Sacramento County Individualized Traffic Safety Report

Across the nation, rural areas are experiencing tremendous growth and transformation. Where once rural roads were used mainly to transport goods to market or to move farm machinery from location to location, rural roads now must accommodate commute and leisure trips that may clash with traditional transportation patterns. This influx of nontraditional traffic presents a major safety concern for rural road users.

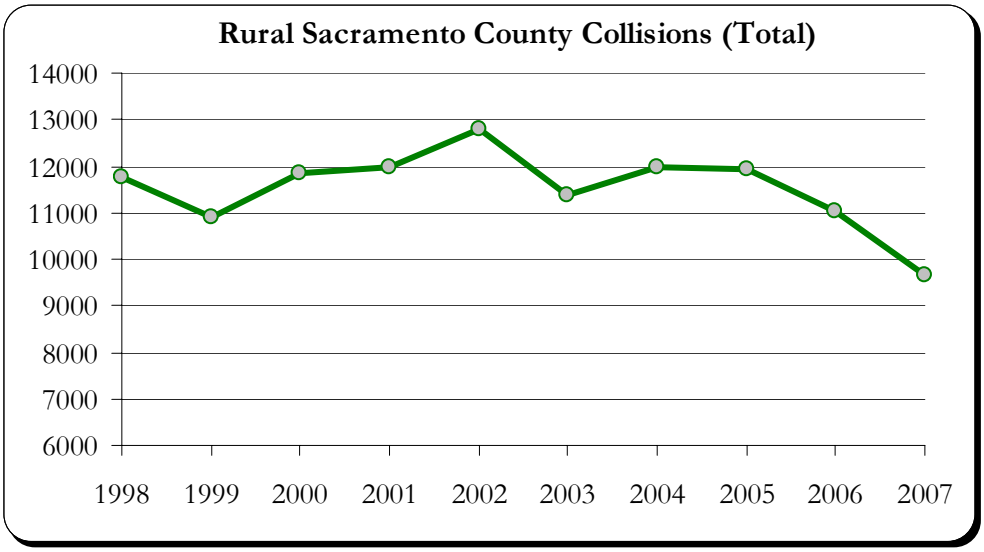
Nationally, 23 percent of the population lives in rural areas; yet, in 2006, 56 percent of the 42,642 traffic fatalities nationwide occurred in rural areas. In addition, the fatality rate in rural areas is over 4 times as high as the fatality rate (measured as deaths/100,000 persons) in urban areas. Preventing severe collisions is especially important in rural areas because statistics show that victims are more likely to die at the crash scene in rural areas than in urban areas. Of the 27,323 drivers killed in 2006, 66 percent of rural drivers and 51 percent of urban drivers died at the scene of the crash, and rural drivers represented 72 percent of drivers who died en route to the hospital. On a positive note, rural traffic fatalities did decrease 7 percent from 1997 to 2006, but the fact remains that rural areas account for a disproportionate number of fatalities. California safety statistics reflect a similar phenomenon. In 2006, only 7 percent of the population lived in rural areas, but rural areas accounted for 37 percent of the state's 4,236 traffic fatalities. See Table 1 below for more detail that will make our rural roadways safer.

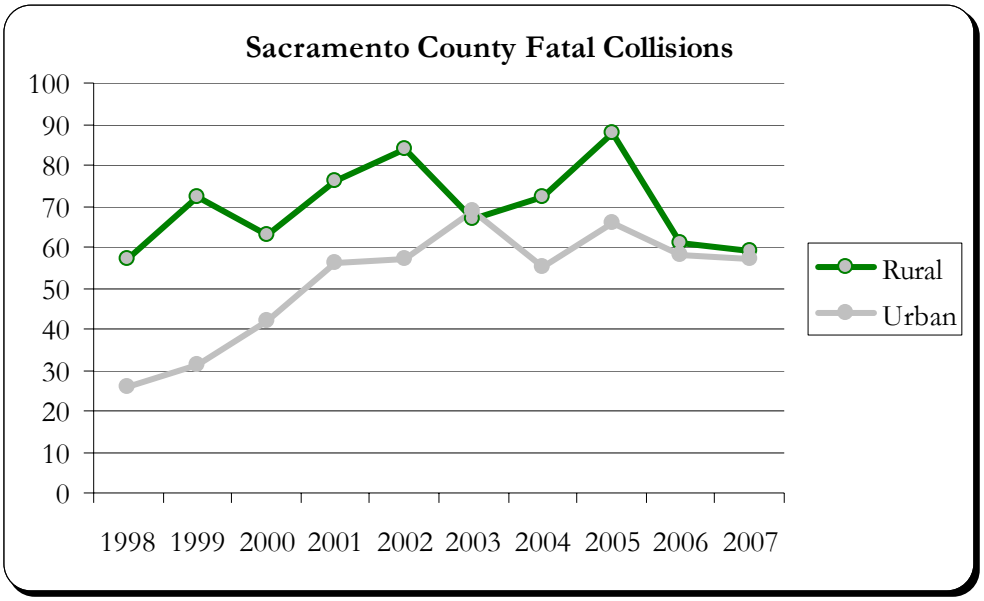
Having national and statewide data can help start discussions about roadway safety in rural areas, but more detailed safety data is necessary to find safety solutions at the local level. The Sacramento Area Council of Governments, as part of its Rural Urban Connections Strategy (RUCS) planning effort, has compiled sample safety statistics (using the Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System) for each county in the region in the hopes that these "safety reports" can be further customized to help bolster grant applications and inform public policy decisions that will make our rural roadways safer.

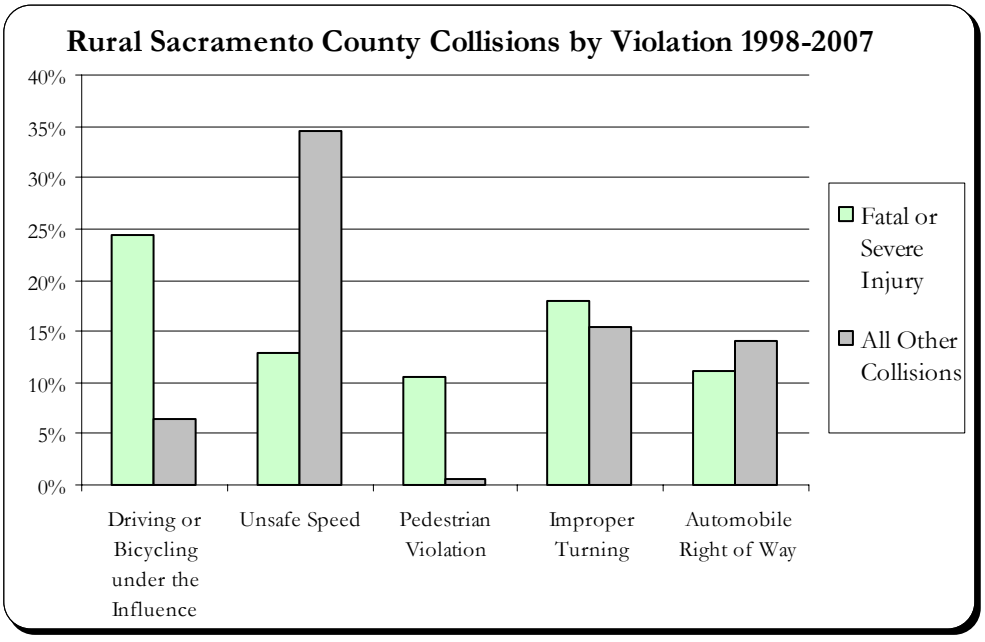
As it is part of the RUCS project, this safety report focuses on the rural areas of Sacramento County. Unless otherwise stated, only fatal, rural crashes are included in the following safety statistics.

Sacramento County in Perspective

	Table 1: Summary Safety Statistics[1]							
	US (2006)		**California (2006)**		**SACOG Region (2000)**		**Sacramento County (2000)**	
	Urban	**Rural**	**Urban**	**Rural**	**Urban**	**Rural[2]**	**Urban**	**Rural**
Population	231,897,219	67,501,266	33,844,533	2,613,016	1,750,054	185,952	1,193,703	29,796
% of population	77%	23%	93%	7%	90%	10%	98%	2%
Fatalities	18,359	23,339	2,659	1,576	66	165	46	71
% of fatalities	44%	56%	63%	37%	29%	71%	39%	61%
Fatalities/ 100,000 persons	7.9	34.6	7.9	60.3	3.8	88.7	3.9	238.3







- After fatal collisions peaked in 2005 with 88, rural Sacramento County has since seen two years well below the 10-year average of 70 fatal collisions per year.

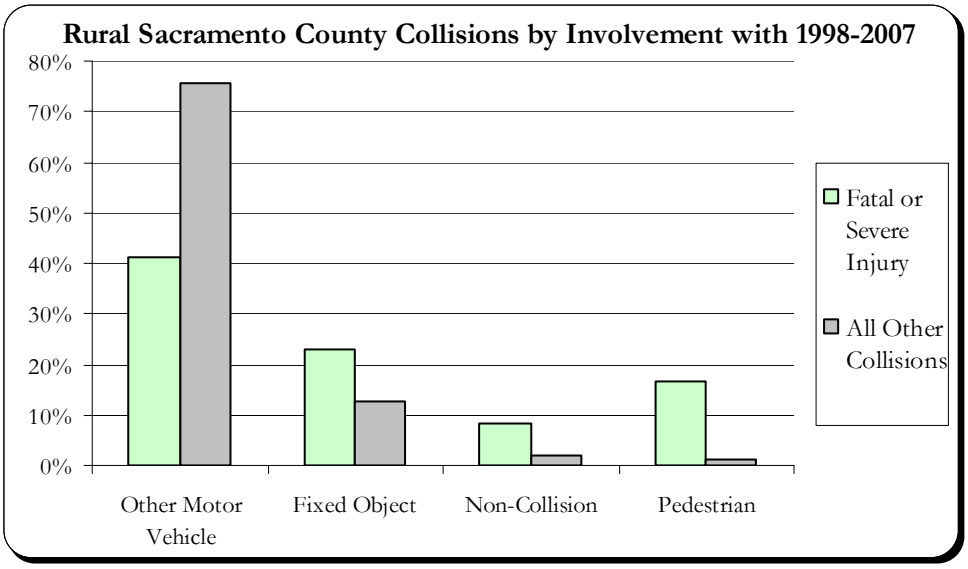
- Urban fatal collisions have grown relatively quickly over the 10-year period, starting at 26 in 1998 and peaking at 69 in 2003.

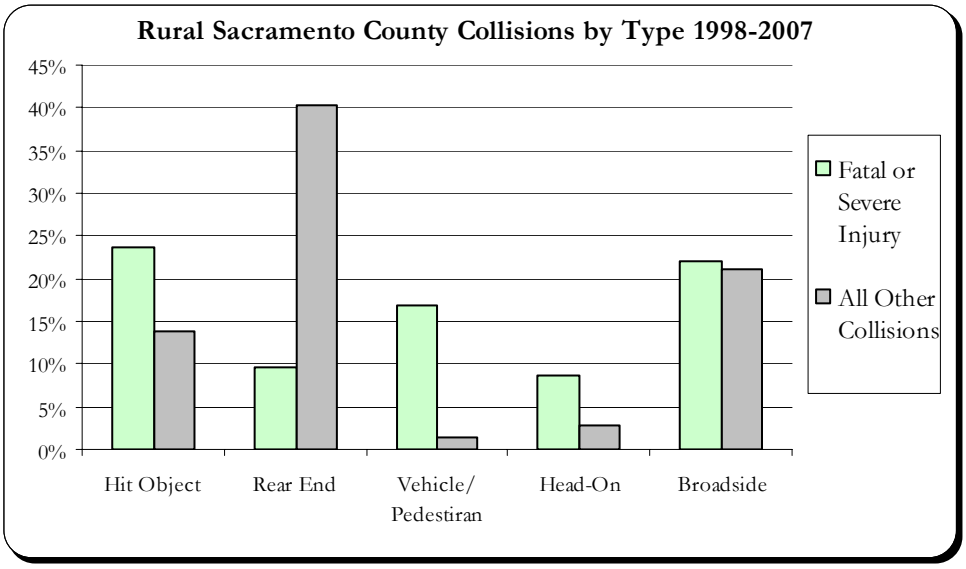
- In 2003 and 2007, urban fatal collisions actually outnumbered rural fatal collisions, whereas in other years rural fatal collisions were far greater than urban.

- Total rural collisions have varied over the past 10 years, but have recently seen a rapid decline.

- Although unsafe speed accounted for the majority of all collisions, it accounted for nearly double the percentage of "all other collisions."[3] Similarly, driving or bicycling under the influence and pedestrian violation accounted for a high percentage of fatal or severe injury collisions, but a low percentage of "other collisions."

	Table 2: Rural Sacramento County Detailed Collision Data						
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Sacramento Total	Region Total
Total Collisions	11,389	11,985	11,946	11,021	9,639	**55,980**	**86,307**
Property Damage Only (PDO)	7,551	7,695	7,681	7,249	6,418	**36,594**	**55,049**
% PDO	66.3%	64.2%	64.3%	65.8%	66.6%	**65.4%**	**63.8%**
Injury	3771	4218	4177	3711	3162	**19,039**	**30,447**
% Injury	33.1%	35.2%	35.0%	33.7%	32.8%	**34.0%**	**35.3%**
Fatal	67	72	88	61	59	**347**	**811**
% Fatal	0.6%	0.6%	0.7%	0.6%	0.6%	**0.6%**	**0.9%**
Pedestrian Killed	13	22	23	9	22	**89**	**116**
Bicyclist Killed	3	2	1	1	5	**12**	**22**
Motorcyclist Killed	11	10	10	7	10	**48**	**113**
Fatal Collisions							
Alcohol Related	21	35	35	30	25	**146**	**295**
Speeding Related	7	7	4	3	8	**29**	**95**
Truck Collision	5	5	8	2	4	**24**	**67**
Hit Object Collision	11	16	28	18	18	**91**	**278**
Head-On Collision	7	7	7	11	3	**35**	**117**
Broadside Collision	21	14	19	10	8	**72**	**141**
Overturned Collision	4	6	5	8	3	**26**	**79**
Occurred on a Weekday (M-Th)	28	37	38	32	31	**166**	**376**
Occurred on a Weekend (F-Su)	39	35	50	29	28	**181**	**435**
Occurred during Daylight	34	25	42	23	23	**147**	**420**
Occurred after Dark (with or without street lights)	32	44	42	35	33	**186**	**360**
Fatal Collision Location							
Route 99	2	2	4	7	5	**20**	*
Route 160	4	7	3	1	4	**19**	*
Greenback Lane	4	3	3	1	2	**13**	*
Intersection Collision	17	10	7	8	7	**49**	**98**
State Highway	18	18	24	17	18	**95**	**335**
Not State Highway	49	54	64	44	41	**252**	**476**





- The most common type of collision among all severity levels was collisions with another motor vehicle, accounting for over 75 percent of "other collisions."
- However, a greater percentage of fatal or severe injury collisions were caused by collisions with fixed objects, pedestrians, and non-collisions.
- Rear end collisions were overwhelmingly the most common type of "other collisions." Broadside collisions caused nearly the same percentage of both fatal or severe injury collisions and "other collisions."
- The most common types of fatal or severe injury collision were hit object, vehicle/pedestrian, and head-on.

Further Study

This safety report highlights only a small portion of the data available for future analysis. SACOG believes this type of detailed data can make our region's safety projects very competitive in federal and state safety programs such as the High Risk Rural Roads (HR3) program. For more information about the data used in this report or to request technical assistance for your agency, please contact Christine Scherman at cscherman@sacog.org or by phone at 916-340-6262.

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[1] In Table 1, U.S. and California safety data were taken from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). NHTSA used the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) to collect the data. Population data were taken from the American Community Survey (ACS) census file 1. County-level rural/urban population data were not available for 2006, so 2000 data were used for Sacramento County and the region. Sacramento County and region fatalities (for year 2000) were taken from SWITRS.

[2] "Rural" as defined by the 2000 census is all territory, population, and housing units located outside an urbanized area or an urban cluster. An urban cluster is a densely settled area (1,000 people/sq. mile) with a population of 2,500-49,999 and any surrounding areas with 500 people/sq. mile. "Rural" as defined by the SWITRS database is any unincorporated area and areas with a population of fewer than 2,500 people.

[3] "All other collisions" refers to collisions resulting in complaint of pain, other visible injury, and property damage only.