

# Enhancement of Driving Performance Among Older Drivers Report Fact Sheet

## The Problem

- Over 27 million Americans are 70 years old or older.
  - An estimated 20 million of them are licensed drivers.
  - Over 500,000 drivers aged 70 and older were involved in police-reported motor vehicle crashes in 2006—including 4,265 fatal crashes.
  - The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that there will be 37 million Americans aged 70 and older by the year 2020, and over 50 million by 2030.
- Many older adults depend on their ability to drive to maintain their independence, and studies have shown that losing the ability to drive is associated with participation in fewer out-of-home activities and an increase depressive symptoms.
- There is a need to help older adults maintain independent mobility for as long as it is safe; however, not enough is known about whether or how years of safe driving can be extended.

## The Current Study

- Purpose
  - To determine whether or not an education program comprising both classroom-based and behind-the-wheel training could improve the driving performance of older drivers.
- Methods
  - A sample of 126 active drivers aged 70 and older who scored below a certain level on an initial road test were recruited to participate in the study.
  - Drivers were randomly assigned to participate in either:
    - A driver education program consisting of 8 hours of classroom-based training, based on the AAA Driver Improvement Program, and 2 behind-the-wheel sessions; or
    - A home, environment, and vehicle safety training program that did not include any driving instruction.
  - Both groups took a knowledge test and an on-road driving test before the training program, and repeated the test after eight weeks.

## Key Findings

- Drivers who participated in the driver education program improved their on-road driving performance scores and knowledge test scores significantly more than drivers who participated in the home, environment, and vehicle safety training program.

## Next Steps

- More research is needed to determine the actual safety impact of these improvements in knowledge test and road test scores, and to determine what components of the intervention are most beneficial.