This coming year will mark 10 years since the Toward Zero Death program was started as a partnership between the Minnesota Departments of Transportation (MnDOT), Public Safety, and Health. During that decade, the number of road fatalities decreased from 655 in 2003 to 368 in 2011—a remarkable drop that far outpaced the drop in fatalities at the national level.

In the beginning, this initiative received considerable push-back. Few believed that “zero deaths” was a viable target, but those who did kept preaching to the unconverted: If not zero, then what other target was appropriate?

Those advocates—leaders of Minnesota’s state agencies and an Institute board member, among others—were certainly right. We at the University have supported the TZD effort during these 10 years by advancing a variety of research projects focused on reducing road fatalities—research funded by MnDOT and the USDOT as well as many other sources. Targeting approaches that help at-risk driver populations and reduce crash-prone conditions became our mantra. Many of the projects described in this annual report testify to our efforts.

There are several other unique features of our work at the ITS institute. These include our push to take research to deployment. Ocie Adams of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, Michael Abegg of the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority, and Steve Misgen of MnDOT are some in the user community who have been delighted with the results and are quoted in our report. These transportation professionals have become some of our strongest advocates.

And the end-user community extends well beyond the transportation professionals with whom we interact. We have for some time been advocating for helping the blind navigate through our complex transportation maze. We are encouraged that some of those affected by our work have been pleased with the results. Their testimony is also included in these pages.

We are not only about research; we serve as a resource in many other areas. Our development of the popular games “Gridlock Buster” and “Distraction Dodger” has explored non-traditional approaches to education, attempting to attract a new generation of student into tackling the transportation problems and challenges that we still face. We strongly believe that we need a diverse workforce to tackle the transportation problems of the day and have instituted a summer internship so students can gain valuable work experience within a state transportation department.

And last but not least, let me thank those departing Institute board members who have made contributions to our efforts over the years and have now moved on: Beverley Miller, Mary Ellison, and Mark Hoisser. Their support of our work will be missed.