

Colorado Department of Transportation's Traffic Safety and Engineering Services Branch and Highway Safety Office Letter of Support

The Colorado Department of Transportation's (CDOT) Traffic Safety and Engineering Services (TSE) branch and Highway Safety Office (HSO) branches support the extension of the current process to collect, analyze, and store data under the NHTSA Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) program. CDOT TSE has been the primary contractor for the FARS Program since its inception in 1975.

While delays in data certification and release remain a significant challenge for real-time safety analysis, the FARS database remains an essential national resource that provides the only "apples-to-apples" comparison of traffic fatalities across all fifty states. Without this unified, standardized system, we would lose the ability to perform the rigorous, consistent national benchmarking required to identify long-term trends and implement effective federal safety standards.

The fragmentation of data at the state or local level often leads to "blind spots" in our national safety strategy. Without this consistent and authoritative national dataset, policymakers and researchers would lack the clarity needed to accurately diagnose problems or prioritize lifesaving interventions.

As we move toward a future involving more complex vehicle automation and shifting demographic patterns, the granular data provided by FARS and the Non-Traffic Surveillance system is more vital than ever. Colorado urges NHTSA to continue prioritizing the modernization and transparency of these databases to ensure that every safety decision made is backed by the highest quality evidence available. This also supports making data accessible to foster informed public discourse on roadway safety and support advocacy efforts.

Colorado embraces data-driven safety analysis, which helps the state determine how to properly distribute resources and funding to achieve the vision and mission of the Colorado Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP). The future of Colorado is eliminating traffic deaths and serious injuries so all people using any transportation mode arrive at their destination safely. Colorado supports the enhancement of the FARS system and maintains that the evaluation and modification of these processes must involve state-level input and feedback loops to ensure continued accuracy and utility.