roadway safety, the state is actually at a disadvantage in securing federal grants designed to improve safety, Garbier said. That makes it all the more important to have a strong, data-backed plan that shows the clear need for a project.

“Being able to show you have done the work ... at least in our experience, that has been helpful in getting those funds,” Franklin-Hodge said.

Developing a thorough plan that can be quickly capitalized upon requires close coordination with other municipal departments, early and often. Public works, police and fire departments, and even local public health offices are critical partners when it comes to changing roadways, because they can speak to the need for change, identify the challenges in implementing or maintaining them, and ultimately advocate for them if they feel they are appropriate.

For example, fire departments may help identify areas where speed bumps would interfere with first responders and DPW staff may be able to note the challenges of plowing a street or picking up trash under different infrastructure. Once everybody is aligned, however, a plan is far more likely to succeed – both in gaining funding and the political support that often facilitates it.

"I have stood shoulder to shoulder with my fire chief in front of crowds, sometimes hostile crowds, describing our commitment to physical traffic calming," said Somerville Director of Mobility Brad Rawson.

These partnerships are equally important in rural communities, where small departments value having input and where coordination can actually be easier simply because many stakeholders already know one another.

"Presenting them with recommendations from on high from a consultant in Boston that says, 'you should do it this way,' – that often backfires," said Laurie Scarbrough, Senior Transportation Planning Engineer for the Franklin Regional Council of Governments. The FRCOG won a SS4A grant to develop a safety plan among the rural county's towns; small towns often lack the staffing, funding, and technical expertise to take on safety work on their own, Scarbrough emphasized.

At the state level, municipal governments must advocate for themselves if they want Massachusetts to fund or implement safety changes. "If municipal governments are not willing to say to our state agency partners, 'We demand a reduction in the number of traffic lanes, we demand physical traffic calming,'" Rawson said, "then they are often unable to deploy those resources... We're the ones that have the responsibility to provide the political cover for our partners at the state."

And at the federal level, especially at a tumultuous time for funding, Garbier recommended that municipalities stay in contact with career federal staffers, who can provide updates on funding processes and flag issues such as word choice that could derail a grant application.

At this moment of tighter finances, cities and towns must be "more entrepreneurial," Rawson said. This may not be the time for mega-projects, but instead experiment with low-cost traffic calming measures.

"Sometimes speed humps do a really good job. Are they pretty? No. But in a time of belt-tightening, it's a time to think through what is effective," Garbier said.

"Sometimes speed humps do a really good job. Are they pretty? No. But in a time of belt-tightening, it's a time to think through what is effective."

Alex Garbier,
Senior Engineer, Kittleson &
Associates



**MOISES RODRIGUES,
BROCKTON MAYOR-ELECT**

CREATIVELY, EDUCATING THE COMMUNITY

Brockton Mayor-elect Moises Rodrigues admits that he used to not fasten his seatbelt – a habit shared by many in his city. Local surveys suggested that only 44% of motorists in the state's largest city south of Boston were regularly buckling up as of early 2024.

Then came the little yellow air freshener.

In 2024, Brockton launched a coordinated campaign to increase seatbelt use through the Community Voices for Road Safety program – a partnership between MassDOT and the communications consultancy Travelers Marketing that builds road safety campaigns in cities. Rather than dictating messages from a distance, the program works closely with community members to develop messages that resonate locally.

In Brockton, the message they settled on was: “Protect Who You Love. Buckle Up, Brockton.” It appeared on murals and billboards, as well as in direct outreach to residents, and was presented in multiple languages. Air fresheners with the slogan were distributed so that motorists could get one last reminder as they turned the keys and hit the road.

By the end of the campaign, a remarkable 72% of surveyed motorists were wearing their seatbelts. Rodrigues was one of them. And good thing, too: shortly after he began wearing his seatbelt, he was involved in a head-on crash on Route 24 between Brockton and Taunton. He credits the air freshener for coming out alive.

"I honestly believe I was actually saved by it," Rodrigues said during the Summit's second panel.

The Community Voices program is an example of how to build a campaign for safer roads from the bottom-up rather than the top-down. Panelists returned to that theme over and over: one of the best ways to change a community's safety habits is to leverage the expertise and experience of its residents.

In 2025, the state and the City of Holyoke launched the latest Community Voices campaign. This one focused on curbing distracted driving, a problem that cellphone data found to be especially prevalent in the Pioneer Valley city.

The campaign is ongoing and results are not yet known, but City Councilor Koco Givner celebrated that so many nonprofits and community groups were involved in developing its message. Using a mix of Spanish and English to urge motorists to keep their eyes on the road: "You're loved. Te necesitan. Mira! Phone down!"

The campaign appears widely in Holyoke, including on a tall mural at a school in a high-traffic area, painted by students and their families. That kind of hands-on participation helps a message land, said Jeff Larason of Travelers Marketing, who moderated the session. "Now that message is part of their DNA and will affect their behavior," he said.

The best public service campaigns move people beyond mere awareness of an issue "to engagement, and to being ambassadors" for change, added Chris Lee, an advertising industry veteran who is now a senior lecturer at Boston University.

While Brockton and Holyoke were chosen for the Community Voices program because data suggested they could use help to address their safety issues, information alone is not enough to change behavior. Both cities landed on messaging that emphasized the devastation families face from traffic fatalities, hoping motorists would confront the costs distracted driving or failing to wear a seatbelt would impose on motorists' loved ones.

"Data points don't make a great headline. They make a good support line," Lee said. "Whatever messages we're putting out there, we need a more human appeal."

While the panel focused primarily on behavioral issues like seatbelt usage and distracted driving, panelists agreed with audience members who suggested similar community-based campaigns help residents better understand infrastructure that improves safety.

"Not everybody understands the importance of infrastructure or the need for slowing traffic," Givner said. "If you change the culture, then you get a population who is more likely to support the projects that are more likely to be life-saving and life-changing."





**LT. SEAN REARDON,
MASSACHUSETTS STATE POLICE**

SMART ENFORCEMENT FOR SAFER ROADS

Roadway safety depends on enforcement that ensures drivers follow the laws designed to protect them. But safety is not static: new challenges take to the road every day, and the law – and its enforcement – must evolve.

The Summit's third panel featured a trio of law enforcement officials who focused not only on the enforcement of traffic laws but on emerging safety issues and the best practices to address them.

"We know that data is at the center of everyone's enforcement strategy and we want to explore how different departments are using that data," said Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association Executive Director Michael J. Bradley, Jr., who moderated the panel.

In addition to discussing policing strategies around data, panelists identified micromobility, distracted driving, and cannabis as some of the modern road safety challenges vexing the Commonwealth's law enforcement officials.



New forms of transportation like e-bikes and scooters are creating a complicated environment for enforcement, panelists said. For example, the advent of high-speed electric bikes is presenting new challenges that traditional bicycles do not. Even that statement lacks full nuance: electric bicycles that provide some pedal assistance to accelerate or climb a hill are “awesome,” Massachusetts State Police Lieutenant Sean Reardon said. But they are almost entirely different vehicles from bikes powered entirely by a battery that can reach speeds of 40 m.p.h., which Reardon likened to “electric dirt bikes.”

Because many of the new micromobility devices have not been clearly classified by the state, it is difficult for police to know how to best approach them. “Should an e-bike be in the bike lane if they do 30 m.p.h.?” asked Beverly Police Chief John LeLacheur. He is working on a state commission to better understand micromobility and shape policy proposals around it.

Distracted driving is not exactly a new issue; LeLacheur recalls seeing drivers decades ago with newspapers open on their laps. But it has exploded as a challenge in the smartphone era despite laws, enforcement, and messaging campaigns designed to curb it. So-called infotainment screens in modern vehicles, designed to prevent people from looking at their phones, provide their own form of distraction. “It’s definitely getting worse,” Reardon said.

Reardon noted that many motorists seem to think they can use their phones while their vehicle is stopped at a light or in traffic. “They go right to their phone,” Reardon said. “You’re still in traffic.”

Panelists emphasized that parents should set a good example for their children by avoiding the phone while driving, because those children will pick up on those habits when they get behind the wheel.

It was also noted that policing cannabis use on the road is set to grow even more difficult as Massachusetts prepares for its first businesses that allow on-site consumption. While rideshare services such as Uber and Lyft have dramatically reduced drunk driving among young people, cannabis-related impairment remains a major concern.

“These next generations coming up – if they’re drinking, they’re not driving, many of them,” Reardon said. “But some have no problem taking an edible or smoking and thinking they can actually drive better.”

Enforcement and training are challenged to keep pace. Police academies still teach traditional field sobriety tests. Adding advanced drug-recognition training will be difficult when recruits are already taking in so much information, Reardon said. Municipalities, meanwhile, lack sufficient drug recognition experts, LeLacheur added. Even among those experts, panelists noted, there is still no agreed-upon standard for measuring cannabis impairment, as it affects people differently based on body type and tolerance.

In addition to those emerging concerns, panelists spoke to the importance of data, not only to identify the best places to position officers on their roads but also to apply for grants to help fund enforcement efforts. Bradley said it is wise for law enforcement to share data they collect about speeding and other road safety issues within their communities. “It’s a good strategy to use for transparency with the public, to say we’re monitoring this area,” he said.

During the panel, members of the audience suggested using cameras and other technology to automate enforcement. The concept has had limited uptake so far in Massachusetts, though cities and towns are now allowed to put traffic cameras on school buses.

Panelists suggested using cameras to enforce traffic laws in work zones or at red lights. They noted, however, that the technology would result in vehicle owners being penalized, which may not always be the same person as the driver that committed the infraction. And the widespread use of automated enforcement may run into political challenges, Bradley said.

“We know it’s a good idea, it’s probably going to be effective, but it’s not something the public embraces,” he said.

“These next generations coming up – if they’re drinking, they’re not driving, many of them. But some have no problem taking an edible or smoking and thinking they can actually drive better.”

Lt. Sean Reardon,
Massachusetts State Police

COLLABORATING FOR SAFER ROADS: STATE, CITY & TOWN PARTNERSHIP

The importance of collaboration between municipalities and the state was a key theme of the Summit. The day's final panel showed how that idea is being put into action, with a team of MassDOT officials walking attendees through newly launched state programs that help cities and towns improve their roads. From early-stage project planning to signage and materials, MassDOT has spent much of the 2020s exploring ways to provide direct support to municipalities.

A quick survey at the start of the panel underscored the need for these programs. Asked what limitations they face in implementing safety improvements, the audience overwhelmingly responded with staff capacity and funding. MassDOT's new programs aim to address exactly that challenge, with the state providing resources for municipalities to make the changes they want to see on local roads.

"These programs are designed to remove barriers and to make safety improvements easier for your community to achieve," Lavallee said in the Summit's keynote speech, previewing the closing panel.





Under MassDOT's Materials Procurement for Municipalities program, the state purchases and distributes safety materials to municipalities who show they need them. The materials include signs indicating a road curve, school zone speed feedback signs, rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFB) that call greater attention to pedestrian crossings, and signage and other materials to support converting two-way stop intersections to all-way stops.

Materials are being distributed to hundreds of cities and towns in Massachusetts. Eligibility differs by material type. RRFB applicants were screened for sidewalks and sightlines at the proposed installation sites, and requests for all-way stop signage were screened for crash data from the challenging intersections.

These materials provide low-cost, high-reward solutions, MassDOT officials said, and they are often the most cost-effective approach to safety. Every \$1 spent on some of these interventions can improve safety outcomes 13-fold – a much higher return on investment than larger safety projects, said Dakota DeSignore, a MassDOT traffic safety engineer. At the same time, these tools don't preclude future larger-scale infrastructure projects. For example, at a challenging intersection, "all-way stop is a good interim measure until a larger reconstruction project can be done," said Shaojie Qiu, another MassDOT traffic safety engineer.

MassDOT is also offering new support for those larger-scale projects, with the state's Local Early and Actionable Planning (LEAP) program, which provides lower-income communities with between \$25,000 and \$100,000 worth of early-stage project planning work such as conceptual design, traffic analysis, grant application assistance, and cost estimates. The state is currently reviewing 52 submissions that were sent in for the first round of funds in 2025.

LEAP GRANTS

\$100K

**STATE'S LOCAL
EARLY AND
ACTIONABLE
PLANNING
PROGRAM
PROVIDES
LOWER-INCOME
COMMUNITIES
BETWEEN \$25K -
\$100K**

The state's other programs have also seen significant uptake: 95 municipalities, for example, applied for RRFB materials, and 40 intersections in 21 municipalities are being converted from two-way stops to all-way stops under that program.

The MassDOT panelists said that in the future, the state could approve these projects more quickly if cities and towns are able to accelerate the process of signing memorandums of understanding and are more selective about where they want to install infrastructure.



"For RRFB, we had an insane number of locations to look through," MassDOT Traffic Safety Engineer Evelyn Densmore said. "It just delayed things a little bit longer than we were hoping."

Audience members suggested it would be helpful if MassDOT expanded its materials program to include things like bike parking, temporary speed humps, and flex posts.

Despite the seeming popularity of these programs, audience members suggested in a survey response that many were still unfamiliar with them. The MassDOT panelists suggested that municipal governments should "champion" their needs to the state, regularly updating about crash data and municipal concerns. Densmore said the most efficient way to bolster the municipal-state partnership is for cities and towns to dedicate one point-person to be in contact regularly with MassDOT.

The communication, she emphasized, is essential to building a partnership that improves safety outcomes on local roads.

THE WAY FORWARD IS CLEAR

As we conclude this Road Safety Summit report, I want to thank our partners at the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, the Massachusetts Municipal Association, and all the speakers and participants who contributed to a meaningful and solutions-focused event. Together, we demonstrated that addressing road safety is not just about reacting and responding. We heard real examples of how thorough planning, strong local advocacy, and collaboration across departments can create the foundation for meaningful change.



A central message of the Summit was that many of the most significant road safety challenges and opportunities lie at the local level. This reinforces that progress depends on empowering municipal leaders with tools, support and partnerships to take action where it matters most.

We also saw how local engagement drives behavior change. Campaigns built around human stories, community voices and emotional connections remind residents that safety is personal, and prevention is about protecting the people we love.

At MAPFRE and Fundación MAPFRE, we recognize that our responsibility extends beyond protecting people after accidents to helping prevent them in the first place. That is why road safety remains a central pillar of our global mission, and why we are proud to support events like this Summit and long-standing initiatives like the MassDOT Highway Assistance Program, which has supported nearly 800,000 motorists across the Commonwealth for over 20 years.

The way forward is clear. Real progress will come from embracing collaboration, sharing responsibility, and supporting local leaders with resources, data and community engagement. Thank you to all who dedicate their time to this vital work. Together, we can advance road safety as a collective priority that will protect and enhance the communities we serve and get us closer to achieving Vision Zero.

Jaime Tamayo

Chief Representative of Fundación MAPFRE in the United States
President & CEO of MAPFRE USA

Fundación **MAPFRE**

