WHERE WE STAND

An Update from

EAST-WEST GATEWAY
Council of Governments

MAY, 2004 • 4th Edition, Update #2

MOTOR VEHICLE CRASHES IN THE ST. LOUIS REGION

INTRODUCTION

Every day, St. Louis loses a piece of its future on area roadways. In 2002, traffic crashes in the metropolitan statistical area claimed the lives of 384 people. This number includes individuals from every age group, every walk-of-life, every racial and ethnic background, and every county in the 16-County MSA. It includes drivers, passengers, and pedestrians. Children and youth are disproportionately represented, however. St. Louisans between the ages of one and 34 are more likely to die as the result of a motor vehicle crash than any other single cause.

WHERE WE STAND

As the chart indicates, St. Louis ranked ninth among 34 peer metros[1] in the rate of motor vehicle fatalities in 2002, with 14.2 lost lives per 100,000 population. St. Louis' crash fatality rate is very similar to that of Kansas City. Among peer metros, overall, areas in Texas and Tennessee rank the highest. The top ten metropolitan areas are all located in the Midwest, South, or Southwest regions of the United States.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC COSTS OF CRASH FATALITIES

Motor vehicle crashes can have a devastating effect not only on the individuals involved, but also on family members and friends. They bring enormous economic costs, as well. According to the "The Economic Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes 2000," a publication of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the costs of motor vehicle crashes, including lost workplace and household activity, property damage, and medical and travel delay costs, reached $230.6 billion in the year 2000, an average of $820 for every person living in the United States.

This report places the national cost of an average roadway fatality at $977,000 and estimates the economic costs associated with a critically injured crash survivor at $1.1 million. Using this as a base measure, fatal crashes in the St. Louis MSA total over $375 million each year.

CRASHES IN THE GATEWAY REGION

East-West Gateway staff have analyzed many of the factors contributing to motor vehicle crashes in the eight-county region encompassing the City of St. Louis; Franklin, Jefferson, St. Charles, and St. Louis counties in Missouri; and Madison, Monroe, and St. Clair counties in Illinois. Specific actions taken (or not taken) by automobile drivers contributed to most of the 1,777 crash fatalities that occurred between 1997 and 2002.

The chart below indicates the driver behaviors noted in police reports from these fatal crashes. The most prevalent were inattention, driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, and speeding. In as many as one-third of all crashes, the driver was not paying full attention due to any number of distractions: eating, talking to passengers, using a cell phone, and more. Driving while intoxicated follows closely behind inattention as a contributing factor, accounting for 30 percent of the region's fatal crashes. In fact, many of the crashes in which alcohol use was a factor also involved speeding, driving too fast for conditions, and improper lane usage. Drunk driving alone or in combination with other factors has cost the region almost $515 million over the past six years.

DEATHS FROM MOTOR VEHICLE CRASHES

Per 100,000 population, 2002

1	**Austin**	**18.3**
2	Nashville	18.2
3	Phoenix	17.4
4	Memphis	16.8
5	San Antonio	15.1
6	Oklahoma City	14.6
7	Houston	14.5
8	Kansas City	14.3
9	**St. Louis**	**14.2**
10	Louisville	13.8
11	Atlanta	13.5
12	Charlotte	12.5
12	Dallas	12.5
14	Columbus	11.5
	Average	11.2
15	Cincinnati	11.0
15	San Diego	11.0
17	Baltimore	10.7
18	Indianapolis	10.6
19	Pittsburgh	10.4
20	Philadelphia	10.1
21	Washington DC	9.8
22	Detroit	9.4
23	Minneapolis	9.0
23	Portland	9.0
25	Chicago	8.8
25	Salt Lake City	8.8
27	Seattle	7.7
28	Miami	7.6
29	Los Angeles	7.4
30	New York	6.8
30	Cleveland	6.8
32	San Francisco	6.7
33	Boston	6.5
33	**Milwaukee**	**6.5**

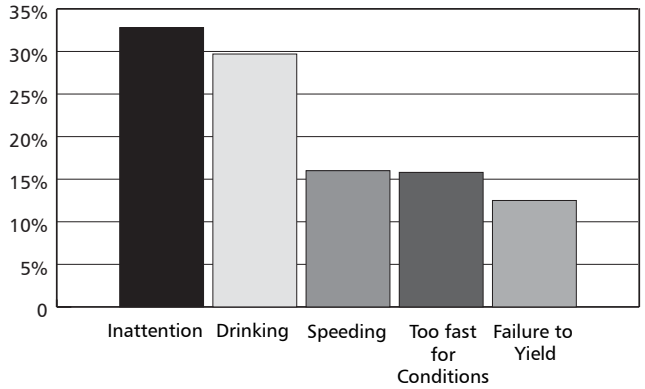
WORSE — AVERAGE — BETTER

Source: FARS, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, 2002

United States Census Bureau, 2000

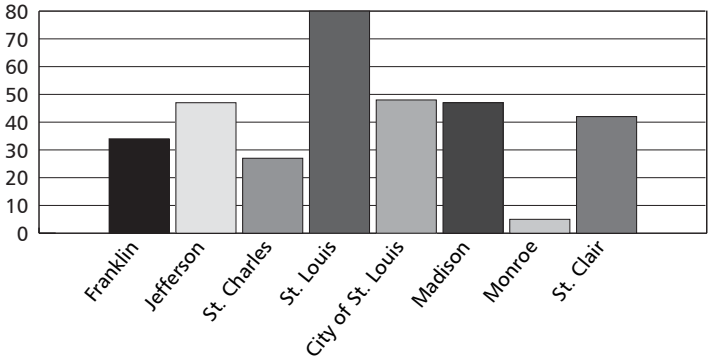
Contributing Factors in 1,777 Fatal Crashes

East-West Gateway Region 1997-2002



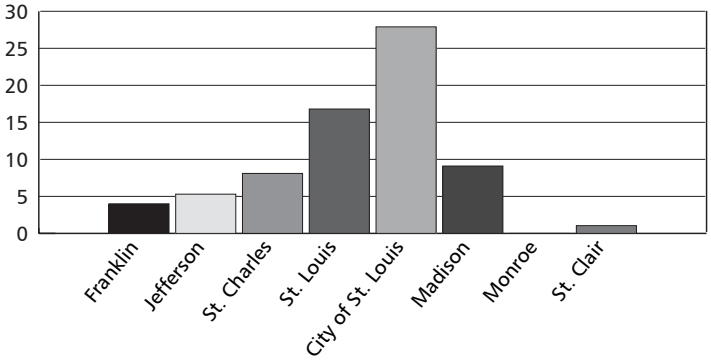
Annual Average Total Fatalities

East-West Gateway Region 1997-2002



Percent Fatal Crashes Pedestrian Related

East-West Gateway Region 1997-2002



The average number of individuals who died from motor vehicle crashes during the six-year period from 1997 to 2002 ranged from a high of 80 in St. Louis County to five in Monroe County.

Thirteen percent of fatal motor vehicle crashes in the region involved pedestrians. The percentage of fatal crashes involving pedestrians in the City of St. Louis was more than twice that—27.9 percent between 1997-2002.

THE REGION CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

These data support the point that most motor vehicle crashes are not "accidents" at all—they could have been prevented. Transportation safety professionals recommend that communities wanting to reduce crashes and the severity of crashes use a four-pronged approach that focuses on four "Es:" Education, Enforcement, Emergency Response, and Engineering. St. Louis can make a difference with this kind of collaborative regional approach bringing together transportation officials, public safety officers, and public health officials to expose major safety issues on the area's roadways and identify needs and opportunities for improvement.

Sources for all bar charts: Missouri State Highway Patrol, 1997-2002 and Illinois State Police, 1997-2002.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

"The Economic Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes 2000", National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, May 2002.

Fatal Accident Reporting System(FARS), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation. http://www-fars.nhtsa.dot.gov

American Automobile Association (AAA). http://www.aaa.com

National Safety Council. http://www.nsc.org

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety. http://www.saferoads.org

Center for Disease Control and Prevention. http://www.cdc.gov

Missouri State Highway Patrol. http://www.mshp.dps.missouri.gov

Illinois State Police. http://www.isp.state.il.us/

1 Metropolitan areas were selected as our "peers" if they met one of two criteria: the area had a population of 950,000 or more and was within 500 miles of St. Louis, or the area had an economic function similar to that of the St. Louis region.

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WHERE WE STAND

AN UPDATE FROM

EAST-WEST GATEWAY
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MAY, 2005 • 4th Edition, Update #4

THE HUMAN TOLL OF MOTOR VEHICLE CRASHES IN THE ST. LOUIS REGION

CRASH FATALITIES IN THE ST. LOUIS REGION

Between 1997 and 2003, there were 2,083 fatal motor vehicle crashes on the roadways of the St. Louis region that includes the City of St. Louis; Franklin, Jefferson, St. Charles, and St. Louis counties in Missouri; and Madison, Monroe, and St. Clair counties in Illinois. Crashes took the lives of 2,332 individuals.[1] This represents an average of 333 persons per year over the seven year period—almost one person every single day.

These are compelling numbers. But the most important thing about them is that they are not just numbers. Every individual who died was someone's daughter, son, father, mother, spouse, closest friend. Someone's future is forever changed when a sudden and premature injury death occurs. Taken together, these deaths impact the entire region.

The all-too frequent reaction is: "accidents happen." They do, but another important thing about these crash fatalities is that most of them are not accidents at all. They were preventable. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, an error on the part of the driver contributes to as many as 90 percent of all motor vehicle crashes. In the St. Louis region, the three most common causes of driver error are inattention, drinking, and speeding. If these factors were eliminated —or significantly reduced—most fatalities could have been avoided.

For every individual who dies, many more are seriously injured. In the five Missouri counties of the St. Louis region, almost 23,700 motor vehicle crash victims visit emergency rooms every year. Nearly 1,760 are admitted to the hospital.[2]

WHERE WE STAND

Metro areas are hubs of the nation's population, as well as its commercial, social, cultural, research, and government activity. It can be expected that crash rates would be highest in these traffic centers. To gauge how the St. Louis metro area compares with others, East- West Gateway staff has analyzed the crash fatality records from the federal Fatal Accident Reporting System for 34 of the 35 major metro areas featured in our ongoing assessment *Where We Stand: A Strategic Assessment of the St. Louis Region*.[3] Earlier assessments were updated in 2004 to include the new MSA boundaries established one year earlier by the federal Office of Management and Budget.[4]

This analysis found that St. Louis is third highest among the metros in motor vehicle crash deaths per 100,000 population. This rank is illustrated in the chart at right. The rate is slightly worse than a year earlier—14.7 deaths per 100,000 population in 2003, compared to 14.2 in 2002. But the rank shows significant progress in the wrong direction—up to 3rd from 9th. Many of our competitors saw enough improvement during the year to push St. Louis up toward the high end of the chart.

DEATHS FROM MOTOR VEHICLE CRASHES

Per 100,000 population, 2003

1	**Nashville**	**18.8**
2	Memphis	16.5
3	St. Louis	14.7
3	Phoenix	14.7
5	Atlanta	14.2
6	Louisville	13.6
7	Oklahoma City	13.1
8	Houston	12.9
9	Austin	12.4
9	Kansas City	12.4
11	San Antonio	12.3
12	Charlotte	11.9
13	Dallas	11.0
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20	Detroit	9.8
21	Pittsburgh	9.7
21	Washington DC	9.7
23	Minneapolis	9.2
24	Denver	8.8
25	Chicago	8.7
26	Salt Lake City	8.3
27	Los Angeles	7.9
28	Portland	7.5
28	Milwaukee	7.5
30	Seattle	7.0
31	San Francisco	6.9
32	New York	6.4
33	Cleveland	6.1
34	**Boston**	**6.0**

WORSE — AVERAGE — BETTER

Source: FARS, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, 2003

United States Census Bureau, 2003

The chart also demonstrates that the average among the metro areas was 10.6 motor vehicle crash deaths per 100,000 population. The U.S. Surgeon General has set a goal for the nation of 9.0 crash fatalities per 100,000 persons by the year 2010.[5] If the St. Louis metropolitan area were to meet that goal, it would require a 39 percent reduction over 2003.

1 Fatal Accident Reporting System (FARS), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, US Department of Transportation, www.fars.nhtsa.dot.gov.

2 Averaged for the nine-year period 1994-2002. Data from the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, www.dhss.state.mo.us.

3 Fatal crash data for the 35th MSA, Miami-Dade County, were not available.

4 The official St. Louis Metropolitan Statistical Area now includes the 16 counties of the City of St. Louis; Franklin, Jefferson, Lincoln, St. Charles, St. Louis, Warren, and Washington counties in Missouri; Bond, Calhoun, Clinton, Jersey, Macoupin, Madison, Monroe, and St. Clair in Illinois. For more information, see www.census.gov.

5 Healthy People 2010 Injury Prevention Objectives, 15-15. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, www.safetypolicy.org.

TRAVELSAFE: SOMEONE'S FUTURE IS IN YOUR HANDS
East-West Gateway has joined with law enforcement officials, educators, engineers, and emergency response personnel from throughout the bi-state region to launch a multi- dimensional transportation safety campaign. Our objectives are to raise awareness of the extent of this problem and to encourage concerted, collaborative action to make a difference. Our message acknowledges the devastating impacts of driver error and encourages personal responsibility. Our theme is: when you are behind the wheel of a car, "*TravelSafe: Someone's Future is in Your Hands*."

For more information and to get involved in regional activities to make a difference, contact:
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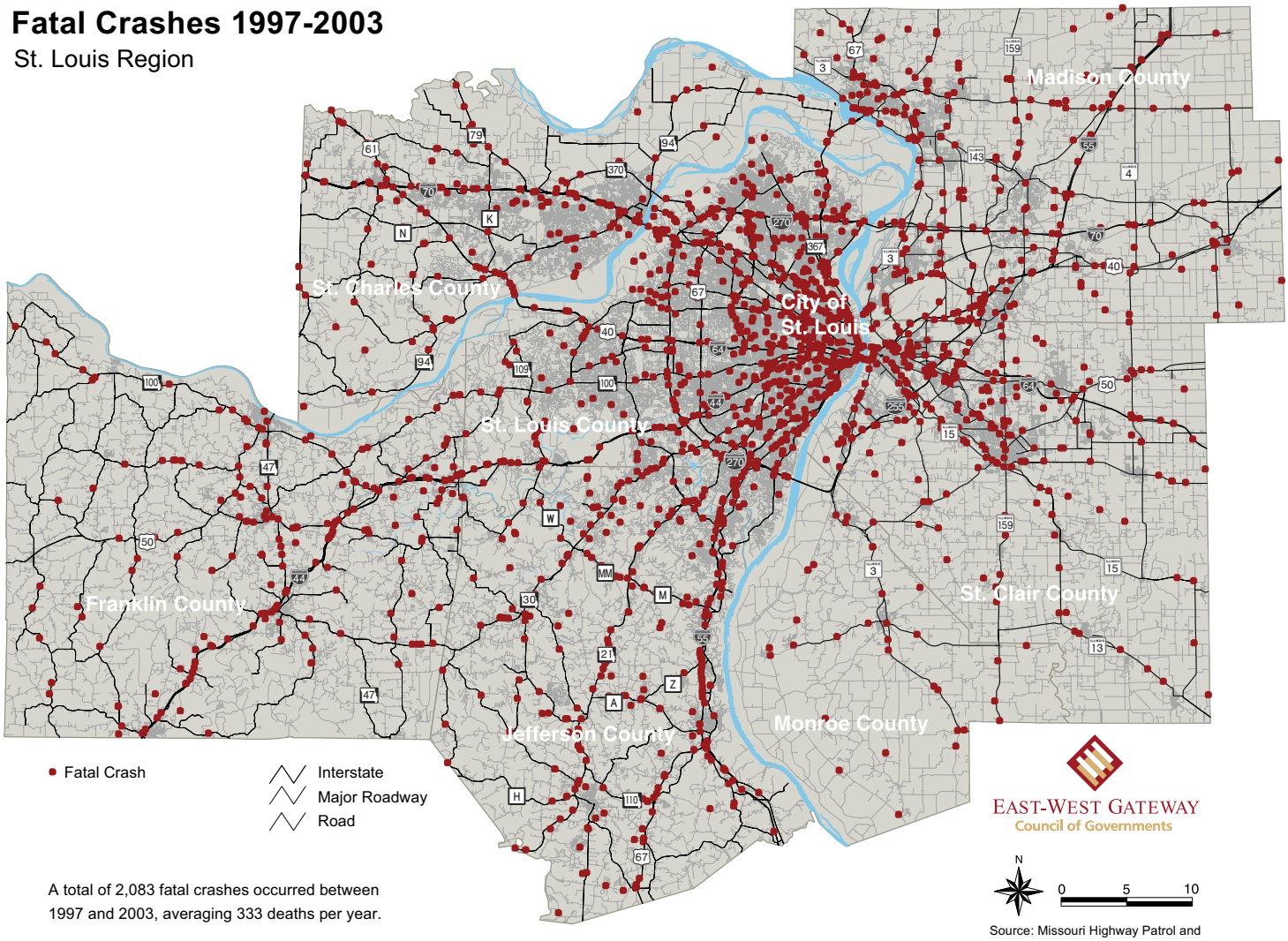
1 Memorial Drive, Suite 1600
St. Louis, MO 63102-2451
314-421-4220 or 618-274-2750
Fax 314-231-6120
www.ewgateway.org

Fatal Crashes 1997-2003

St. Louis Region



A total of 2,083 fatal crashes occurred between 1997 and 2003, averaging 333 deaths per year.

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Source: Missouri Highway Patrol and Illinois State Police

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