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Golden beaches with a backdrop of crystal clear water were my first impression of Florida. I love Miami's beaches just as much as the next adventurer, but how can we enjoy them if we cannot get there safely?

Perhaps the easiest way to reduce fatal accidents is to reduce all types of accidents. Seems simple enough, yet continual legislation has struggled to curtail crashes year after year. Many times, these collisions occur when traffic laws are disobeyed, highlighting that the exigent problem of motor vehicle fatality is not one of policy but rather one of enforcement. If that's the case, what can we do to reduce the likelihood of roadway violations? The answer lies in encouragement.

Forms of deterrents such as fines and jail sentences serve as a warning against hazardous driving but do nothing to promote safe driving. After all, if punishment is received only when caught, no incentive exists for vehicle operators to abide by traffic regulations, engendering a mindset of "don't get caught" rather than a mindset of "cautious and defensive driving."

To alter this fundamental attitude, I propose a reward system targeting desired driving practices. Collaborating with both insurance companies and tourist attractions, the state of Florida could take the first step in reducing roadway accidents. As the employment of technology by insurance providers surges, this new influx of driver data constructs a foundation for government programs that incentivize the practice of safe driving. For example, drivers with good roadway habits identified by vehicle sensors could be rewarded with small discounts for tourist destination tickets and highway toll fees. This method would not only shift drivers towards a safety first mindset but also incentivize Florida residents and visiting enthusiasts.

While we can do our best to mitigate roadway dangers and collisions, sometimes they are inevitable. In these cases, the best alternative is to ensure minimal injuries to both driver and passengers. Analyzing 2020 data provided by the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, I noticed certain driving patterns indicated a positive correlation with fatality rate. In particular, 589 out of 1,354 crashes were fatal for drivers without restraint (~43.5%) and 3541 out of 414,166 crashes were fatal for drivers with both shoulder and lap restraint (~0.9%). Recognizing the risks of unrestrained driving is the first step in resolving fatal collisions. Utilizing informative brochures and roadway signs that underscore extreme accident statistics at Florida attractions, airports, toll booths, and other public locations would raise awareness for the dangers of disregarding vehicle restraint. Moreover, a similar reward system could be employed by adding the use of seatbelts and other safety devices as a factor of overall driving score, further encouraging restraint usage.

Years of Florida crash statistics all indicate that the current structure of deterrence fails to prevent fatal accidents. A habit-reward system and increased spread of information, however, would ultimately shift the attitude of drivers from one of passively breaking regulations to one of actively practicing safe techniques.