



Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts Performance Audit Operations

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Why we did this review

Senate Bill 226, signed into law in May 2005, added driver training to Georgia's Graduated Driver's Licensing system. Under the new law, all 16-year-olds applying for a license are required to complete an approved driver training program. In addition to the added requirement, the bill also created the Georgia Driver's Education Commission to recommend changes in state programs, statutes, policies, or budgets relating to driver training, with the objective of maximizing participation in driver education and training and accident reduction. This audit was conducted to determine whether access and affordability of driver training has increased, and how Georgia compares to other states. In addition, we reviewed the Department of Driver Services' licensing and monitoring of Georgia's driver training schools.

Who We Are

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Driver Training

Of the \$26 million collected in driver training fees since May 2005, only a third (approximately \$8.27 million) has been appropriated and spent on driver training; however, the funds spent have resulted in increased access to and affordability of driver training

What we found

In 1997, the Georgia General Assembly passed the Teenage and Adult Driver Responsibility Act (TADRA). This Act limited teenagers' driving privileges and established Georgia's Graduated Driver's License (GDL) system. The Act was established in response to a series of widely publicized fatal crashes involving teenage drivers. Under the GDL guidelines, teenagers may obtain a Class D license after meeting specified requirements; they also have limited driving hours, and are limited to the number of passengers who can ride with them. The Class D license is valid until drivers turn 18, at which time they are eligible to apply for a Class C license, which provides full driving privileges.¹

In May 2005, Senate Bill 226 (commonly referred to as Joshua's Law) was signed, amending TADRA by adding a driver education requirement to the existing GDL framework.² According to statute, any 16-year-old who obtains a Class D license on or after January 1, 2007 must have completed a driver education course approved by the Department of Driver Services (DDS). The course is to consist of 30 hours of classroom training and six hours of behind-the-wheel training (referred to as "30/6"). Joshua's Law created the Georgia Driver's Education

¹ A Class C license is required for driving any vehicle weighing 26,000 pounds or less, and does not contain the provisional restrictions of a Class D license.

² Joshua Brown was killed in a car accident in July 2003. His parents advocated for driver training and worked for passage of a bill that would require driver training for all 16-year-olds prior to receiving a Class D license. Senate Bill 226 noted that the law (specifically Article 10) would be known as "Joshua's Law."

Commission (GDEC) with the objective of *maximizing participation in driver's education and training and accident reduction* and created the Driver Education Training Fee (DETF) - a 5% court fee assessed on all traffic violations - to provide funding for driver training initiatives.

Our review of several studies found that GDL systems have been shown to reduce the fatal crash rate of teenagers; however there was not sufficient evidence to determine that the traditional 30-hour classroom and six hour behind-the-wheel driver training program (as required in DDS regulations) is effective at reducing the teen crash rate . In July 2007, DDS fully implemented its web initiative which requires driver training schools to report information on the number of students completing driver training. According to DDS personnel, this information will allow for comparisons between driver training information and individual crash data. Currently, DDS is responsible for licensing and monitoring driver training schools and driver training instructors. In order to be licensed, DDS now requires that schools participate in the web initiative. DDS reports that approximately 55,000 teens took a driver training course in fiscal year 2008.

Our review found that, of the approximately \$26 million collected through the DETF, only \$8.27 million has been appropriated to GDEC. According to statute, *[I]t is the intent of the General Assembly that, subject to appropriation, an amount equal to such proceeds received from such fines in any fiscal year shall be made available during the following fiscal year to the commission for the purpose... of providing driver education and training to a person, entity, or program eligible pursuant to criteria set forth by the commission.* However, to date, GDEC has never been appropriated more than 50% of the amount collected and, in the past two years, has received less than 1/3 of the collections. It should be noted that, to date, GDEC has not formally requested additional funding.

GDEC has used the funds it has received to increase accessibility to and affordability of driver training, through the introduction of virtual driver training and a Parent-Teen driving guide (which allows teens to meet the behind-the-wheel requirement by driving with a parent or guardian). However, additional action is necessary to ensure that driver training is having the desired impact and that the programs funded are having the desired results. For example, GDEC provides grants to high schools (to enhance or implement driver training programs) and to library systems (to buy computers so teens can access virtual training programs); however, current reporting requirements will not provide sufficient information to determine the extent to which these grants are helping GDEC achieve its goal of increasing access and affordability. Additionally, as noted above, the traditional 30/6 driver training is not considered effective at reducing the crash rates for teens. Given that additional funds could be made available (based on current fee collections), and the availability of better data regarding usage and outcomes of driver training, the Commission may be in a unique position to pilot and adopt innovative programs.

We also determined that DDS should take steps to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its auditing process (of driver training schools) by incorporating a risk-based approach to selecting schools for review and using data collected through its web initiative to influence this selection.

Finally, it should be noted that driver training schools operated by the Technical College System of Georgia (formerly the Department of Technical and Adult Education) and the University System of Georgia are exempt from DDS licensure. As a result, the 18 schools operated by these two agencies are not required to report information on program participants to DDS . An estimated 2,200 teens reportedly received training through these schools in calendar year 2007. In order to ensure complete information is available for analysis, we recommend consideration be given to requiring these schools to report activity information to DDS.

In its response to the report GDEC and DDS noted areas of agreement and disagreement with the individual findings. Their specific comments regarding our findings and recommendations are summarized in the remainder of this report.

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Audit Purpose

The purpose of this audit was to evaluate the impact of the Georgia Driver's Education Commission (GDEC) on the accessibility, affordability, and effectiveness of driver training, and how the structure of driver training in Georgia compares to other states with required driver training for teens. In addition, we reviewed the Department of Driver Services' (DDS) processes for licensing and monitoring driver training schools. Details about our objectives, scope and methodology are included in Appendix A.

This report has been discussed with appropriate personnel representing DDS and GDEC. A draft copy was provided for their review and comment; pertinent responses have been included in the report as appropriate.

Background

Georgia's Graduated Licensing Program

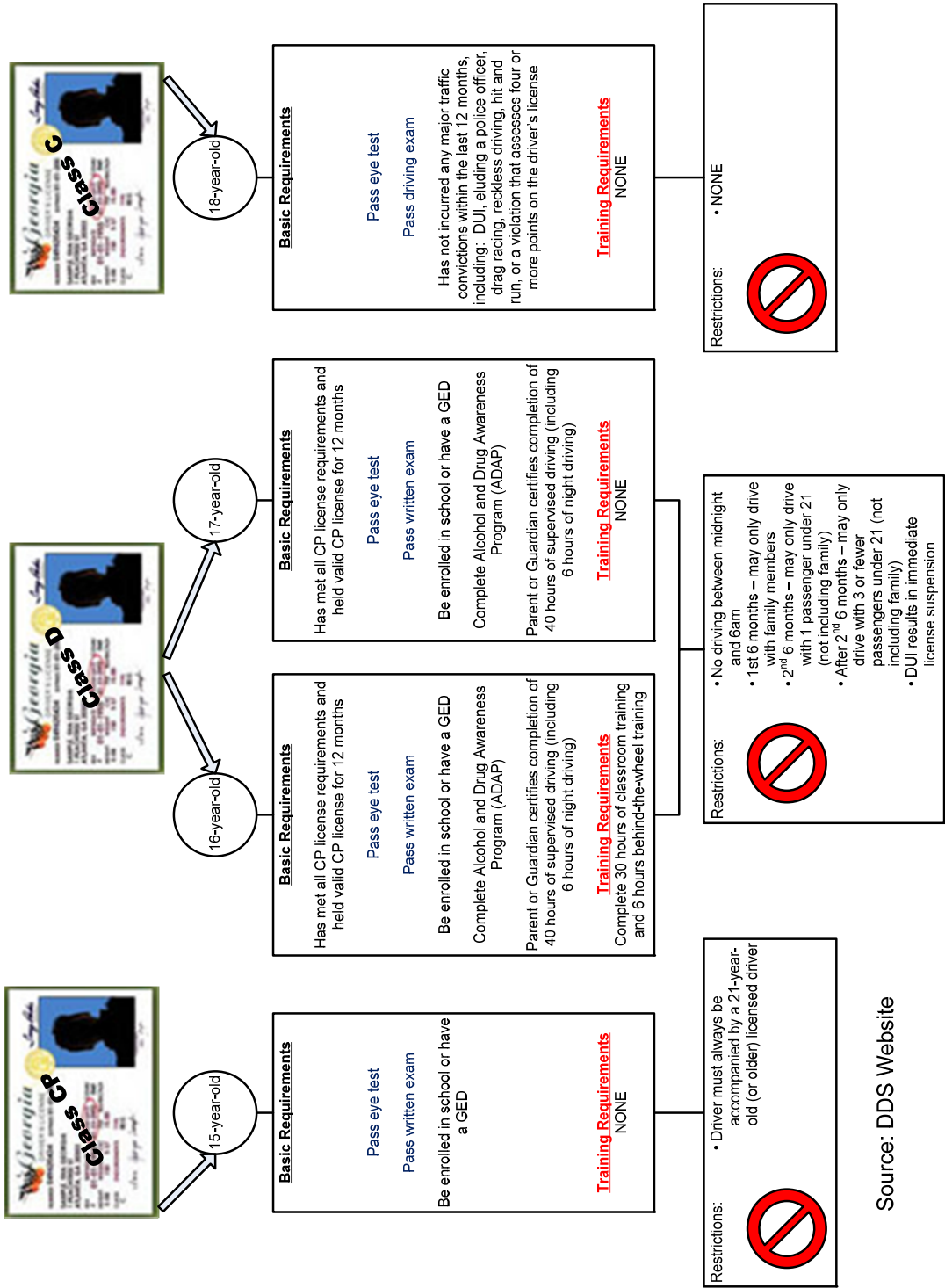
In response to a series of widely publicized fatal crashes involving teenage drivers, the Georgia General Assembly passed legislation limiting teenagers' driving privileges. Passed in 1997 and amended in 2001, the Teenage and Adult Driver Responsibility Act (TADRA) established a graduated driver's license (GDL) system and created a Class D license for 16- and 17-year-old drivers. The GDL system specifies actions 16- and 17-year-olds must take in order to qualify for a license, as well as restrictions on those driving privileges. The Class D license is valid until drivers turn 18, at which time they are eligible to apply for a Class C license, which provides full driving privileges.¹

In May 2005, Senate Bill 226 (commonly referred to as Joshua's Law) was passed, further amending TADRA by adding a driver education requirement to the existing GDL framework. According to the law, any 16-year-old who obtains a Class D license on or after January 1, 2007 must have completed a driver education course approved by the Department of Driver Services (DDS). The driver education requirement is in addition to the 40 hours of supervised driving (six of which must be at night) already required under TADRA. As defined in statute, driver education consists of two components: classroom instruction and actual driving (behind-the-wheel training). TADRA outlines a three-step process individuals must complete in order to obtain a Class C license. **Exhibit 1** on the following page details the requirements for each phase of the process.

It should be noted that 17-year-olds obtaining a Class D license are not required to take driver education *classes*, but are required to have 40 hours of supervised driving, including at least six hours at night, with a parent or guardian (or other Class C licensed driver 21 or older) sitting next to the driver. The parent or guardian must attest to the supervised driving by signing an affidavit, which is available at DDS.

¹ A Class C license is required for driving any vehicle weighing 26,000 pounds or less, and does not contain the provisional restrictions of a Class D license.

Exhibit 1
Georgia's Graduated Driver License



Source: DDS Website

In 2006, House Bill 1252 expanded the definition of driver training schools to include *virtual driver training courses approved by the Department of Driver Services for the purpose of assisting persons to meet the requirements for licensed driving of Class C or Class M motor vehicles in this state.*² These programs serve as an alternative to the 30 hours of classroom instruction that is required by DDS regulation. Any student completing the virtual program must still complete the six-hour behind-the-wheel instruction requirement. Currently, there are three approved virtual training curriculums.

As an alternative to driving with a professional, teens may choose to meet the six-hour behind-the-wheel requirement by driving with a parent or guardian and completing the “Parent Teen Guide”. The Guide is a workbook of activities (such as parallel parking, driving in traffic, driving at night) to be filled out by the parent as the teen completes each step; it requires 40 hours of driving time with the parent present. The Guide was developed by the Virginia Department of Education, and DDS was granted permission to reproduce it for use in Georgia.

Given the variety of options described above, there are several methods by which a teen can meet the driver education requirements in order to obtain a Class D license:

- 30 hours of classroom and six hours behind-the-wheel training (referred to as “30/6”) taken at a DDS-approved driver training school, plus 40 hours of supervised training (including six hours at night);
- 30 hours of classroom training taken at a DDS-approved driver training school and completion of the Parent/Teen Driving Guide (no additional supervised driving time required);
- DDS-approved online (virtual) course and six hours behind-the-wheel training taken at a DDS-approved driver training school, plus 40 hours of supervised driving (including six hours at night); or,
- DDS-approved online (virtual) course and completion of the Parent/Teen Driving Guide (no additional supervised driving time required).

DDS posts a list of the approved Driver Training Schools on its website. The Parent Teen Driving Guide can also be printed off of the DDS website.

It should also be noted that parents or guardians are eligible for a Georgia income tax credit up to \$150 if their dependent minor child successfully completes a course through a private driver education school that is licensed by DDS. The amount of the credit is equal to \$150 or the actual amount paid for the course, whichever is less. Courses taken through DDS-licensed public high schools do not qualify for the tax credit. Additionally, statute requires that insurance companies offer a minimum of 10% discount on insurance rates for drivers who complete the 30 hours of classroom and six hours of behind-the-wheel training at a DDS-approved driver training school.

² Drivers are required to hold a Class M license in order to operate a motorcycle.

Driver Training Schools

Driver training instruction is provided to teens by public and private driver training schools. Driver training schools are required to be licensed and monitored by DDS; however, there is a statutory exemption for any school operated by a college. As a result, schools operated by Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) and the University System of Georgia (USG) institutions are not required to be licensed, but may provide driver training and education to teens.

As of February 2008, there were 280 “brick and mortar” driving training schools, of which 130 were privately operated and 150 were operated by a high school. In addition, there are three approved virtual driver training program curriculums available, offered by 36 private companies.³ Thirteen technical colleges and five universities offer driver education and training. Statewide, 105 of the 159 counties (66%) have a driver training school located in their county. In 25 counties, both a high school program and a private program are in operation. **Exhibit 2** on the following page shows which counties have certain types of driver training schools. Individuals in all counties can access virtual classes. It should be noted that in terms of access points, a high school may offer its own approved driver training program (counted as one of the 150 high school driver training programs) or contract with a private company to provide access to its students – the training may either occur at the school or at an alternate location.

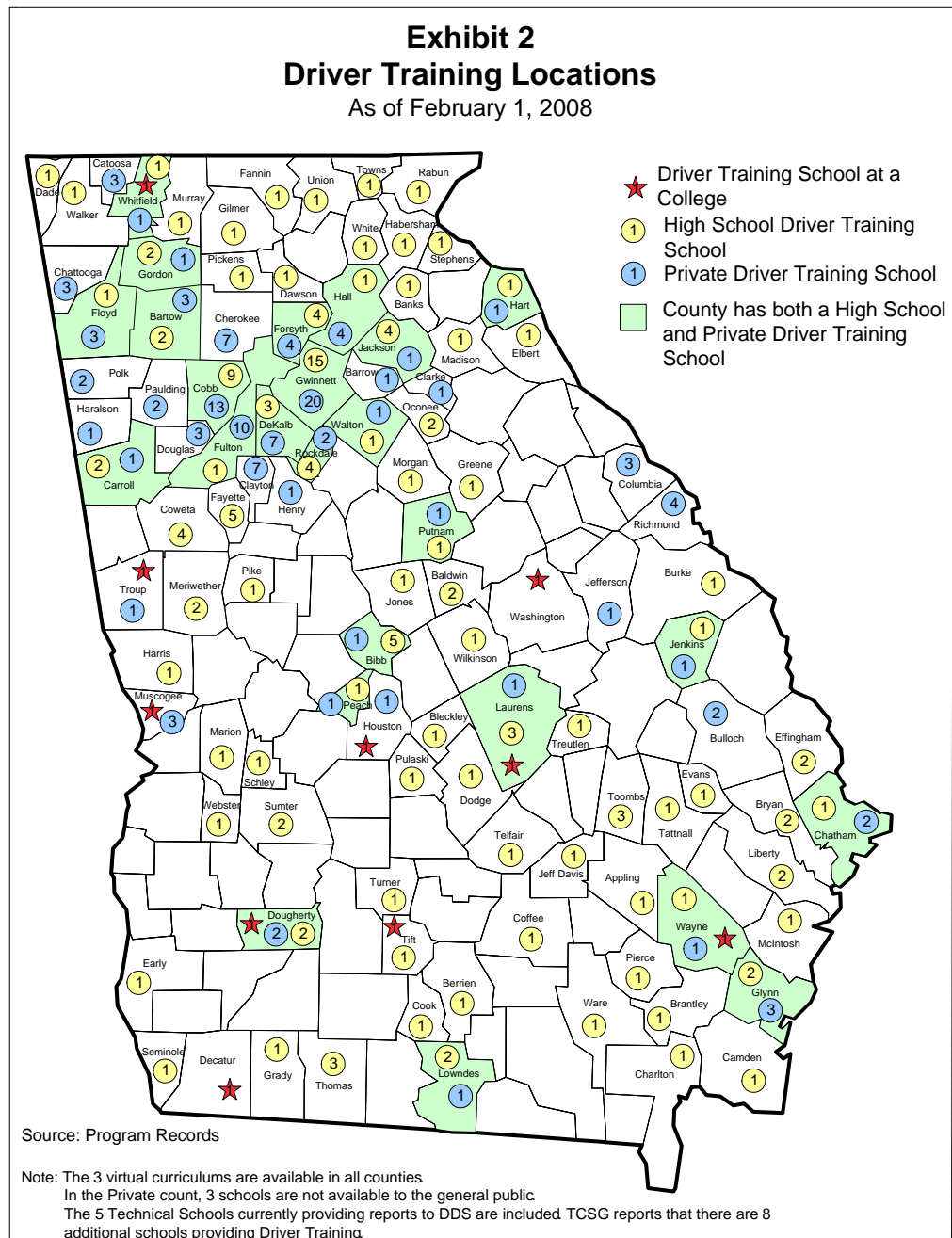
Our survey of 92 private companies offering 30 hours of classroom and six hours of behind-the-wheel training found that the rates range from \$175 to \$520. Some public high schools offer the program to students free of charge, while others charge a fee. Technical colleges and universities may also charge students a flat rate for driver training. DDS reports that approximately 55,000 teens took driver training through an approved driver training school in fiscal year 2008; it is estimated that an additional 2,200 received training through a TCSG or USG driver training school in calendar year 2007.

DDS Licensing and Monitoring Activities

All driver training instructors and schools, with the exception of schools operated by colleges and universities, must be licensed by DDS. The driver training schools must renew their licenses every four years. Currently, the Driver Training Program within the Regulatory and Compliance Division of DDS has 10 positions, including a program director and nine compliance analysts. The Regulatory and Compliance Division has also cross-trained staff from the Field Operations Division (responsible for licensing and monitoring Commercial Driving Schools, Defensive Driving Schools, and DUI Schools) to assist with auditing and monitoring driver training schools and instructors.

The Driver Training Program is responsible for conducting audits of driver training schools and instructors to ensure compliance with DDS rules and regulations for initial licensure and renewal. The Program’s analysts ensure that license fees are paid, no classes are conducted while licenses are expired, no Certificates of Completion are missing, records and contracts are properly maintained, and

³ It should be noted that the private company offering a virtual training program may also have a separate brick and mortar location.



insurance and safety requirements are met. Private schools are audited quarterly and high schools are audited upon completion of the driver training course (e.g., at the end of the semester in which the course is held). The analysts use a one-page standardized form to document the audit and note minor violations. The school is notified in writing of the violation(s) and given a timeframe in which to correct the problem(s). Major violations (such as conducting classes with an expired license) can result in immediate closure of the school.

Approximately 940 certified driver training instructors are responsible for providing driver training. In order to become certified, instructors must complete a four-hour

course or provide evidence of credit in driver education and safety from an accredited college or university. They are then subject to monitoring to ensure they teach a DDS-approved curriculum. Eight different curriculums have been approved for traditional driver training and three curriculums have been approved for virtual driver training. DDS performs monitoring visits on each instructor every two years that include instructor class monitoring for content and procedural requirements. Analysts document the review using a standardized audit report form. The instructor is notified in writing of any violation(s) and given a timeframe in which to correct the problem(s). Major violations can result in suspension of the certification.

Information on inspections is maintained in paper files located at DDS' headquarters in Conyers. In fiscal year 2007, the Driver Training Program and Field Operations Program conducted 559 audits of driver training schools.⁴ According to DDS personnel, a total of 195 instructors received a monitoring visit. In fiscal year 2008, staff report that 676 audits of driver training schools were conducted, while 173 instructors received a monitoring visit.

Web Initiative

DDS has developed and implemented a web initiative to track information related to driver training schools. Each DDS-approved driver training school is required to report information on the number of students completing each of its programs. Using the information submitted, DDS will be able to track and report the number of teens completing the state's driver training requirements. It also provides a database for examiners to check against the certificates of completion from driver training schools that teens submit when applying for a Class D license.

According to DDS personnel, after several years of data collection, they will be able to track this data and match it against the Department of Transportation's crash data. As a result, if a teen is involved in an accident, DDS will be able to match the teen to the driver training school attended, identify the type of training (classroom or virtual) they received, and the instructor who taught that particular course. According to DDS personnel, the ultimate goal is to enable DDS to gather trend data to identify the driver training schools or type of driver training schools most effective at keeping teens from being involved in crashes.

Georgia Driver's Education Commission

Joshua's Law (Senate Bill 226) created the Georgia Driver's Education Commission (GDEC) with the objective of *maximizing participation in driver's education and training and accident reduction*. In its first meeting, GDEC cited its direction as: *increase[ing] safety of Georgia by improving driving by reducing accidents and fatalities, especially in teens; study, review and recommend effective methods of improving teen driving; and, accessibility and affordability of driver education and how funding that flows through this commission can assist with those two areas*.

The Commission is comprised of eight members, four appointed by the Governor, two by DDS, one by the Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS), and one by

⁴ It should be noted that the Driver Training Program and the Field Operations Program both license and monitor other types of schools such as commercial driver license (CDL) schools, defensive driving schools, and third party testing schools (which are schools that have been licensed by DDS to administer the road test to students who successfully complete a 30/6 driver training program).

the State Board of Education. Of the four members appointed by the Governor, statute requires that two be private driver education instructors and two be public driver education instructors. Initial terms ranged in length from one to three years; all future appointments have a term of four years. Commission members are not paid, however they are reimbursed for expenses. GDEC is attached to DDS for administrative purposes.

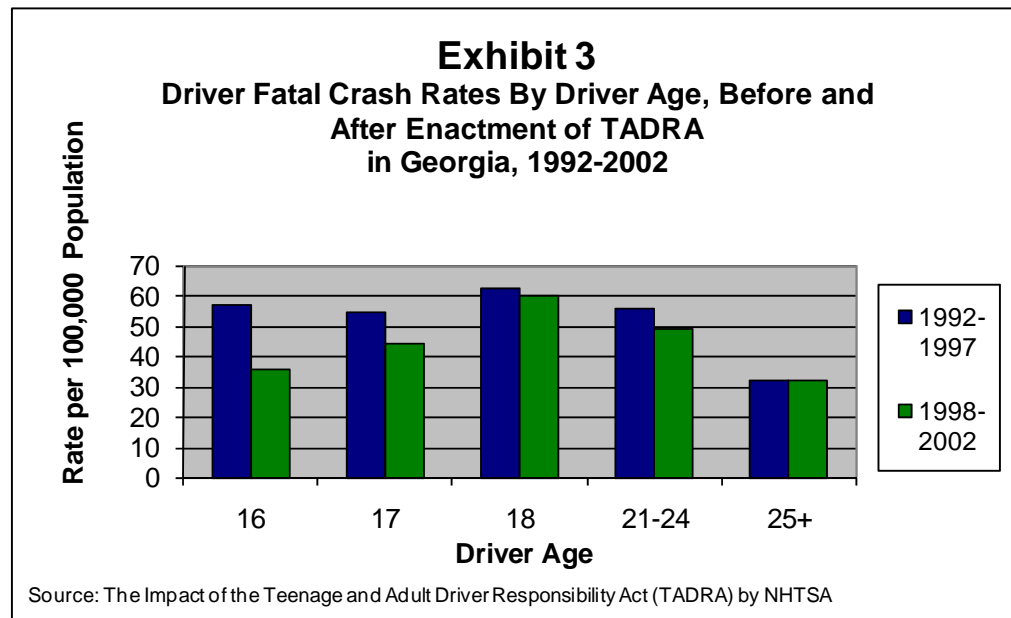
In addition to establishing GDEC, Joshua's Law included a funding source for driver training by creating a court fee. The Driver Education and Training Fee (DETF) is a 5% fee charged on all traffic cases. Courts are required to remit the DETF to the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority (GSCCCA), which remits the funds to the State Treasury for deposit into the general fund. Per the statute, *it is the intent of the General Assembly that, subject to appropriation, an amount equal to such proceeds received from such fines in any fiscal year shall be made available during the following fiscal year to the Commission....* The funds are to be used for purposes of providing driver education and training to a person, entity, or program eligible pursuant to criteria to be set by the commission. Funds not appropriated to GDEC remain in the general fund; there is no restriction on how those remaining funds can be used. Through fiscal year 2008, collections from the court fee (since its inception in fiscal year 2005) totaled approximately \$26 million.

GDEC has developed a grant process, administered by GOHS, to provide grants to fund driver training activities in public high schools and libraries (See **Appendices B and C** for a complete list of grantees). As of June 30, 2008, GDEC had awarded grants to 110 public libraries (in 28 library systems) and 38 public high schools. The grants to high schools were used to initiate or enhance a driver training program. The library grants funded two computers in each library to provide internet access for students to complete the 30-hour virtual driver training course. GDEC funds the grant administration by providing funding to GOHS for two positions and indirect administrative costs. GDEC is also responsible for setting policies and developing initiatives for driver training. In support of that mission, it has commissioned two studies to assess the need for driver training in the state and has developed a DVD entitled "Driving Ambition" to make teens aware of the importance of safe driving. While it does not employ a staff, GDEC has provided funds for three positions for DDS compliance analysts, who are responsible for assisting driver training schools in collecting and reporting information they are required to provide. As noted above, while GDEC is responsible for maximizing participation in driver education and training, the schools providing the training may be private or public and are licensed and monitored by DDS.

Effectiveness of TADRA and Driver Training

According to a 2007 study funded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and conducted by the Emory University Department of Emergency Medicine and Center for Injury Control, the fatality rate has decreased since Georgia's 1997 implementation of TADRA and the establishment of a GDL system in Georgia. The study analyzed the number of fatal crashes among teens in Georgia for 5.5 years prior to TADRA and 5.5 years after the enactment of TADRA. The study found that the rate of fatal crashes involving 16-year-olds decreased by 38.6% (from an average annual rate of 57.0 to 36.1 per 100,000 16-year-olds) during

the period from 1992 to 2002⁵. It should be noted that even with this decrease, Georgia's rate of 16-year-olds involved in fatal crashes was still well above the national average of 28 per 100,000 nationwide. The study also concluded that TADRA had a positive effect on the fatal crash rate of 17-year-olds, reducing their fatal crash rate by 19.1%. See Exhibit 3 below for a breakdown of the fatal crash rate before and after enactment of TADRA by age.



While studies indicate that graduated driver's license systems have had a positive impact on teen driving habits, studies of the effectiveness of driver training on accident reduction have been less clear. During the audit, we were unable to locate a study that linked driver training to a reduction in the teen driving crash rate. According to a study conducted for the Traffic Injury Research Foundation⁶ in 2002, *there is little support for the hypothesis that formal driver instruction is an effective safety measure. There is no clear and convincing evidence that driver education/training, particularly the traditional formula, which is 30 hours in-class education and six-hours in vehicle instruction, impacts safe driving and reduces the elevated crash risk of young novice drivers...* This study concluded that effectiveness may be improved by selecting content that is more focused on hazard recognition and risk assessment behaviors. In addition, the authors note that NHTSA has suggested that a tiered approach to driver training (where a basic driver education course is required in the early phase and a more advanced safety oriented course is required in the intermediate phase) might be more impactful and states should consider moving toward this model.

Another study conducted in 2004 for the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) reached similar conclusions, stating that *[t]here is no difference in the crash records of driver education graduates compared with equivalent groups of beginners who learned to drive without formal education.... There is little reason to think driver education should produce drivers*

⁵ This study was conducted prior to the amendment of TADRA to include a driver education requirement. The driver education requirement was not effective until January 2007.

⁶ The Traffic Injury Research Foundation's mission is to reduce traffic related deaths and injuries.

less likely to crash. The courses generally are of short duration (for example, 30 hours in-class and six hours in-vehicle); in the available time it is possible to teach only basic driving skills.

Funding

As noted earlier, the DETF collections are deposited into the general fund, from which appropriations are made to GDEC through DDS. Funds not appropriated to GDEC remain in the general fund and can be used for other purposes; there is no requirement that the funds be held for driver training purposes. It should be noted that there is a sunset provision in the law, which provides that the fee will cease on June 30, 2013.

As shown in **Exhibit 4**, in fiscal year 2007, the Commission was appropriated \$2.76 million. The same amount was appropriated in fiscal years 2008 and 2009. As shown in the chart below, approximately \$2.2 million in fiscal year 2007 and \$2.3 million in fiscal year 2008 was spent on grants to fund driver training activities in public schools and libraries. The remaining monies have been used to fund three positions at DDS, two positions at the Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS), and cover indirect costs of grant administration.

Exhibit 4 GDEC Revenue and Expenditures Fiscal Years 2007 - 2009			
	Fiscal Year 2007 (Actual)	Fiscal Year 2008 (Actual)	Fiscal Year 2009 (Budgeted)
Prior-Year DETF Collections	\$5,658,492	\$9,590,973	\$10,396,518
Revenues			
Appropriation	\$2,756,218	\$2,756,218	\$2,756,218
Expenditures			
Grants			
Libraries	\$270,800	\$0	\$0
High Schools	1,914,856	2,337,048	2,316,303
Administrative Costs			
Web Initiative Consultant (DDS)	23,638	147,492	107,551
Grants Management at GOHS ⁽¹⁾	97,000	224,930	228,396
Advertising and Media	420,194	11,748	0
Need Assessment Studies	30,000	35,000	0
Total Expenditures	\$2,756,218	\$2,756,218	\$2,659,750⁽²⁾
⁽¹⁾ In FY 2007, funds were for salaries for two GOHS employees; in FY 2008 and FY 2009, funds were used to cover two positions and to cover indirect administrative costs.			
⁽²⁾ GDEC voted to reduce its budgeted expenditures by \$96,468 (3.5%) in order to meet the Governor's budget reduction request.			
Source: GDEC Unaudited Records and GSCCCA			

DDS also receives an appropriation to fund its Regulatory and Compliance Division, which houses the Driver Training Program that is responsible for the licensing and monitoring of driver training schools. In fiscal year 2007, DDS was appropriated approximately \$1.2 million for its Driver Training program. In fiscal year 2008 and again in fiscal year 2009, the Driver Training Program was appropriated approximately \$2.1 million.

Findings and Recommendations

Of the \$26 million in Driver Training and Education Fees collected since the fee's establishment in 2005, only \$8.27 million has been appropriated for driver training purposes.

As shown in Exhibit 5 below, since the Driver Training and Education court fee went into effect in May 2005, only \$8.27 million (32%) of the total \$26 million collected has been appropriated to GDEC and ultimately spent on driver training activities.⁸ While, per the statute, *it is the intent of the General Assembly that, subject to appropriation, an amount equal to such proceeds received from such fines in any fiscal year shall be made available during the following fiscal year to the commission for the purposes...of providing driver education and training to a person, entity, or program eligible pursuant to criteria set by the commission*, GDEC has never been appropriated more than 50% of the collections from the previous fiscal year. The result is that \$17.7 million collected to fund driver training stayed in the general fund and was spent on other activities as there is no requirement in statute that funds stay connected to driver training.

Exhibit 5 Driver Training Education Fee Collections and Appropriations				
Collections Amounts by Year		Appropriations to GDEC		% of Collections Appropriated
<u>FY</u>	<u>Collections</u>	<u>FY</u>	<u>Appropriations</u>	
2005 ⁽¹⁾	\$6,887	2006	\$0	0%
2006	\$5,658,492	2007	\$2,756,218	49%
2007	\$9,590,973	2008	\$2,756,218	29%
2008	\$10,396,518	2009	\$2,756,218	27%
Total	\$25,652,870	Total	\$8,268,654	32%

(1) The fee went into effect on May 10, 2005.
Source: GDEC records, Appropriations Acts, OPB BudgetNet reports, and GSCCCA

It should be noted that since its inception in October 2005, the Commission has not made a specific request for all driver training fee collections from the previous fiscal year. The Commission did not specifically request any funding in fiscal years 2006 or 2007.

In fiscal year 2007, the Office of Planning and Budget added \$2.75 million to the DDS budget request as a Governor's recommendation to appropriate *additional revenues collected from fees to support driver's education*. The funds were combined into the DDS budget under the Regulatory and Compliance Division base budget which already contained DDS funding for its driver training sub-program, creating a new base budget of approximately \$4 million. It should be noted that prior to the beginning of the 2008 session, the GDEC chairman sent a letter to both OPB and the General Assembly informing them of the amount collected through the court fee and the amount appropriated to GDEC; however, the letter did not include a specific request for funds for the FY 2009 budget cycle. In the letter to OPB, the chairman did

⁸ It should be noted that, in fiscal year 2009, GDEC voted to withhold approximately \$96,000 (3.5%) from its appropriation in accordance with the Governor's request. According to staff, GDEC is awaiting further instructions from the Governor's office regarding the need for any additional reductions. If this reduction occurs, the amount of overall funds that have been made available for driver training will be \$8.17 million.

indicate there was an unmet demand for grant funding; not all of the schools that met the requirements for grant funding received an award; and additional schools have since submitted applications for grant funds. The letters are included in Appendix D.

As discussed in the next finding, GDEC is at a point of determining what role it will fulfill with regard to driver training in Georgia. As part of this determination, GDEC will have to develop a formal plan for fulfilling this potentially revised role and determine the amount of funding necessary to accomplish its goals. Absent such a plan, the General Assembly may need to decide whether to continue funding GDEC driver training at the current level. If only \$2.75 million is going to be appropriated to GDEC and spent for purposes of driver training, then consideration should be given to reducing the 5% court fee so that collections are approximately equal to the annual appropriations.

In its response to the report, GDEC noted that, while it has not submitted a formal, written request seeking an appropriation for a particular dollar amount, it has given briefings to the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget and the Appropriations Committees of both chambers of the General Assembly each year on how GDEC has spent the amounts previously appropriated and how it would spend additional amounts if they were appropriated. It also noted that GDEC's plan for the first phase was to create a grant program by which public schools and libraries could begin to offer driver training or expand the number of students who could be served. The next phase of GDEC's plan is to continue the grant program with "an eye toward creating public-private partnerships that will expand driver training opportunities in public schools by allowing them to collaborate with licensed, private driver training schools."

GDEC should begin to explore alternatives to the traditional 30/6 driver training program to identify and recommend more effective methodologies for improving teen driving.

GDEC is uniquely positioned to provide leadership in driver training and education. With the implementation of DDS' web initiative, information will be available to assess the effectiveness of the various types of driver training currently offered. In addition, it will also provide information for more in-depth analysis to determine if there are correlations between teen driver crash rates and other factors, such as geographic location, type of driver training course taken, age, etc. Given that fee collections have been approximately \$10 million per year for the past two years, additional funds could also be made available for driver training.

According to a GDEC representative, until now, the Commission has been focused on creating a foundation for driver training in Georgia. According to its enabling legislation, GDEC *may recommend to the Governor and the General Assembly changes in state programs, statutes, policies, budgets, and standards relating to the provision of driver education and training in this state with the objective of maximizing participation in driver's education and training and accident reduction.* At its inaugural meeting in October 2005, the Commission noted that one of its priorities was to *study, review and recommend effective methods of improving teen driving.*

In support of this statutory mission, GDEC should begin to evaluate alternatives to traditional 30/6 driver training and use the resources potentially at its disposal to identify, test, and evaluate methods for addressing accident reduction. The traditional 30/6 driver training methodology has been used for over 75 years; however, it is seen as largely ineffective at reducing teen driver's crash rates. According to AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, *[T]here is not yet much compelling evidence that young people who complete driver education programs drive more safely or have fewer crashes than those who receive less formal driver instruction.*⁹ AAA suggests focusing on what it is about young drivers and their crash risk that we hope education will change. In addition, it is generally accepted that driver training will continue to exist because of public support and the perception that it must be useful in some manner.

It should be noted that other states have also had difficulty in identifying a teen driving program that directly impacts the crash rate. Officials in Louisiana, Washington, and Virginia (which all have requirements similar to Georgia's for licensing drivers), could not provide evidence that their programs were effective at reducing the crash rate of teens who completed the required course. In fact, Washington indicated that their inability to prove that their program is effective at reducing the crash rate caused the legislature to stop funding the program in 2002. Michigan, however, employs a two-stage driver education program that requires classroom and behind-the-wheel driver training to complete a Level 1 phase, followed by an additional six hours of classroom training required to reach Level 2. Michigan requires "face-to-face" instruction with certified instructors. The two-stage method of driver training has been endorsed by NHTSA. At present, sufficient information is not available to determine its impact on the crash rates of teen drivers. It should also be noted that NHTSA has contracted with a private company to adopt enforceable standards for driver training that are widely accepted by driver training program administrators across the country. These standards are to be unveiled in February 2009.

Given that GDEC has the potential for additional funding, coupled with additional information available to allow for analysis of current driver training programs, it should consider addressing alternatives to the traditional 30/6 driver training. While traditional programs are largely deemed ineffective at reducing crash rates among teens, alternative approaches may be available. Action GDEC could consider includes, but is not limited to, pilot testing potential driver education and training programs that are showing promising outcomes.

According to its response to the report, GDEC is planning a pilot project involving the DRIVE program. This program "focuses on attitudinal training of teen drivers, which is intended to encourage hazard recognition and avoiding risky behavior." In addition, GDEC noted that it anticipates "utilizing NHTSA's findings in conjunction with studies into the impact of SB-226 on teen crashes and convictions for moving violations in its review of future program proposals".

⁹ AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety was established in 1947 and is a not-for-profit publicly supported charitable educational and research organization.

GDEC has taken action to improve both accessibility and affordability of driver training by supporting and developing alternatives to the traditional methods; however, GDEC should ensure the newly established options are effective by monitoring their effectiveness and usage.

Currently, three factors have increased the accessibility and affordability of driver training in Georgia: the approval of virtual programs (on-line driver training schools), the development of the Parent Teen Guide, and driver training schools entering the market as a direct effect of the requirements of statute. These three areas are discussed below.

- As early as October 2005, GDEC meetings included discussion of the viability of expanding the definition of driver training to include virtual programs. This expansion was accomplished in 2006 with the passage of HB 1252. Virtual driver training programs provide a less expensive and potentially more accessible method for meeting the 30 hours of classroom training teens are required to have prior to receiving a Class D license. The average cost of 30 hours of classroom instruction is \$137 (ranging from free, in some public high schools, to \$390) according to a survey of driver training schools conducted by the audit team. However, virtual programs range in cost from \$55 to \$99. Additionally, virtual instruction immediately increases access because it is available to anyone with internet access. Prior to the approval of virtual programs, teens in certain rural areas would have had to travel to the next county, or further, to attend a driver training school (See Exhibit 2 on page 5).

As shown in Exhibit 6 below, teens are using the virtual program to complete the 30-hour classroom portion of the statutory requirement. In fiscal year 2008 approximately 35% of teens used the virtual programs.

Exhibit 6		
Virtual Program Utilization Fiscal Year 2008		
Type of Instruction	Total	Percentage
Virtual	19,294	35.4%
Classroom	35,162	64.6%
Total	54,456	100%
Source: Program Records		

Currently, companies offering virtual training report information on participation to DDS through its web portal. By working with DDS to track usage and monitor the virtual driver training programs, GDEC will be able to identify any differences between the driving actions of teens who took traditional driver training versus those who took the virtual course. As a result, GDEC will be able to determine whether virtual programs are at least as effective as traditional methods, and take, or recommend, action if they are not.

- The Parent-Teen Guide, used to fulfill the behind-the-wheel requirement for teen drivers, provides an affordable and accessible alternative to attending a driving school. The Guide itself is free, while behind-the-wheel training at a school tends to be the most expensive portion of driver training. Based on our survey of driver training schools, six hours of behind-the-wheel training cost an average of \$312 (with costs ranging from \$75 to \$425). In addition to a reduced cost, teens or parents can download a printable copy of the Guide from the DDS website. It should also be noted that, if using the Parent-Teen Guide, teens are exempt from the 40 hours of supervised training required as part of the driver education requirements.

In order to obtain a license, teens must have their parents or guardians sign a statement that they have completed the requirements set out in the guide. However, while this signed statement is submitted upon license application and physically retained by DDS, the information is not currently entered into the web initiative for tracking purposes. As a result, neither DDS nor GDEC has information that can be used to determine effectiveness and utilization. In addition, in order to fulfill the 40 hours of supervised driver training (required as part of the driver training education requirements if you are **not** using the Parent-Teen Guide), parents or guardians must hold a valid Class C license; however there is no such requirement for those using the Guide. GDEC should require that parents or guardians using the Guide to fulfill the behind-the-wheel portion hold a valid Class C license.

- It should also be noted that the number of driver training schools in the state has increased since driver training became a licensure requirement in January 2007. Prior to January 2007, there were 197¹⁰ DDS-approved driver training schools in Georgia; as of February 1, 2008, there were 280 approved driver training schools (a 42% increase). The number of private driver training schools has increased as well as the number of public high schools offering driver training. The increase in the overall number of schools is likely a direct effect of state law requiring driver training for teens. See **Exhibit 7** on the following page for the numbers of each type of driver training school before and after the effective date of the driver training requirement.

While GDEC and DDS are not responsible for the increase in the number of schools offering driver training, they do have responsibility for ensuring the schools are offering approved training and in assessing the impact on accessibility. Additionally, through its grant program, GDEC has the ability to influence where schools are created. For example, the 2008-2009 Grant Project Guidelines include the following statement: *public schools that currently are not served within a 40+ mile radius by public driver training programs or private driver training programs should be highlighted for special grant offer considerations.* Given this, GDEC could elect to focus its grant efforts even more, for example exclusively on applicants from underserved areas (based on identified criteria). Additionally, through its data collection efforts, DDS will have information on the individual schools which may help GDEC better assess their effectiveness.

¹⁰ Joshua's Law became effective January 1, 2007. The number of schools does not include virtual curriculums; as of July 2008, there were three approved virtual curriculums offered by 36 companies.

Exhibit 7 Number of DDS Approved Driver Training Schools (Before and One Year After Implementation of Joshua's Law)			
<u>Type of School</u>	<u>Number of Schools Prior to Law</u>	<u>Number of Schools as of 2/1/08</u>	<u>Percentage Increase Since Joshua's Law</u>
Private	74	130	76%
High School	<u>123</u>	<u>150</u>	22%
Total	197	280	42%
Note: Joshua's Law became effective January 1, 2007. Numbers do not include virtual curriculums; As of July 2008, there were 3 approved virtual curriculums offered by 36 companies. Source: DDS Records			

Accessibility and affordability of driver training have improved in Georgia, both as a result of GDEC efforts and in response to additional demand because of new statutory requirements. To ensure that the additional options provide at least the same quality of driver training, GDEC should work with DDS to monitor usage of the Parent-Teen Guide and virtual schools. GDEC should also consider how the growth in the number of driver training schools impacts its future actions.

According to its response, DDS and GDEC are now turning their attention to studying the impact of existing driver's education programs upon crash rates among teen drivers and will soon will be able to analyze the effectiveness of mandating driver training for 16-year-old drivers using various approved materials and comparing their crash and conviction rates with drivers licensed at 17 without the benefit of driver training. The results of these comparisons and information gleaned from studies done elsewhere will be used to make additional recommendations to the Governor and/or General Assembly.

In order to determine the extent to which grant funds are helping GDEC achieve its goal of increasing the access to and affordability of driver training, GDEC should require consistent, measurable reporting from grant recipients.

Currently, it is not possible to determine the extent to which the grants awarded to local libraries and high schools have had an impact on driver education accessibility and affordability. As of June 30, 2008, GDEC had awarded \$4.5 million in grants to 38 public high schools to either establish or enhance driver training programs and to 110 libraries (in 28 library systems) to purchase computers (and provide internet access) for local teens to take virtual driver training courses. (See **Appendices B and C** for a complete list of grantees.) Through these grants, 13 schools established new driver training programs, thereby creating 13 new access points for teen drivers. While, the goal of the Commission is to increase access and affordability of driver training, the grant process does not provide a mechanism to determine the impact of the grants.

GDEC has partnered with GOHS to administer the grant program. While the original request for proposals required grantees to report within three months of implementation and at year end, little information is available to assess progress. As discussed below, there were problems with the initial reporting and a lack of pre-grant information will make it difficult to assess information provided in the final reports. Additionally, what information has already been reported has not followed a

standard format, so there are no assurances that GOHS or GDEC will be able to determine the extent to which the grants have had the desired impact.

- Unanticipated challenges and delays caused GOHS to alter the reporting requirements and resulted in little information being available regarding impact. According to the request for proposals, grantees were to conduct an administrative evaluation and report the results to GOHS within three months of project implementation; they were also required to produce a year-end report. The administrative evaluation was to include the number of students who started and completed each phase of driver training, purchases made with grant funds, and number of simulators/computers used for the on-line course. The requirement to complete the administrative evaluation and report within three months of implementation was eliminated and grantees are now only required to provide the year-end report, which was due in late July. In addition, while grantees were required to submit a self sufficiency assurance plan because this was to be a one-time grant, GDEC has changed that requirement and is allowing previous grantees to apply for more grants.
- Even if grantees report as required, the reporting may not be sufficient to determine the impact of the funds. Public high school grantees are required to submit the number of students completing driver training during the year and the amount students are charged to participate. However, given that 25 (66%) of the 38 schools indicated the grant was to enhance an existing driver training program, the report will not clearly identify the impact of the GDEC funding on accessibility and affordability. GDEC would need to know how many students were being served prior to the grant and the rate they were charged to determine the impact their grant funding has had on access and affordability in a particular school or community. There is currently no requirement to provide information on previous service levels. By requiring consistent information from all grantees during the application and reporting processes, GDEC could ensure it is able to determine its impact on the access and affordability of driver training in the communities of grantees.

The year-end report for libraries requires the grantees to report the number of students that used the computers by a certain date. However, it does not require reporting on the number of students who successfully completed a virtual driver training course, nor does it require the grantees to report the total number of driver training hours spent on the computers. Without this information GDEC cannot determine the impact its funds have had on fulfilling its statutory mandate of maximizing participation. In fact, it is doubtful that GDEC will be able to gauge the impact of its funds on increasing participation in driver training.

- Based on information currently available, it is unclear whether the grants are having any impact on accessibility and affordability of driver training. The audit team reviewed all progress reports submitted by grantees through February, which represents two-thirds of the grant cycle. Generally, the public high schools reported information on obstacles and opinion of the use of the programs. Of the 28 library systems (which represent the 110 libraries

receiving grants), 14 (50%) reported a lack of interest among students, trouble attracting the intended patrons, or trouble generating interest among local teens.

In order to assess the effectiveness of the grants at increasing accessibility and affordability of driver training, GDEC should ensure the request for proposals requires sufficient information to establish a baseline against which to measure future activity. In addition, GDEC should ensure consistent reporting from the grant recipients to allow for comparisons on effectiveness. Before additional grants are awarded, GDEC should ensure that they are resulting in, or having an impact on, the desired results of increasing access and affordability.

In its response to the report, GDEC noted that GOHS has devoted considerable resources to training grantees in the correct processes for successfully submitting monthly reports and claims. It also noted that complying with deadlines and requirements vary among participants because of unique situations and degrees of understanding.

Additionally, GDEC and GOHS note that they are “certain that removing the financial barriers to driver training or driver training improvements does contribute to accessibility and affordability. It was noted that “[I]n an attempt to fill the data gap for “before and after” grant comparisons, GOHS and GDEC have proposed to implement a means for a discussion regarding affordability, accessibility, and program qualities implications through the collection of baseline and year end surveys”. To this end, a Baseline Survey Report was implemented in June 2008 which captures information including, but not limited to, whether or not driver training has been offered previously, and, if so, what fees were charged and how many students completed the training.

Action should be taken to appoint GDEC members as required by statute; additionally, GDEC should take steps to establish appropriate rules and regulations for its operations.

According to the statute, GDEC members serve a specified term and there is no statutory provision allowing members to continue to serve past the expiration of their term until another member is appointed. Of the eight members originally appointed, four members' terms expired by August 2007 but two continued to serve until April 2008, when new members were named, and two were reappointed in March 2008. According to a 2003 Attorney General's Opinion regarding gubernatorial appointments, these members should not have been allowed to continue to serve and do not count toward reaching a quorum for voting purposes. As a result, GDEC did not have enough members to reach a quorum of five members for official business that took place at the three meetings between August 2007 and March 2008. However, during this time, business was conducted and decisions were reached. For example, in November 2007 GDEC voted to set aside funding for a pilot program called The DRIVE Program.

Per state statute, GDEC shall *adopt rules and regulations for the transaction of its business*. However, GDEC has been meeting since October 2005 and has yet to formally adopt any rules or regulations related to the transaction of their business. At the first meeting in October 2005, there was discussion of adopting by-laws and a proposed set of by-laws was provided to the Commission members for review. According to communications between the Attorney General's office and GDEC, it was

determined that by-laws were not required and that rules would suffice. However, no rules have been adopted at present.

In order to ensure that it is operating in accordance with the statute, all members should be appointed in a timely manner. It should be noted that the Governor's office is required to appoint half of the members; DDS, GOHS, and the State Board of Education appoint the remaining four members. Because GDEC members are not currently allowed to serve past their term until new appointments are made, it is critical that these appointments be made in a timely manner to allow for the continuation of operations. Additionally GDEC should establish rules and regulations to clearly outline how it will transact its business, thereby increasing the transparency of its operations.

GDEC noted, in its response to the report, that all business has been conducted in conformity with the open meetings provision of statute and its operations have been transparent. GDEC will consult with the Attorney General's Office for advice on the promulgation of administrative rules and it agrees that all members should meet the applicable qualifications and be within their terms of office.

Licensing and Monitoring Activities

The Regulatory and Compliance Division within DDS should take steps to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its auditing and monitoring processes with regard to driver training schools.

Currently, resources are being used to audit schools multiple times when such frequency may not be necessary. The Division's procedures state that each private school will be audited quarterly to ensure compliance with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations.¹¹ Infractions are to be noted on the audit form and the Division issues a letter to the school detailing the infraction and seeking a resolution strategy. However, there was no evidence that the Division follows up to ensure that schools respond or that action is taken. The Division could make better use of its resources by focusing on those schools that pose a risk to the public and by ensuring that infractions are corrected as necessary.

With the implementation of the Department's web initiative, the Division now has access to more information on how many students each school is teaching, the number of classes offered in a year, and the class instructor. By matching this information with Department of Transportation crash data, DDS will be able to determine how students of the various programs are performing on the road. The Division should use this type of information to help target its auditing and monitoring efforts. As noted above, current policies require that each private driver training school be audited quarterly and in 2007, of the 119 schools we reviewed, 66 (55%) were audited quarterly. However, auditing quarterly may be excessive and a risk-based approach to selecting schools for audit would ensure audits are not repeated unnecessarily. Our review of 119 private driver training schools' files revealed that 14 (12%) of the schools were actually audited more than quarterly in calendar year 2007. According to Division staff, this may not be the result of any particular finding, rather, the school may be selected because it offers a DUI program

¹¹ Driver Training Schools operated by high schools are audited at the end of each semester (twice a year). Schools offering "summer only" programs are audited once a year or after the summer classes have been completed.

– and the analysts decides to review the Driver Training program as well while there; then the school is selected for a Driver Training audit, resulting in another review.

Additionally, the Division should identify infractions that require corrective action and ensure that the school takes the appropriate corrective action. Our review found that the problems noted are generally minor and little action is taken to ensure the school makes corrections. The Division should not identify “problems” which do not require corrective action. Of the 273 driver training school files we reviewed¹², only two contained evidence of a suspension or cancellation, and only one contained evidence of a fine being issued.

By revising the auditing process, the Division could ensure that schools are in compliance with rules and regulations, as well as ensuring that action is taken to address identified problems.

In response to the report, DDS noted that its Regulatory and Compliance Division is in the midst of a re-organization, and it is expected that efforts will be made to select a risk based approach for identifying schools for review as part of the changes to the operation.

Legislative Action

Consideration should be given to requiring all driver training schools to report information to DDS to ensure complete information is available to assess the impact of driver training.

Currently, driver training programs offered at a college are exempt from DDS oversight. As a result, programs offered through the University System of Georgia (USG) and through the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) are exempt from reporting to DDS and from licensing requirements. DDS provided evidence of five University institutions that offer driver training, and TCSG reported 13 technical colleges offer driver training. In calendar year 2007, it is estimated that over 2,200 teens received training through one of these schools.

Consideration should be given to requiring the schools to participate in the web initiative by providing information on the students taking classes through their programs. According to personnel from TCSG, five of its schools are currently submitting information to DDS on a voluntary basis; and all five University institutions are submitting information. Requiring reporting from all driver training programs would allow DDS and GDEC to access complete information on driver training schools and allow for better tracking of the effectiveness of different types of driver training schools.

In its response to the report, DDS noted it is “amenable to incorporating students taught by the Technical College System of Georgia and the University System of Georgia into the web initiative either by agreement with those entities or upon the directive of the General Assembly”.

¹² The 273 schools reviewed includes high school and private driver training schools

Appendix A

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

In this report, we evaluate the Georgia Driver's Education Commission's (GDEC) impact on the accessibility, affordability, and effectiveness of driver training; evaluate how the structure of driver training in Georgia compares to other states with required driver training for teens; and, review the Department of Driver Services' (DDS) processes for licensing and monitoring driver training schools.

To determine the extent to which GDEC has increased accessibility and affordability of driver training in Georgia, we interviewed members of GDEC, key personnel within DDS, employees of the Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS), and relevant personnel from the Office of the Attorney General, as well as other stakeholders. We researched applicable laws and regulations. We attended GDEC meetings occurring during the fieldwork portion of our project, and obtained and reviewed meeting minutes from all GDEC meetings that have occurred since GDEC's establishment. We reviewed data maintained by DDS regarding the number, type, and location of driver training schools to determine accessibility. In addition, the audit team conducted a survey of driver training schools in the state to gather information on the cost of driver training. We also reviewed studies regarding the effectiveness of driver training.

To determine whether other states have established effective driver training programs which have resulted in a reduction in teen fatalities or injuries due to car accidents, we interviewed key personnel involved with the driver training programs in Louisiana, Michigan, Maryland, Oregon, Virginia, and Washington. We also reviewed studies regarding the effectiveness of driver training.

To determine if DDS is effectively and efficiently licensing and monitoring driver training schools, we interviewed key personnel within DDS. We reviewed licensing and monitoring activities using program records and files as well as information from DDS' web initiative. The audit team also reviewed applicable laws and regulations to determine if DDS is taking necessary steps to ensure compliance with them.

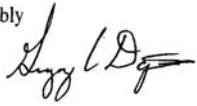
We conducted this performance audit from December 2007 through August 2008 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards for performance audits. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Appendix B	
GDEC High School Grantees	
As of June 30, 2008	
Grantee	Amount
Banks County School System	\$139,800
Bleckley County Schools	\$69,300
Brantley County High School	\$135,700
Bryan County High School	\$7,300
Calhoun High School (Gordon County)	\$63,600
Carroll County School System	\$140,000
Charlton County High School	\$140,000
Clarke County School District	\$110,400
Coffee County Board of Education	\$107,200
Dade County High School	\$140,000
Dawson County High School	\$140,000
DeKalb County School System	\$140,000
Early County Board of Education	\$140,000
Effingham County High School	\$140,000
Elbert County Comprehensive High School	\$133,000
Forsyth County School System	\$49,500
Gilmer County Schools	\$130,200
Gordon Lee High School (Bartow County)	\$130,100
Harris County High School	\$11,300
Jenkins County School System	\$66,300
Jones County High School	\$100,100
Lumpkin County High School	\$139,500
Madison County High School	\$22,500
Marietta High School (Cobb County)	\$140,000
Meriwether County School System	\$139,100
Pickens County High School	\$90,400
Rabun County High School	\$80,600
South Effingham High School (Effingham County)	\$134,400
Stephens County School System	\$140,000
Tattnall County High School	\$125,400
Telfair County High School	\$140,000
Thomasville City School (Thomas County)	\$139,600
Tift County High School	\$140,000
Toombs County High School	\$108,900
Wayne County School System	\$90,000
Webster County Board of Education	\$80,200
White County High School	\$133,800
Wilkinson County Schools	\$140,000
TOTAL	\$4,218,200
Source: GOHS Records	

Appendix C	
GDEC Library System Grantees	
As of June 30, 2008	
Grantee	Amount
Athens Regional Library System	\$26,800
Bartow County Public Library	\$7,600
Chatooga County Library System	\$5,100
Cherokee Regional Library System	\$9,300
Chestatee Regional Library System	\$5,100
Clayton County Public Library	\$14,700
Coastal Plain Regional Library	\$11,300
Dalton-Whitfield County Library	\$2,500
DeSoto Trail Regional Library	\$11,800
Elbert County Library System	\$2,400
Fannin County Public Library	\$2,500
Hall County Library System	\$15,200
Jefferson County Library System	\$6,300
Kinchafoonee Regional Library System	\$12,500
Lee County Library	\$7,600
Middle Georgia Regional Library	\$2,400
Mountain Regional Library	\$2,500
Ocmulgee Regional Library System	\$15,200
Pine Mountain Regional Library System	\$17,700
Roddenberry Memorial Library	\$2,500
Satilla Regional Library	\$14,800
Sequoyah Regional Library System	\$17,600
Screven-Jenkins Regional Library System	\$4,800
Statesboro Regional Library System	\$15,100
Thomas County Public Library System	\$12,200
Towns County Public Library	\$2,500
Uncle Remus Regional Library System	\$20,300
Union County Public Library	\$2,500
TOTAL	\$270,800
Note: Grants to these Library Systems placed computers in 110 public libraries.	
Source: GOHS Records	

Appendix D**GDEC Letters to General Assembly Members and Office of Planning and Budget****MEMORANDUM**

TO: Members of the Georgia General Assembly

FROM: Gregory C. Dozier, Chairman
Georgia Driver Education Commission 

DATE: September 17, 2007

RE: Grant Program Enables over 17,500 Students Access to Driver Training At School

I wanted to share some very exciting news with you concerning the growth of Georgia's teen-age driver education program. The Georgia Driver Education Commission has worked tirelessly over the past year to identify options to enhance driver education throughout the state. A comprehensive plan that is *accessible, affordable* and *effective* has been developed. But more importantly, a viable framework has been created for the future advancement of driver education throughout the state.

Over the past year, 35 Georgia public high schools and 110 Georgia libraries have received grants totaling \$4,100,100 to improve driver education throughout the state. More than 17,555 Georgia students will now have access to driver training at public high schools. Many more will be able to access virtual driver training via their local community libraries. Please see the attached maps outlining the extended coverage.

Grant Administration

The Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS) administers the grant application and selection process. A grant review committee established a point system for the evaluation of applications. Applicants must demonstrate effective ways to meet high school students' needs and motivation to learn and subsequently drive safely through the offering and managing of the Department of Driver Services (DDS) approved driver training methods.

Schools, school districts, or multiple schools are allowed to submit a joint or single grant application. Public schools are allowed to propose partnerships with one another, as well as to propose partnerships with for-profit and not-for-profit driver training schools to offer and manage DDS approved driver training methods.

For more information on Georgia teen driver education, please contact me, or you may visit www.georgiateendriveducation.com.

GCD/ssm

Attachments (2)



Georgia Department of Driver Services

2206 East View Parkway • Conyers, Georgia 30013 • 678.413.8650

Sonny Perdue
Governor

Gregory C. Dozier
Commissioner

November 27, 2007

Mr. Trey Childress, Director
Office of Planning and Budget
270 Washington Street, S.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Dear Mr. Childress,

Senate Bill 226 (Joshua's Law) was passed in May 2005 and specified that all teenagers must complete an approved driver education course in order to be eligible for a Class C driver's license at age 16. This legislation also provided funding for this effort through a 5% add-on fee to traffic citations and created the Georgia Driver Education Commission, which was tasked with the financial oversight of those funds. Since that time, the Commission has worked to identify options to improve driver education throughout Georgia and has developed a comprehensive plan that is accessible, affordable, and effective. Approved methods of driver education include:

- Public/Private – Classroom (30 hrs) and Behind the Wheel (6 hrs)
- Public/Private – Virtual Classroom and Behind the Wheel (6 hrs)
- Public – Classroom (30 hrs) Private – Behind the Wheel (6 hrs)
- Public – Classroom (30 hrs) Parent Teen Guide – Behind the Wheel (40hrs)
- Virtual Classroom/Private – Behind the Wheel (6 hrs)
- Virtual Classroom/Parent Teen Guide – Behind the Wheel (40 hrs)

Through its efforts, the Commission has created a strong foundation for the future of driver education.

As of October 31, 2007, a total of \$18,553,723.10 had been collected for driver education by the court systems. Funds totaling \$2,756,218 were appropriated for Commission use in the FY 2007 budget, and an additional \$2,756,218 was appropriated in FY 2008. In order to quickly and efficiently distribute this money to the driver education community, the Commission appointed the Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS) to develop a grant program and provide oversight for grant approvals and awards. All high school grantees must meet all DDS driver training requirements prior to funds being released and submit monthly activity reports, as well as a final project evaluation report, to GOHS.

www.dds.ga.gov

Mr. Trey Childress
Page two
November 27, 2007

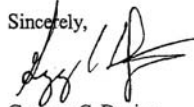
To date, a total of \$4,088,000 has been awarded and will allow 17,500 students to be served on an annual basis. These awards included funding for 13 new start-up programs and 22 existing programs that will be expanded or enhanced. In addition, a total of 235 computers were funded for 110 Georgia libraries to provide students access to the virtual driver training programs. Collectively, the 35 high school programs received a total of \$3,817,200, while libraries received a total of \$270,800. The first awards were released during the spring of 2007.

Not all applications were funded, and 42 additional schools have requested financial assistance. Thirteen applications totaling \$1,743,000 have met all requirements for funding, and those proposed programs have the capacity to serve 8,000 students annually. In addition, the GOHS has reviewed 29 other applications for funding, which totaled approximately \$5,880,000. The grant program can be expanded to include these other schools.

Approximately 34,265 students completed a driver education program during the first nine months of calendar year 2007. Based on current estimates, approximately 50,000 could complete a program before the end of the year, which is twice the number of students that completed a driver education program prior to implementation of Joshua's Law. This number is expected to grow exponentially as more programs become available to students.

Thank you for your interest in the Georgia Driver Education Commission. If you have any questions or need additional assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Rob Mikell, Deputy Commissioner, at (678) 413-5880, or you may contact Michele Jordan, Budget Director, at (678) 413-8759.

Sincerely,



Gregory C. Dozier
Commissioner

GCD/mlj

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