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King County Deploys New SmartSigns to Reduce Unsafe Driving Practices

Six month program deploys four SmartSigns in 12 locations throughout King County

SEATTLE (April 1, 2024) – Today, the King County Target Zero Traffic Safety Coalition announces a new pilot program that provides real-time, educational feedback to motorists in an effort to deter unsafe driving. Over the next six months, four SmartSigns will rotate throughout 12 locations in King County, remaining at each for eight weeks at a time. While they are in place, the SmartSigns will detect if drivers are distracted, wearing their seat belt, or speeding, and display appropriate messaging that is relevant to each driver.

The campaign is part of an effort to encourage safe, focused driving in King County, where over 900 people were seriously injured or killed in traffic collisions last year. This is the first time that SmartSigns have been used in King County, and the King County Target Zero Coalition hopes its learnings will serve as a useful resource in combatting unsafe driving in other regions across the state.

“SmartSigns are focused on education, providing the right message to the right motorist at the moment they’re being unsafe,” says Sara Wood, Target Zero Manager, King County. “We know that the majority of people in King County do the right thing and remain focused on their driving, but there are still far too many families who are being impacted by unsafe driving every year. We hope this campaign reminds everyone that we’re all in this together.”

To maximize the campaign’s effectiveness, the King County Target Zero Traffic Safety Coalition worked with SaferStreet Solutions to develop and implement a plan that strategically selected locations by reviewing data to pinpoint specific places and times that unsafe driving is happening.

In order to provide real-time feedback to motorists, the SmartSigns system uses a specially designed sensor based on microwave and infrared waves to monitor for unique signatures of unsafe driving. The sign then displays a message that is most relevant to each motorist. For example, if someone is not wearing a seatbelt the sign message could be “buckle up” or feature a seatbelt emoticon. Alternatively, if the sign detects that drivers are focused, buckled-up, and not speeding, it will flash a smiley-face emoticon to reward them and reinforce their safe driving practices.

“Each time a driver passes a SmartSign, it reminds them to drive safely, and that can make a real difference in their behavior,” said Tim Hogan, Founder/CEO, SaferStreet Solutions. “For instance, SmartSigns reduce distracted driving by up to 40% when left in one area over a four week period. By rotating these signs throughout King County, we can help create a safer driving environment throughout the surrounding community.”

Similar to radar signs, the solar-powered SmartSigns use a sensor instead of a camera, so they never collect any personal information, and the anonymous data is sent over a private network. SmartSigns are strictly an educational tool, and do not have the option or functionality to be used for enforcement.

Neighborhoods participating in the SmartSign campaign include Seattle, Fairwood, Pacific, Algona, Maple Valley, White Center, Skyway, Kenmore, Issaquah, Newcastle, and sites in unincorporated King County.

For more information, please visit www.wtscpartners.com.

ABOUT KING COUNTY TARGET ZERO COALITION

Extra patrols are partially funded by the Washington Traffic Safety Commission with the coordination of the King County Target Zero Coalition. The Coalition brings together representatives from law enforcement, public health, health and human services, transportation and community organizations to coordinate traffic safety campaigns throughout King County.

The WTSC and participating law enforcement agencies condemn profiling. Trained and commissioned law enforcement officers will be conducting these patrols enforcing traffic violations as defined by Washington State laws.

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