



Réseau de recherche en sécurité routière du Québec/ Quebec Traffic Safety Research Network

**The GLOBAL PLAN of ACTION for the 2021 – 2030 DECADE of ACTION for ROAD SAFETY consultation:**

**Response by members of the *Réseau de recherche en sécurité routière du Québec* (Canada)**

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## Who are we?

We, signing members<sup>1</sup> of the *Réseau de recherche en sécurité routière du Québec* (RRSR; Quebec Traffic Safety Research Network) – a multidisciplinary network of transportation researchers, decisionmakers, and knowledge users whose objective is to promote research, pragmatic knowledge transfer, and traffic safety (<https://rrsr.ca/en/mission>) – would like to communicate the following:

1. The RRSR connects hundreds of individuals involved in traffic safety in Quebec and is one of the largest road safety groups in Canada. Among its myriad activities, the RRSR promotes and participates in the development of research initiatives by organizing national and international road safety conferences (e.g., <https://www.fourwav.es/view/1528/info/>), training future researchers and decisionmakers, publishing road safety best practices, and engaging directly with members of the global road safety community. Our links with national decisionmakers, such as the *Assemblée nationale du Québec* (e.g., invited consultations to develop bills modifying the Traffic Safety Code; Ouimet, et al., 2018) and political authorities in the cities of Montréal and Québec (e.g., to provide guidance in the development of urban action plans) among others, have directly and pragmatically led to road safety knowledge transfer.
2. We applaud this second Decade of Action 2021 - 2030, as well as this invitation to participate in this global enterprise by offering our suggestions. We also acknowledge how this **Global Plan of Action** provides continuity from the first **Decade of Action for Road Safety** 2011 - 2020 while integrating new elements. For instance, we appreciate the importance of the inclusion of road safety targets (3,6<sup>2</sup> and 11,2<sup>3</sup>) in the 17 United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) (United Nations, 2015). As described in the Global Plan of Action<sup>4</sup>, this addition promotes traffic safety as a cross-cutting theme in all aspects of one's life. We also appreciate declarations that traffic safety should be a high-level political priority, that stronger attention should be directed at vulnerable road user populations, as well as the importance of supporting low- and middle-income countries in their pursuit of increasing traffic safety. At the same time, we acknowledge that formulation of a global road safety plan represents a dauntingly complex task, in particular because different countries have diverse national road safety trajectories.

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<sup>1</sup> See the list of contributors at the end of the document.

<sup>2</sup> “Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”: “3.6 by 2030 halve global deaths from road traffic accidents” (United Nations, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> “Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”: “11.2 by 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons”(United Nations, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> “The influence of the road transport system is so pervasive that its safety – or lack thereof – affects a wide range of basic human needs. As such, ensuring the safety of roads and enabling sustainable mobility plays an important role in reducing poverty and inequities, increasing access to employment and education as well as mitigating the impact of climate change.” (GPA 2021-2030, p. 1).



## Our suggestions

We therefore suggest that the Global Plan of Action for the 2021 – 2030 Decade of Action for Road Safety (GPA 2021-2030) address six aspects: i) the prospective incorporation of research at all levels of the process; ii) the focus on the proposed “integrative model” at all levels; iii) the importance of prevention in the proposed “integrative model”; iv) the clarification of the meaning of “errors” and “deliberate behaviours”; v) a greater linkage between the 12 World Health Organization Decade of Action global road safety performance targets and the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDG); vi) improved use of terminology.

### 1) Prospective incorporation of research at all levels of the process

**Suggestion 1a:** Include research in the integrated framework and promote its inclusion before, during, and after implementation of road safety actions in partnership with research users.

In our opinion, the role of research in the proposed process needs to be more strongly emphasized. We suggest that research be clearly integrated throughout the process, namely before, during, and after implementation of road safety actions. Jurisdictions frequently implement new laws or programs without adequate regard to relevant available data. Moreover, researchers are frequently consulted to evaluate the impact of these efforts only after the deployment phase, when the required indicators for unbiased appraisal of outcomes have not been planned for or collected. An integrated framework where researchers are involved before, during, and after implementation would contribute critically to international research capacity, and equitable access to valid data to inform program “promotion, monitoring and evaluation, research and development, and knowledge transfer” (GPA 2021-2030, p. 3). We envision that this would involve an equal partnership between knowledge users and researchers in confronting road safety challenges, seeking innovative solutions, and achieving common goals. In addition, integrating research in all actions would advance evidence-based, yet locally responsible, road systems. By increasing local research capacity, the probability of generating more context-relevant solutions would be enhanced.<sup>5</sup>

Here is one example of a location in the document where the importance of research could be emphasized:

- Part III on implementation for Stage 1 (assessment), Stage 2 (development of a plan) and Stage 3 (implementation of the plan and monitoring of progress) (GPA 2021-2030, p. 8-10).

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<sup>5</sup> This suggestion is directly linked to the **UN-SDG Target 9.5** which suggests to “[e]nhance scientific research, upgrade the technological capabilities of industrial sectors in all countries, in particular developing countries, including, by 2030, encouraging innovation and substantially increasing the number of research and development workers per 1 million people and public and private research and development spending” (United Nations, 2015).



**Suggestion 1b:** Include the process of monitoring, evaluation, and knowledge transfer as part of the research process.

While we contend that research needs to be integrated at a higher level in the document, we comment on three specific locations where research appears to be portrayed as a distinct process from monitoring, evaluation and knowledge transfer, or where research could provide guidance (see the underlined sections below):

- “The implementation challenges identified from collective reflective insights and some research were lack of local buy-in, insufficient guidance on implementation, lack of robust monitoring and evaluation strategies, misalignment of work and plans, lack of coordination across various levels of the system, the fragmentation of the current system and structural barriers to multi-sectoral efforts. These challenges reveal lack of ownership and accountability to be a major implementation challenge of road safety policy.” (GPA 2021-2030, p. 3).
- “Management should not be pursued as a stand-alone goal but as a means to govern—through coordination, legislation, funding and resource allocation, promotion, monitoring and evaluation, research and development and knowledge transfer.” (GPA 2021-2030, p. 3).
- “The data, knowledge and insights generated from monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of action plans should feed into the situational assessment for the next cycle of implementation. The assessment should draw upon not only the results of the monitoring and evaluation, but also incorporate current research as well as innovations—technological and scientific, that could influence the priorities for the next cycle.” (GPA 2021-2030, p. 10).

## 2) Focus on the proposed “integrative model” at all levels

**Suggestion 2a:** Convey the importance of the integrative model by providing examples of integration of the dimensions (i.e., road infrastructure, vehicle safety, road user behaviour) in each section and in boxes 9-12 if possible, or in a separate section.

The document states that “...road transport has lacked an integrated approach towards safety” (GPA 2021-2030, p. 1). We share this opinion and support the following statement:

‘Article 55 of the Resolution A/RES/70/1 states that the 17 Goals are “integrated and indivisible, global in nature and universally applicable.” This means that road safety cannot be compromised or traded-off in order to achieve other social needs. On the contrary, improving road safety contributes to the realization of other needs such as access to e.g. healthcare, employment or education. In this context, a lesson learned from the past decade is that road safety should not be approached as a stand-alone issue but as an integrated component of many different policy agendas’ (GPA 2021-2030, p. 3).



Because each section can be taken separately as particularly relevant to specific agencies, we worry that the following sentence in Part IV Safe System Intervention presented before the sections on road infrastructure, vehicle safety, road user behaviour and post-crash, may not have the expected impact or promote sought-after synergies: “A number of these targets address cross cutting outcomes—such as speeding, that are influenced by actions in road infrastructure, vehicle safety, as well as road user behaviour. Thus, while actions have been grouped according to the primary outcome that they directly influence, emphasis is put on synergies between action areas within the safe system.” (GPA 2021-2030, p. 11).

**Comment:** An integrative approach to traffic safety is proposed, which is critical in our opinion. The proposed model includes the usual dimensions: road infrastructure, vehicle safety, road user behaviour, with an emphasis on the post-crash phase. While the term “integrated approach” is used and some sentences link different dimensions together, we think the document needs to provide clearer guidance to the different stakeholders worldwide in this regard. What we observe in the field is that different actors and authorities may tend to emphasize their outlook and priorities as being the most important and efficacious for improving traffic safety. The document may contribute to this type of compartmentalization by presenting each section independently from all others. The provision of examples of synergies between dimensions in each section or a reminder in each section that each dimension is important in relation to the others, may promote the goal of integration and increase collaborations and sharing of responsibilities and actions.

### 3) Importance of prevention in the proposed “integrative model”

**Suggestion 3a:** Promote the importance of prevention.

The proposed integrative approach is based on the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) Recommendations for Enhancing National Road Safety Systems. Box 3 explicitly name the following stages included in the Haddon matrix (Haddon, 1972): “Prevent accidents<sup>6</sup>, protect people in accidents, if prevention fails, and rescue people after accidents”. The GPA 2021-2030, however, is not very precise on how the first two stages (“prevent accidents, protect people in accidents if prevention fails”) are part of the integrative approach. They are included, but not specifically named. Meanwhile, the post-crash phase has a specific section. We understand the position of the GPA 2021-2030, namely that higher increase in safety must be achieved in low- and middle- income countries that have more crashes and less developed post-crash capacities. Nevertheless, we recommend that prevention is named more explicitly in the document. Prevention efforts directed at the pre-crash and crash phases are an important ingredient in an overall traffic safety strategy. At the same time, it is more difficult to evaluate, and thus is more vulnerable to omission or cutting when governments must prioritise their traffic safety objectives. In sum, an explicit focus on the post-crash phase, while not explicitly labelling preventions efforts and the pre-crash and crash phases directly, may limit considerations of significant opportunities for prevention.

<sup>6</sup> See our suggestion 6a on the preferred use of crashes.



- **Example of a critical location where prevention can be promoted:** “This part presents key areas for action to contribute to a safe system. These key areas are road infrastructure, vehicle safety, road user behaviour, and post-crash-response. The recommended actions for these key areas are based the principles of the safe system as well as core UN legal instruments pertaining to road safety including the following:” (GPA 2021-2030, p. 11)

#### 4) Clarification of the meaning of “errors” and “deliberate behaviours”

**Suggestion 4a:** The definition of “errors” and “deliberate behaviours” should be provided on page 5 to avoid potential confusion leading to the understanding that an error is a deliberate behaviour (or a risky behaviour; see suggestion 4b).

The term “errors” is first mentioned on page 5: “humans are fallible and capable of making errors that are not mitigated by education, training or enforcement”; while “deliberate behaviours” is described on page 17: “.....there are deliberate behaviours that are not the result of human error—such as speeding, drink driving, non-use of protective equipment and use of a mobile phone while driving,...” (GPA 2021-2030)

- **Comment:** It is unclear that all readers will automatically understand mitigated by education, training or enforcement (description of error) as meaning that risky behaviour, such as speeding, does not comprise an error.

**Suggestion 4b:** The term “deliberate” behaviours should be replaced by “risky” behaviours.

The use of the terms deliberate behaviours should be further discussed. If the document promotes the shared responsibilities between road infrastructure, vehicle safety, road user behaviour, and uses speed as one example of deliberate behaviour, it may be understood to infer that the driver is completely responsible. The use of risky behaviour for referring to behaviour that increases crash risk is more appropriate in our view.



## 5) World Health Organization Decade of Action global road safety performance targets and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

**Suggestion 5a:** Increase linkage in the GPA 2021-2030 between the 12 World Health Organization Decade of Action global road safety performance targets and the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The document states “...ensuring the safety of roads and enabling sustainable mobility plays an important role in reducing poverty and inequities, increasing access to employment and education as well as mitigating the impact of climate change. In fact, the efficiency, accessibility and safety of transport systems directly or indirectly contributes to the realization of many of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.” (GPA 2021-2030, p. 1)

We contend that the systemic aspect of the transport system needs to be highlighted with more precision. While SDG’s targets 3.6<sup>7</sup> and 11.2<sup>8</sup> deal directly with road safety, the new Decade of Action would benefit from highlighting how its new objectives and targets contribute to SDG targets, and how in turn, the SDG targets contribute to road safety. We further contend that the larger context associated with SDG is only hinted at in scattered locations throughout the document. Hence, we propose that SDG be spelled out more extensively in the document and linked to targets of the Decade of Action.

Here are some possible locations:

**Suggestion (work/fatigue): UN-SDG Target 8.5:** “by 2030 achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.” **GPA 2021-2030 Target 11** (p. 18): “all countries to enact regulation for driving time and rest periods for professional drivers, and/or accede to international/regional regulation in this area.”

**Comment:** Improving the conditions of professional drivers by recognizing a healthy number of driving hours per day (target 11) is decent work (target 8.5). When countries tackle UN-SDG target 8.5 they need to move forward the GPA 2021-2030 target 11, and when countries adopt the GPA 2021-2030 target 11 they are also tackling the UN-SDG target 8.5.

**Suggestion (substances): UN-SDG Target 3.5:** “strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.” **GPA 2021-2030 Target 9** (p. 18): “Reduce by half the number of road traffic injuries and fatalities related to drivers using alcohol, and/or achieve a reduction in those related to other psychoactive substances.”

**Comment:** The SDG (target 3.5) promotes one condition that may affect the GPA (target 9) and increase the success of the Decade of Action.

<sup>7</sup> “3.6 by 2030 halve global deaths from road traffic accidents”

<sup>8</sup> “11.2 by 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons”





**Suggestion (health and post-crash phase): UN-SDG Target 3.8:** “achieve universal health coverage [...], including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.” **GPA 2021-2030 Target 12** (p. 21): “all countries establish and achieve national targets in order to minimize the time interval between road traffic crash and the provision of first professional emergency care.”

**Comment:** To be successful with GPA (target 12), access to quality essential health-care services (UN-SDG, target 3.8) is paramount. Increases in health care services will lead to more timely responses to crash events by hospitals and ambulances.

**Suggestion (climate): UN-SDG Target 13.2** “Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.” **GPA 2021-2030 Target 3** (p. 12): “Build all new roads according to high quality technical and safety standards taking into account the needs and uses of different road users including pedestrians, cyclists, and those using motorized transport.”

**Comment:** Inclusion and promotion of walking, cycling and public transit have direct impacts on climate change since these means of transport contribute directly to reduction of air pollution and greenhouse gases.

## 6) Improved use of terminology

**Suggestion 6a:** Promote the use of “crash” in all versions of the document (including the translations).

We suggest the use of the term “crash” instead of “accident” in all locations, as “accident” suggests a chance situation for which not much can be done (Stewart and Lord, 2002). The term “crash” in contrast can also convey a potentially preventable event. The use of the more neutral term “crash” opens the possibility to specify true accidental events as well as those that spring from factors amenable to prevention.

- In the English version, the term “crash” has been selected (except for five uses, for which we suggest a change).
- In French, however, the term “accident” is used in all locations; « collisions routières » is suggested.
- In Spanish, the term “accidente” could be replaced by “colisiones viales” throughout the document.
- In arabic, the term “حادث” could be replaced by “إصطدام”.



**Suggestion 6b:** Clarify terms related to road user behaviour.

- a) The link between blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limits and drug driving should be clearer in the following sentence, as there are existing thresholds for drugs implemented in some countries (the words “and drug” should be removed):
- “Establish blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limits to prevent impaired driving (drink and drug driving) including specific provisions for novice and professional drivers” (GPA 2021-2030, p. 19).
- b) The terms “mobile phone” could be broadened to other types of electronic devices, which would take into account both existing technologies and future technologies.
- c) The following sentence lacks clarity: “Technologies to disable texting and or other forms of distraction while driving” (GPA 2021-2030, p. 20).
- Why only texting?
  - Technologies to disable other forms of distraction while driving (examples of other forms of distraction might be helpful).



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