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For Immediate Release

Local transportation officials have designated five sections of interstate highway as the first St. Louis "TravelSafe Zones," which will be areas targeted for increased law enforcement and community education because of their high incidence of serious motor vehicle crashes.

Signs will mark the TravelSafe Zones to alert drivers they are entering roadways where there is a greater risk for serious injury or death from a crash. Local police and state highway patrol officers will focus on these areas. Pete Rahn, director of the Missouri Department of Transportation, announced the designation of the zones Friday.

The first TravelSafe Zones in the city extends five miles west from the Poplar Street Bridge on Interstate 70. The other TravelSafe Zones are on I-70 from the Wentzville Parkway to Lake St. Louis, on I-270 from St. Charles Rock Road to Dorsett Road, on I-44 from Route 109 to Pacific and on I-55 from Highway Z to Route 67 between Pevely and Festus. More zones are expected to be designated later. MoDOT is providing funding for signage and other aspects of the TravelSafe Zone campaign.

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The East-West Gateway Council of Governments is coordinating this regional effort as part of its ongoing transportation safety initiative, which has the theme of “Someone’s Future Is in Your Hands.” The initiative is designed to reduce the region’s death-a-day fatality rate from motor vehicle crashes. For this year through September, 235 people have died as a result of motor vehicle crashes in the St. Louis metropolitan area, which includes the Illinois counties of Madison, Monroe and St. Clair.

When compared to 33 other metropolitan areas of similar size and demographics, St. Louis has the third worst ranking for fatality rates from motor vehicle crashes, according to data compiled from 2003 by East-West Gateway. For that year, motor vehicle crashes accounted for 14.7 deaths per 100,000 residents in the St. Louis metropolitan area. In 2002, St. Louis ranked 9th for fatalities from motor vehicle crashes.

Crash records indicate that the causes of most fatal crashes are driver inattention, driving after drinking alcohol and driving too fast for road conditions. Increased law enforcement in TravelSafe Zones and community education in those areas is intended to curtail those causes of fatal crashes.

The East-West Gateway Council of Governments is the federally designated metropolitan planning organization responsible for approving federal funds used in road projects. In its monthly board meetings and through the work of its staff, East-West Gateway also addresses other regional issues. Its 21-member board of directors includes five mayors and the top elected official in each of the seven member counties.

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