

Press release

Leidschendam, 23 April 2007

Number of road deaths stable

Decrease insufficient to achieve 2010 target

On 23rd April 2007, the Dutch Minister of Traffic Camiel Eurlings made public the road crash numbers for 2006. The number of road deaths in 2006 (811) remains at the same level as in 2005 (817). The strong decrease that started in 2004 did not continue. If the current numbers stay at this level, the target of 750 deaths in 2010 will not be reached. SWOV expects that extra measures to be needed.

Extra attention for vulnerable road users

In order to get a good idea of road safety developments it is advisable to compare data over a longer period. One should be careful about making statements based on small fluctuations in annual totals by age, modal split, or road type.

Taking a longer period in consideration, some groups of road users appear to profit less from the general decrease. They require extra attention in road safety policy. The groups concerned are cyclists (especially the elderly ones) who represent 25% of the total, the elderly in general (30%), and those killed by a lorry turning right.

Cyclists

Crash data shows that the total number of cyclists killed is once more back to the level of before 2004; the decreases in 2004 and 2005 have not been maintained. Detailed study of the specific problems is required in order to take proper measures.

The elderly

The number of elderly road users will increase considerably during the coming decades. Their physical vulnerability makes them an important road safety group. It is important for them to independently and actively participate in traffic for as long as possible. Measures to improve their safety must be especially looked for in infrastructural changes and vehicle adjustments. In-vehicle facilities include an increasing use of intelligent technologies (ITS). In late 2007, when the PhD study of one of SWOV's researchers on this issue has been completed, SWOV expects to be able to give more specific recommendations.

Lorries turning right

The number of deaths as a result of a lorry turning right once more showed an increase in 2006. This confirms the results of earlier SWOV research which showed that, in spite of the introduction of the blind spot mirror and camera, the number of road deaths increased again after an initial decrease in 2002 and 2003. The level is now back to where it was before the introduction. The Ministry of Transport is currently carrying out a large scale demonstration project in which extra front mirrors and cameras for lorries are being tested.

Apart from this, SWOV is in favour of other measures that can prevent this crash type, such as:

- separating road users so that lorries and cyclists cannot come near each other. This requires infrastructural adjustments, in accordance with Sustainable Safety;
- if separation is not possible, preventing lorries and cyclists simultaneously occupying the crossing area by giving them green traffic lights separately;
- placing large mirrors at crossroads;
- electronic detection of cyclists;
- information campaigns for vulnerable road users;
- larger front and side windows for lorries.

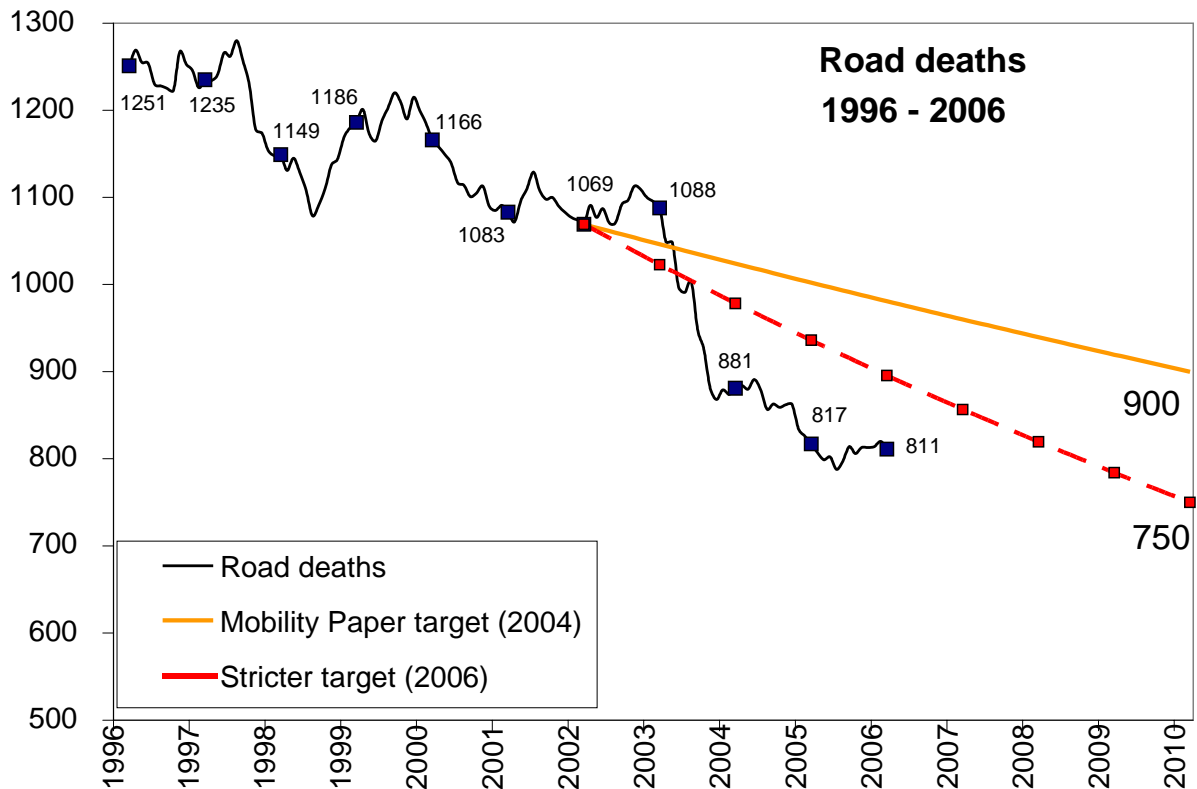
Extra measures necessary

To achieve the 2010 target of not more than 750 road deaths, it is necessary that the declining trend continues with a steady decrease in the annual number of road deaths. SWOV regards as possibilities:

- continuing the policies for the construction of 30 km/hour zones and cyclist facilities while aiming to further improve their quality;
- limiting the driving speeds of motorized traffic at those locations where they use the same road as pedestrians and cyclists, especially at crossroads;
- looking for possibilities to increase the driving experience of young, novice motorists before they take their driving test, for example by introducing types of accompanied driving;
- a better agreement between road environment and speed limits;
- extra measures to combat the use of alcohol and drugs in traffic;
- combat extreme speeding offences and recidivism by revising enforcement policy.

More on the background at SWOV's 2003-2006 congress

During this congress which will take place on 26th April 2007, SWOV will further discuss the road safety developments and the various possibilities to make improvements during the coming years.



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