

Charles County FFY2023 Problem Identification

Overall

Charles County accounted for 2.7% of the population and 2.2% of the vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in the State of Maryland on average over the past three years (2018-2020). During that time, an annual average of 22 traffic fatalities have occurred in the County, which have oscillated, ranging from 21 (4.1% of all fatalities in the State) to 19 (3.6%) to 26 (4.5%). The number of serious injuries (defined as KABCO=4 on the police crash report) over the past three years in Charles County has varied, ranging from 115 to 100 to 105, which are 3.6%, 3.2% and 3.9% of the State total for serious injuries in 2018, 2019, and 2020¹ respectively.

Usually over four hundred thousand citations for traffic violations are issued across the State and adjudicated in Maryland District Courts each year (449,381 in 2018 and 438,451 in 2019)². However, only 323,400 citations were issued and adjudicated in the year 2020 across the State. Over the previous three years, the number of traffic citations issued in Charles County has steeply decreased from 16,058 (3.6% of statewide traffic citations) in 2018 to 14,277 (3.3%) in 2019 to 8,162 (2.5%) in 2020. These citations were issued anywhere within the boundaries of Charles County to a resident of any jurisdiction, state, or country.

Aggressive Driving

Aggressive driving fatalities in Charles County during the past three years have dipped and increased, with 4 occurring in 2018, 1 in 2019, and 4 in 2020. Serious injuries resulting from such crashes in the County have increased, ranging from 2 in 2018 to 5 in 2019 and 11 in 2020. Aggressive driving crashes occurring in 2020 accounted for 6.6% of all fatalities and 6.4% of all serious injuries in the State.

Aggressive driving citations are rarely issued because a driver must be observed committing three or more specific infractions to qualify under the aggressive driving statute. In Maryland, 793 such citations were issued on average over the past three years. Of those, an average of 10 were issued in Charles County (18 in 2018, 8 in 2019, and 3 in 2020).

¹ In 2020, the world experienced the COVID-19 pandemic which contributed to significant changes in roadway travel and driver behavior. Reduced vehicle miles traveled and open roadways resulted in an increase in speed and other risky driving behaviors. Consequently, 573 people died in traffic-related crashes on Maryland's roads, representing an increase of more than seven percent from the previous year's total of 535, with pedestrian and bicycle fatalities comprising over one-quarter of the State's roadway deaths. While overall fatalities increased in 2020, the reduced travel contributed to marked decreases for injury and overall crashes at the statewide and jurisdictional level. Therefore, this anomalous year must be considered when drawing conclusions based on the use of 2020 crash data to evaluate highway safety programs and trends.

² Citations listed under Transportation Article 21, which are defined as "Rules of the Road" in the Citation Manual, also referred as moving violations.

Distracted Driving

Since 2018, there have been an annual average of about 8 distracted driving fatalities occurring in Charles County. In 2020, distracted driving in the County added 10 deaths to the State's distracted driving fatalities, a point on a trend that has seen an increase over the previous three years (6 in 2018 and 8 in 2019). Serious injuries resulting from distracted driving crashes in the County have been alternating over the past three years, from 63 in 2018 (3.9% of all distracted driving serious injuries in the State) to 50 in 2019 (3.3% of all) to 63 in 2020 (5.2% of all). In 2020, 38.5% of all fatalities and 60.0% of all serious injuries recorded in Charles County resulted from distracted driving crashes.

Distracted driving citations issued in Maryland during the past three years have decreased significantly, ranging from 33,655 in 2018 to 33,978 in 2019 and 19,450 in 2020. During the same period, distracted driving citations issued in Charles County have oscillated, ranging from 1,267 in 2018 to 1,445 in 2019 and 684 in 2020. As a proportion of the distracted driving citations issued statewide, those handed out in the County accounted for 3.8% in 2018, 4.3% in 2019 and 3.5% in 2020.

Impaired Driving

Over the past three years, an average of 7 impaired driving fatalities occurred per year in Charles County. Fatalities from such crashes have trended up then down, ranging from 7 (5.0% of all impaired driving fatalities in Maryland) in 2018 to 10 (6.6% of all) in 2019 to 3 (2.5% of all) in 2020. Serious injuries resulting from such crashes in the County over the same time period have fluctuated, ranging from 20 in 2018 (4.3% of all impaired driving serious injuries in the State) to 25 in 2019 (5.1% of all) to 19 in 2020 (4.3% of all). In 2020, 11.5% of all fatalities and 18.1% of all serious injuries in Charles County resulted from impaired driving crashes, compared to 21.1% of all fatalities and 16.4% of all serious injuries from impaired driving crashes occurring throughout the State.

Impaired driving relates to driving while impaired by alcohol and/or drugs or controlled dangerous substances. Several citations may be issued at the point of an encounter with an impaired driver. Therefore, all judicial figures related to impaired driving will be quantified using arrests, not individual citations. Impaired driving arrests have steeply decreased in Maryland over the past three years, from 18,403 in 2018 to 18,279 in 2019 to 13,651 in 2020. During the same period, impaired driving arrests have decreased significantly in Charles County, ranging from 570 in 2018 to 532 in 2019 to 329 in 2020. As a proportion of impaired driving arrests in the State, the number of impaired driving arrests in the County accounted for 3.1% in 2018, 2.9% in 2019, and 2.4% in 2020. Of the impaired arrests in the County in 2020, 1.5% were of older drivers (ages 65+) while 0.3% were of younger drivers (ages 16-20).

Speeding

During the past three years, Charles County averaged 4 speeding related fatalities per year, which have seen an increase over that time: 2 in 2018, 3 in 2019 and 7 in 2020. Serious injuries resulting from such crashes in the County over the past three years have trended down then up, ranging from 12 in 2018 to 10 in 2019 and 18 in 2020. In 2020, 6.4% of statewide speeding

related fatalities and 6.0% of statewide speeding related serious injuries resulted from crashes in Charles County. Over the same year, 26.9% of all fatalities and 17.1% of all serious injuries recorded in Charles County were the result of crashes involving driving speed.

Speeding citations are very common even though those adjudicated through the District Court do not include automated enforcement. Speeding citations issued in Charles County have decreased significantly over the past three years, with 9,021 (4.6% of statewide speeding citations), 7,545 (4.1% of statewide), and 4,216 (2.8% of all) issued in 2018, 2019, and 2020, respectively. Statewide speeding citations have steeply decreased over the same three years: 195,649, 182,213, and 151,419. Speeding citations comprised 51.7% of all Charles County citations in 2020.

Non-motorists

Non-motorists are defined here as pedestrians (on foot) and bicyclists. Pedestrian fatalities in Charles County have remained relatively constant over the previous three years, from 3 (2018) to 4 (2019) to 4 (2020), while serious injuries have leveled after a decrease, ranging from 13 (2018) to 8 (2019) to 9 (2020). The occurrence of bicyclist fatalities in Charles County has been rare, with 0 in 2018, 0 in 2019, and 0 in 2020, while serious injuries to bicyclists have risen and fallen, ranging from 1 in 2018 to 4 in 2019 to 0 in 2020.

Very few non-motorist citations are issued throughout the State, to either the pedestrian or the motor vehicle driver. Typically, more violations are issued to drivers, and in Charles County 11 were issued to drivers against pedestrians or bicyclists in 2020, while 1 was issued to pedestrians or bicyclists that year. As a proportion of statewide totals (933 and 235), those numbers represent 1.2% and 0.4%, respectively, in 2020.

Motorcycles

Motorcycle rider fatalities have stayed about the same over the past three years in Charles County, ranging from 4 (2018) to 3 (2019) to 3 (2020). Serious injuries to motorcyclists have leveled after an increase, ranging from 10 (2018) to 15 (2019) to 14 (2020). The 2020 figures account for 3.8% of motorcycle rider fatalities and 4.5% of rider serious injuries that occurred in the State.

Maryland has had a universal helmet law in place for several decades, consequently the incidence of unhelmeted motorcyclists involved in a crash is low. The State has averaged 7 unhelmeted motorcycle rider fatalities per year over the past three years, therefore, unhelmeted motorcycle fatalities in Charles County have been rare (an average of 0 per year). However, 4 seriously injured riders in Charles County were unhelmeted in 2020, which is 4.6% of the State total (compared to 1 in 2018 and 6 in 2019).

Older Drivers

In Maryland, older driver safety programs focus on drivers of age 65 years or older. The data presented here on fatalities and serious injuries include any person involved in a crash with an older driver. Older drivers were involved in crashes that resulted in an average of 94 fatalities in Maryland each year (85 in 2018, 105 in 2019 and 91 in 2020). During that time, serious injuries resulting from these crashes in Maryland have seen a significant decrease, ranging from 518 in

2018 to 512 in 2019 to 381 in 2020. Fatal crashes involving older drivers in Charles County averaged 2 over the same period (ranging from 4 in 2018, 1 in 2019 to 2 in 2020). Further, serious injuries resulting from these crashes in the County have fluctuated, ranging from 21 in 2018, 9 in 2019 to 13 in 2020.

A total of 10,971 citations for moving violations or restraint usage were issued to drivers of age 65+ in Maryland in 2020. Over the past three years, the number of traffic citations issued to older drivers in Charles County has trended up then down from 538 (3.1% of those issued statewide) in 2018 to 608 (3.4%) in 2019 to 352 (3.2%) in 2020.

Young Drivers

In Maryland, young driver safety programs focus on individuals between ages 16 and 20. The data presented here on fatalities and serious injuries include any person involved in a crash with a young driver. Young drivers were involved in crashes that resulted in an average of 52 fatalities in Maryland each year (54 in 2018, 46 in 2019, and 56 in 2020). During that time, serious injuries resulting from these crashes in Maryland have fluctuated, ranging from 384 in 2018 to 407 in 2019 to 345 in 2020. In 2020 there were 5 fatalities involving young drivers in Charles County, a number that has been increasing over time, with 1 in 2018 and 1 in 2019. Further, serious injuries due to crashes involving younger drivers have been increasing over the same time period, from 12 in 2018 to 13 in 2019 to 23 in 2020.

A total of 35,236 citations for moving violations or restraint usage were issued to drivers of age 16-20 in Maryland in 2020. Over the past three years, the number of traffic citations issued to younger drivers in Charles County has seen a significant decrease: 1,519 (3.6% of those issued statewide), 1,418 (3.4%), and 805 (2.3%) in 2018, 2019, and 2020, respectively.

Occupant Protection

An unrestrained occupant is defined as a child under the age of eight not reported to be restrained in a child safety seat (which includes harness and booster seats) or a person over the age of eight not reported as restrained by a seat belt while riding in a passenger vehicle or light truck. Unrestrained occupant fatalities have seen an increase over the past three years in Charles County, ranging from 6 (2018) to 5 (2019) to 8 (2020). Serious injuries have been alternating over the same period: 13 (2018) to 10 (2019) to 14 (2020). The 2020 values accounted for 6.3% of the unrestrained fatalities and 3.6% of the unrestrained serious injuries occurring in the State.

In 2020, 16,858 citations were issued statewide for safety equipment violations (including seat belt violations and child safety seat violations), which was a much lower total when compared to the numbers issued in the previous years (27,342 in 2018 and 29,660 in 2019). In Charles County, 741 such citations were issued in 2020, representing 4.4% of the statewide total, compared to 1,051 from 2018 and 1,492 from 2019. The MHSO conducts an annual roadside survey of seat belt usage in Maryland. The statewide observed seat belt usage rate for Maryland in 2020 among drivers and front seat passengers of all vehicles was 91.4%, while the overall observed seat belt usage rate for Charles County was 90.6%.

Note: Citation frequencies and percentages reported here may be underestimates of actual issued citations due to an ongoing system conversion.