



Traffic Safety Findings

FINAL REPORT

Findings Summary

Road Safety	Pedestrian Safety	Driver's Ed
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Here are some brief takeaways from the traffic safety listening session focus group:

- 1. **Increased awareness:** The session helped participants become more aware of various traffic safety issues and concerns.
- 2. **Importance of education:** Participants emphasized the need for educational campaigns to inform the public about safe driving practices.
- 3. **Behavioral changes:** The session encouraged participants to reflect on their own driving behaviors and consider making necessary changes for improved safety.
- 4. **Infrastructure improvements:** Discussions highlighted the importance of infrastructure enhancements, such as better road design and increased signage, to promote safer road conditions.
- 5. **Collaboration:** Participants recognized the need for collaboration between community members, law enforcement, and other stakeholders to address traffic safety challenges effectively.

Introduction

The IRCO Traffic Safety Team received a grant to provide eight Traffic Safety listening sessions specifically for immigrants and refugees across different cultural centers, with the Africa House, Slavic and Eastern European Center (“SEEC”), and the Pacific Islander & Asian Family Center (“PIAFC”), that serves youths, seniors, newcomers, and communities broadly of refugee and immigrant communities. The IRCO Traffic Safety Team focused on engaging with immigrants and refugees to educate them on how to be safe while walking or driving in an interactive manner.



The team conducted five focus groups. We held two separate sessions for the African community: one with the elders & seniors, interpreting the presentation into the Oromo & Tigrinya languages. A separate session was also held with African students. Our team met with the Slavic community – which included parents and elementary women teachers. Further, we coordinated sessions with the Pacific Islander community, as well with Asian community members primarily from our Vietnamese community. Specific communities were targeted in response to the high number of traffic accidents and deadly crashes in neighborhoods where our communities live.

Focus Group Participants

Race	Ethnicity	Language	Numbers
Africans	Ethiopians, Somalians, Burundi, Eritreans, Kenya,	Oromo & Triginya, Somali, Kirundi, Eritrea, Maima Bantu, Maay Maay Bantu	45
Eastern Europeans	Slavic, Russians	Russians	21
Asians	Vietnamese, Nepal	Nepali, Karen, Mayan, Lou Goku	17
Pacific Islanders	Micronesian, Polynesian, Melanesian	Samoan, Chuukese, Pohnpeian	9
Latin America	Guatemala	Spanish	2
Total participants			94

Many of IRCO’s clients speak multiple languages, which makes it difficult for them to understand road instructions and safety for driving and walking. Being new to the country and to Oregon, many community members are not familiar with the systems that manage the roads and can improve road safety. The goal of these Traffic Safety listening sessions was to introduce community members to the systems and context, as well as gather their story and feedback on ways to improve traffic safety.



Methodology

The IRCO Traffic Safety Team created our presentation using current traffic safety data and ODOT educational materials. We then reached out to our different cultural centers and programs for help with recruitment and conducted the focus group presentation in multiple languages as needed.

The participants were asked the following questions regarding road safety:

- Do you feel safe where you live? Why or why not?
- Do you know the Traffic Safety Laws?
- Why are there higher rates of road accidents and fatalities in Multnomah?
- Do you know road signs and understand their meanings?
- Do you know what happens when you receive a traffic citation after being pulled over by a police officer?
- How can ODOT reduce traffic accidents or deaths on the roads?

We also showed and pointed out the High and Deadliest Crash Network Streets and Intersections, and asked:

- Do you live on or near these streets (82nd, Sandy, Powell etc..)?
- Do you feel safe living around these areas/streets?
- How can ODOT make these areas safe?

Pedestrian Safety and Responsibility:

- Do you walk and/or bike in your community? If so, how often? Is it for work, exercise, or recreation?
- Do you feel safe while walking or biking in your community? Why or why not?
- Do you feel like you know your rights and responsibilities when walking and riding on Oregon roads?

Driver's Education:

- Do you know where to find teen/adult driver's education resources?
- What barriers do you face for your children to attend driver's education? (Parents' questions)
- As a driver or learner, what challenges do you face in becoming a driver?
- Why do you think there is driver's education here in the U.S?

Summary of Key Findings

In this section, we will provide a summary of the findings from the community members who participated in the Traffic Safety listening sessions.

Pedestrian Safety Concerns

Most participants reported walking four to five days a week for various purposes. Regarding road safety, when asked if they feel safe where they live and why or why not, several participants noted that they do not feel safe due to:

- High crash streets (122nd, Division St, and 82nd)
- Bumpy and potholed roads (82nd & Division Street, where roads are not being fixed and construction takes a long time)
- Lack of crossing signs and beacons
- Absence of speeding monitoring cameras
- Presence of homeless individuals on the sidewalks, making it difficult for students and pedestrians & bicyclists to use them
- Lack of respect for speed limits
- People driving without a driver's license or insurance
- Drivers not respecting pedestrians crossing or obeying the law



Pedestrian Knowledge of Street Signs and Resources

We included an activity of showing some of the road & traffic signs printed & by showing videos. It is intended to educate the audience on road signs that are most frequent to observe on the streets and to understand what they are & represent. Among the participants in our focus groups, some were aware of road signs and understood their meanings. One of the examples was given by participants, that a road sign for school zone (ahead) is seen on the road but audiences had seen drivers neglect it and would not reduce speed. This caused a huge confusion to question why even bother have that road sign there and/or why pedestrians are not safe to cross the streets across anymore. There should be a traffic officer present to be able to locate the speeders, or a speed monitor camera near or in school areas. However, many participants were not aware of resources available to appeal traffic citations or participate in safety classes.

Regarding Driver's Education

- Some participants were unaware of where to find driver's education classes, while others knew where to find them.
- The main challenges mentioned were lack of income and the high cost of classes, that made most to not go that route of taking a driver's education.
- Many participants mentioned that they opt to take the driving test at the DMV because they cannot afford driver's education classes. They recommended that ODOT provide free driver's education classes to high school students and low-income families to improve basic driving knowledge and potentially reduce future road traffic fatalities.
- There were participants suggesting that road law breakers (those who are at fault for causing accidents) must take driver's education, even though they may or may not have had taken a class before. This could help reduce future road deaths.

Shared Stories From Community Members

- One participant shared a personal experience of losing a family member in a road accident and emphasized the need for drivers to be held responsible for accidents caused by distraction, drunk driving, speeding, and not respecting pedestrian laws.
- Pacific Islander participants mentioned that accidents often occur due to driving under the influence, not wearing seatbelts, speeding, and not respecting the law. They also mentioned that some drivers refuse to stop and give pedestrians the right of way.



Community Feedback

When asked how ODOT can reduce or improve traffic deaths on the roads, participants suggested the following:

- Improve security on the streets through traffic policing or cameras
- Increase crossing signs in the community and on main roads
- Increase sidewalks in the neighborhood
- Install more flashing beacons for crossing signs
- Suspend vehicles driving without plates and insurance
- Trim trees for better road visibility
- Increase road lanes instead of decreasing them
- Install speed signs in the community
- Improve trails for walking and biking
- Improve road design, such as Division Street
- Address the issue of homeless people on the sidewalks
- Add speed bumps to include all neighborhoods, not just wealthy areas only, to reduce speeding in the neighborhoods
- Make walkways safer to walk on by removing trees in the way, fix walkways better
- Introduced some basic road safety education in elementary school's family nights activities & driver's ed classes to be taught in middle schools & high schools

Key Recommendations

The IRCO Traffic Safety team provided key recommendations for reducing the risk of road fatalities and injuries:

- Recommend ODOT to have a place for people to report traffic safety issues and provide feedback, including a hotline
- Provide resources related to traffic safety and education materials to people, making them available at Community Based Organizations like IRCO and community resource centers
- Listen to people’s concerns regarding traffic safety, including fixing potholes and improving roads in underserved areas
- Advocate for better street lighting and safety in neighborhoods
- Provide more traffic safety education in schools and for parents
- Address specific road safety issues mentioned by participants, such as SE Woodstock & 90th in Portland.
- Address the issue of homeless individuals in neighborhoods
- Advocate for making drugs illegal in Oregon
- Fix broken crosswalk signs and lights
- Ensure that pedestrians’ rights and responsibilities are acknowledged by drivers
- Improve access to driver’s education resources
- Provide transportation resources for seniors to medical appointments and other activities, such as shuttle buses to traffic safety focus groups

Overall, the findings from the focus groups highlight the need for improved road safety measures, education, and resources to ensure the safety of immigrants, refugees, and other community members.



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Co-Authors

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Finally, we thank the community members who participated in our continued efforts around traffic safety and mobility in our region. We aimed to help them understand and address road user behaviors that are negatively impacting their safety such as roadway departure, impaired driving, and speeding.

IRCO Community Development Team

About the IRCO Community Development: We are a Collaboration & Capacity Building sector through community engagement, coalition building, advocacy, and popular education. The purpose of this report is to engage with the community on topics like traffic, pedestrian & road safety.

If you have any questions, please reach out ircocommunitydevelopment@irco.org



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