**Description of Highway Safety Problems**

In 2021, there were 1,797 fatalities and 8,937 serious injuries that occurred in motor vehicle traffic crashes on Georgia roadways – the largest number of traffic fatalities since 2006. The number of traffic-related fatalities increased by 8% from 1,664 fatalities in 2020. The main contributing factor to traffic crashes and injuries was drivers, passengers, and non-motorists engaging in risky behaviors. These behaviors include not using the appropriate restraint system (unrestrained), alcohol impairment, drug use, speeding, distracted driving, and drowsy driving. In 2021, 151 out of 159 Georgia counties experienced at least one traffic-related fatality.

• **Unrestrained Fatalities:** Between 2011 and 2021, Georgia’s observed seat belt usage rate was over 90% — 9 out of 10 front passenger occupants were observed wearing a seat belt. However, since 2015 the statewide observed seatbelt usage rate has steadily declined, falling below 90% usage in 2022, and the number of unrestrained fatalities has increased. In 2021 the number of unrestrained passenger vehicle fatalities increased by 94 fatalities (20%) from

461 in 2019 to 555 in 2021. Rural areas have a higher proportion of unrestrained seriously injured and fatally injured passenger vehicle occupants compared to other regions.

• **Alcohol-Related Fatalities:** In 2021 there were 391 fatalities in motor vehicle traffic crashes involving drivers with BACs of .08 g/dL or higher. This is a 5% increase (18 more fatalities) compared to 2020 and a 9% increase (36 more fatalities) compared to 2019. These alcohol- impaired driving fatalities accounted for 24% of all motor vehicle traffic fatalities in Georgia.

• **Speed-Related Fatalities:** In 2021, speeding-related fatalities decreased by 3% (11 fewer fatalities) compared to the previous. In 2020 (during the covid-19 public emergency response) speeding-related fatalities increased 46% compared to 2019. Twenty percent of all traffic fatalities (369 out of 1,797) were speeding related in 2021, compared to 23% (380 out of 1,664) in 2020 and 17% (260 out of 1,492) in 2019.

• **Pedestrian Fatalities:** Pedestrian fatalities remain a great concern in Georgia. In 2021, there were 306 pedestrian fatalities in the state of Georgia — a 10% increase from 279 pedestrian fatalities in 2020. Seventeen percent of all traffic fatalities were pedestrians in 2021. Preliminary data1 shows that pedestrian fatalities continue to increase.

• **Motorcyclist Fatalities:** In 2021, there were 185 motorcyclist fatalities in Georgia motor vehicle traffic crashes – one less fatality compared to 2020. Ten percent of all traffic fatalities were motorcyclists. The number of un-helmeted motorcyclist fatalities remains the same—an average of 14 un-helmeted fatalities per year.

• **Bicyclist Fatalities:** In 2021, bicyclist fatalities decreased by nearly half—from 32 bicyclist fatalities in 2020 to 15 bicyclist fatalities in 2021. Less than one percent of all traffic fatalities were bicyclists in 2021.