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TxDOT to commit \$600 million to reducing roadway deaths

Roughly two-thirds of a \$600 million down payment aimed at decreasing deaths along Texas highways will go to straightening roads, improving lighting and adding guardrails, under a plan being considered by state transportation officials.

The Texas Department of Transportation proposes spending \$390 million, 65 percent of the total safety money set aside by the Texas Transportation Commission, to reduce incidents in which drivers veer from the roadway. Though causes vary, so-called “departure incidents” represent 41 percent of the serious injury and fatal injury crashes in Texas last year.

Another \$60 million will go toward pedestrian improvements, which claimed 10 percent of the money despite being more than 21 percent of the roadway fatalities statewide. The money, an unprecedented \$300 million each of the next two years, is the first tangible effort to eliminate roadway fatalities on Texas, which leads the nation in automobile-related deaths. The Houston region leads major metro areas in the nation in preventable roadway deaths, a Houston Chronicle investigation revealed last year.