

Roadway Safety Professional Capacity Building Program

Through engaging peer workshops, the RSPCB Program matches agencies seeking solutions to roadway safety issues with trailblazers who have addressed similar challenges and emerged with a roadmap and noteworthy practices for approaching the issue.



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

OHIO LOCAL ROAD SAFETY PLAN PEER EXCHANGE

An RSPCB Peer Exchange

Notice

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BACKGROUND

This report provides a summary of the Local Road Safety Plan Peer Exchange held in Columbus, Ohio on June 14-15, 2016. Local Road Safety Plans (LRSP) can help local agencies identify roadway safety concerns and determine the steps needed to implement safety countermeasures. Incorporating local roads in safety planning is critical to achieve zero fatalities. The peer exchange brought together safety practitioners from across the United States to facilitate the exchange of information on local road safety plans and explore opportunities for collaboration between local transportation agencies, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), State Departments of Transportation (DOT), Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) centers, and other government entities on LRSPs. A full list of attendees is provided in [Appendix A](#).

The peer exchange covered the following key topics:

- Developing Local Road Safety Plans
- Local road data analysis
- Local Road Safety Plan implementation
- Moving forward with Local Road Safety Plans

LOCAL ROAD SAFETY PLAN OVERVIEW

An LRSP is a coordinated safety plan that provides a comprehensive framework for reducing highway fatalities and serious injuries on local roads. Local road safety plans can be referred to as county road safety plans, vision zero strategic action plans, and systemic safety analysis reports. State or regionally initiated roadway safety plans are typically larger, more expensive documents, less flexible, and frequently developed by contractors. Local plans are

typically shorter, flexible living documents which are developed with assistance from LTAPs or the State. They usually have a lower development cost, depend on local expertise, and focus on methods to get funds for implementation of safety projects. The benefits of LRSPs include:

- Raise safety awareness
- Help establish safety partnerships
- Help encourage agency collaboration
- Leverage safety funds
- Inform safety priorities
- Complement the State's Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP)

An SHSP informs local practitioners of general issues on the roadway system, but a locally-focused plan such as an LRSP is often needed to address the unique conditions on local and rural roads. Factors influencing the development and implementation of a LRSP:

- Influence of a champion
- A clear vision and mission
- Collaborative partners
- Appropriate resources
- Open communication

LRSP development can be funded with Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funds however the plan must be consistent with goals and strategies of the State SHSP to be eligible. Projects must be supported by data and have great potential to reduce fatalities and serious injuries. FHWA offers a guidance document, "Developing Safety Plans Manual," which includes a template for a kick-off meeting agenda, sample emphasis areas, an emphasis area table, an LRSP template, and resources for assistance.

The format of the Peer Exchange consisted of a series of presentations, roundtable discussions, and breakout groups (see [Appendix B](#) for the complete agenda). At the end of the workshop, participants from each organization were charged with developing action plans for their respective agencies to address the key topics noted above. Key actions included:

- Establish regular meetings with local agencies
- Generate data and data trees to help local agencies begin LRSP analysis
- Market LRSPs to counties
- Consider a pilot program with one county using Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funds
- Review other States' best practices in LRSPs
- Highlight projects that have been on the ground and implemented
- Work to build internal safety culture and enthusiasm
- Expand safe routes to school groups to broader safety topics
- Look into creative new ways to educate the public on roadway safety practices
- Educate local agencies on funding opportunities
- Streamline environmental processes and application paperwork
- Fund an initial, high-profile project to demonstrate the success of the plan
- Work to improve risk assessments on rural roads

STARTING LOCAL ROAD SAFETY PLANS

The development of LRSP is not a straightforward path because it requires community and political buy-in, strong

support from state-level agencies, and strategic implementation.

San Antonio found that strong local partnerships and a champion are key to having a successful LRSP program. Community activities offer a platform to reach many people and incorporate the idea of “Vision Zero.” Political cycles can impact the effectiveness of programs, but roadway safety can become an accepted brand within the community, and elected officials may mention it in their campaigns as an accomplishment.

States can provide local agencies with a variety of different tools and support to catalyze and maintain local agency LRSP development. Some of these tools are:

- Regional transportation safety meetings with all levels of agencies to maintain communication
- Webinars that overview the safety program
- Data and mapping analysis tools, such as Transportation Injury Mapping System (TIMS)
- Programs to assist local agencies that do not have safety analysis capabilities with funding and analysis (Systemic Safety Analysis Report Program)
- Handbooks that guide locals with an overview safety plans
- Tools that track real-time crashes to improve emergency response time and to be used as a data source for roadway safety programs

Historically in Minnesota, the absence of sustained high crash locations were interpreted to mean that there was no safety deficiencies. As part of the Towards Zero Deaths (TZD) initiative, a Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan (now SHSP) was developed and revealed the need to focus on the local roads to truly have an impact on traffic fatalities. The SHSP highlighted the need and the County Roadway Safety Plans (CRSPs) provide a path to implementation, which included systemic safety strategies, such as rumble strips, along with high visibility, targeted, sustained enforcement, legislation to encourage driver behavior programs, and improved emergency response services. Previous programs had established good relationships between the State and locals, which were revisited in the development of updated CRSPs.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: IMPORTANCE OF DATA

A roundtable discussion at the peer exchange highlighted that data is at the core of most roadway safety efforts, and presents one of the greatest challenges especially at the local level. Centralized data systems are invaluable and are often associated with strong state DOTs. Local agencies cannot afford to invest in extensive data systems and look to States to make that investment. FHWA is available as a resource to help coach States on creating data systems that serve local needs. Common challenges include merging legacy systems and “dilution of resources” with many different data systems.

Even limited data can help local agencies gain a general understanding of safety risks associated with the roadway system. Local engineers can make assumptions about roadway characteristics, based on known roadway information, in order to extrapolate to unknown areas of the roadway system.

DEVELOPING LOCAL ROAD SAFETY PLANS

Event participants from Iowa, Nebraska, and Oregon shared the different ways in which LRSPs are developed, including funding and contracting plan development, the benefits of the process, and coordination with SHSPs.

Iowa used 90 percent HSIP funding and 10 percent Traffic Safety Improvement Program funding (one-half of one percent from the road use tax fund) to develop its LRSPs. Iowa hired consultants to develop LRSPs with the review of county safety practices, historic funding levels, and county crash history to assess ongoing safety strategies. The state and

consultants presented crash maps and emphasis areas to county stakeholders. This collaboration screened the county paved road network and analyzed intersections for risk factors. Decision trees incorporated the top intersections, curves, and segments. These decision trees considered traffic volumes, intersection types, curve radius, lane width, and presence of safety features. Project information sheets provided locals a snapshot of the current environment, countermeasure recommendations, cost estimates, etc.

In Nebraska, three rural counties chose to participate in a pilot program, which was intended to educate roadway safety professionals in counties with high crash rates and few engineering staff resources. The pilot was funded using 90 percent HSIP and 10 percent local funds. The Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) issued a request for proposals and selected a contractor to carry out the LRSP pilot. In developing the scope for each LRSP, Nebraska required two face-to-face meetings with local stakeholders, a presentation to local government officials, and an in-field analysis. NDOR is considering creating outreach materials on common local issues and countermeasures for future efforts.

In Oregon, Clackamas County began their LRSP development by hiring a consultant and convening an advisory board for the planning efforts. Members of the County Traffic Safety Commission were included as technical advisors. Peer presenters highlighted the importance of safety culture, and recognized that crashes are rare and random but crash types are predictable. Engineering can only improve road safety to a certain point, so it is important to take the initiative and approach other agencies and stakeholder groups to understand new ways to improve safety beyond infrastructure improvements alone.

DATA ANALYSIS

Peer exchange presenters identified initial efforts related to data sources and needs, tools related to data analysis for LRSPs, and the systemic approach to safety.

Initial data collection efforts require a preliminary review of crash data needs for LRSPs, including crash trends and mapping tools. Regardless of gaps in data, local agencies should analyze the data at-hand, using qualitative ratings and approximate measures. This progress in data analysis should be done while in the process of collecting quantitative baseline data.

State DOTs identified useful tools for data collection and analysis:

- **County fact sheets** can provide easily digested data for county officials to use. These fact sheets break down crashes into types, attributes, and crash data trees, and provide county road high crash location maps that show frequency of crashes to help inform county officials.
- **Summary data** can be provided to local agencies to highlight the importance of comparing crash data across the counties statewide. The summary data can be used by locals to highlight what types of crashes they should focus on and identify risk factors related to severe crashes. Risk factors could be correlated to the crash data set and used to prioritize high risk locations in the road network.
- **Web-based tools** can make safety data more easily accessed by stakeholders and more approachable to local agencies. Ohio DOT's tool GCAT (GIS Crash Analysis Tool) includes a set of data dashboards, pre-loaded reports, etc., the capability of generating custom reports, and is open to all government agencies.
- **Mapping Systems** can be used to assemble current transportation data, including transportation asset inventories, priority snow routes, roadway information, boundaries, traffic counts, transportation projects, and environmental information. These systems sometimes allow users to view data and to provide their own data inputs.

The systemic approach to safety involves analyzing crash data to identify and prioritize risk factors on the roadway. This type of analysis results in a proactive approach versus a reactive approach to identify roadway safety projects, and takes

the focus from events-based to risk-based.

BREAKOUT SESSION: LRSP DEVELOPMENT

Peer presentations were followed by a series of facilitated breakout sessions on topics such as LRSP content, development process and funding, the varying available resources for local agencies, and local agency buy-in. The breakout session grouped participants by State DOTs, Counties, and LTAPs and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO). A brief summary of strategies and challenges related to the development of LRSPs identified during these discussions is provided below.

Counties

- Counties outlined potential incentives for county participation in LRSPs including:
 - Access to additional funding for safety projects, which allows for counties to expand their maintenance budget;
 - Streamlined application process to access Federal safety funding at the local level; and
 - Improvement of public relations and tangible improvements for elected officials to point towards.
- Counties identified the challenge of using the systemic approach to safety, because the improvements are not necessarily the high visibility hot spot safety improvements. Counties stated that a mixed solution of systemic safety improvements and spot safety improvements may be a more realistic goal.
- Counties also identified the underreporting of crashes on rural roads as an obstacle in analysis and developing an LRSP.

LTAPs and MPOs

- LRSPs are strongly guided by local champions. The implementation of strategic “easy win” projects can be used to encourage stakeholders during early phases. Furthermore, HSIP funds can be used for these pilot projects, which can be held as an example for other local agencies.
- A lack of understanding about the application process is an obstacle for local agencies to begin the development of an LRSP or receive funding for safety-related projects.
- LTAPs and MPOs can be used as resources to help local jurisdiction perform safety analysis, and establish working relationships that build trust and institutional knowledge over time.

State DOTs

- States must change the culture of DOT to focus on safety. Relationship building is critical for developing LRSPs; counties with strong relationships with the State are often successful in developing and implementing LRSPs.
- Oregon has a series of goals and performance measures that includes local roads as a part of their long-range, 20-year plan. The State guides local agencies with systemic fixes on the local roads.
- States identified flexibility as an important part of encouraging local agencies’ participation in LRSPs. In Minnesota, if a project is not part of the CRSP or does not seemingly align with the State’s goals, the locality must bring in documentation to justify its funding.
- Ohio conducts a quantitative and qualitative analysis of LRSP projects, where benefit-cost and present value is highly considered, but funding is also awarded based on projects that “make sense.” Sometimes there is a safety element that is cheap and practical, so it will receive funding.

LRSP PROCESS

LRSP requires processes for project selection, development, grouping, funding, and delivery.

Counties discussed the need for public input and involvement in order to identify transportation issues and gain

acceptance of these issues as problems. Communication with the public allows for an understanding and acceptance of safety concerns leading to progress with LRSP project implementation. Data needs were also discussed; LRSP development typically requires preliminary collection of crash data from the State or local agencies and roadway data usually from the local agencies. Volume data, such as average daily traffic (ADT), mileposts, speed limits, street lighting, and road and shoulder widths, can be used to generate a list of projects. This list of projects can be used to identify common characteristics of roads where crashes have occurred. LRSPs are often developed uniquely to each locality, which supports specific projects and solutions for the local agency.

The application of LRSP project funding can also be presented at strategic times to maintain the momentum of the CRSP release. For example, the release of Stearns County, Minnesota's CRSP, was paired with a state HSIP funding solicitation that stated that counties with a project list from their LRSP had high probability of project funding. Most counties that applied to the HSIP funding solicitation with LRSPs were awarded funds for their LRSP projects. Stearns County began with projects that were easy to implement and were supported maintenance activities and project modifications. They also used data to support reactive projects. In Ohio, State highway safety funding was awarded to local governments, including Licking County, which was a pilot county because it had high crash rates. Licking County installed thousands of feet of guardrail, thermoplastic striping, and updated signage. It now ranks much better in Ohio compared to its initial crash rates. The county attributes its great progress to its LRSP and its strong relationship with ODOT.

Several of the States that presented LRSP implementation discussed their processes for prioritizing proactive projects rather than projects that are solely reactive to a crash that occurred in a random location. Proactive projects can be prioritized, using a tiered system. For example, the highest priority projects would incorporate the highest percentage of factors present in fatal or serious injury crashes, while the lower priority projects would incorporate a lower percentage of factors present in fatal or serious injury crashes.

BREAKOUT SESSION: COMMITTING TO LRSP

A facilitated breakout session followed presentations on topics such as local agency involvement, benefits to safety in the county, stakeholder feedback, management support, and cost to counties. The breakout session grouped participants by State DOTs, Counties, and LTAPs and MPOs. A brief summary of these strategies and challenges in LRSPs identified during these discussions is below.

County

- Educational programs are a good place to partner (e.g. child seat checkpoint, mock crash extraction at high schools, text and drive simulators, alcohol goggles, holiday parade exhibits, county fairs - water safety, environmental safety, traffic safety, etc.)
- Participants discussed timing challenges with the development process, which often includes a complex environmental process. States with tribal contacts agree that involving the tribes in the LRSP process streamlines LRSP development and LRSP project implementation. Keeping stakeholders involved and informed throughout the development process is key to maintaining a timely schedule for project delivery.

LTAPs and MPOs

- LTAP and MPO attendees noted that a repository of successful plans, specifications, proposals, documents and other examples are useful in the revision of LRSPs.
- MPOs and LTAPs found that concise and streamlined LRSPs are most effective and are perceived as achievable by local agencies, in comparison to large plans, which can be overwhelming. Simplified applications and environmental review forms can streamline LRSP project delivery.

- LTAP and MPO participants saw value in prioritizing projects based on crash data evaluation, in order to implement projects that will address local road safety issues at high risk locations.

State DOTs

- Elected officials can be champions for local safety programs. Often a high profile case is a catalyst to bring attention to safety issues. Strong communication, including regular reports, with officials is important to maintain momentum in safety projects.
- LTAP support is used in a variety of ways, including hosting stakeholder meetings and presentations, providing training, conducting road safety audits, offering technical assistance, extending public outreach for a wider audience, and delivering consulting services to smaller jurisdictions for the development of their LRSPs.

LRSP REVISIONS AND UPDATES

When revising and updating LRSPs, the duration since initial plan completion, previous lessons learned, resources needed, plan liability concerns, maintaining stakeholder engagement, and agency roles and responsibilities must be considered.

In Washington State, all counties received HSIP funds in 2010; the DOT offered safety analysis training in 2012 to help counties strategize and plan using crash data. Plan development took on average 80 hours, but counties were not given strict guidelines on how to develop the plans. Washington counties maintained the ability to prioritize projects and, combined with SHSP priorities, provided a logical list of projects to move forward with. For future LRSP development endeavors, WSDOT aims to refine the data analysis to give counties more ways of looking at the data. Furthermore, several of the counties have proposed to improve data collection efforts as a part of their plan.

Minnesota had a CRSP process which included crash data analysis, selection of safety emphasis areas, development of a comprehensive list of safety strategies, coordination of a safety workshop, identification of a short list of critical strategies, identification of safety projects, and finally, the first draft creation of a safety plan. Through this process, the DOT funded almost \$30M in projects statewide between 2013 and 2015. Minnesota counties were provided the opportunity to review the plans and edit as appropriate, however if the edits were significant and not aligned with the greater vision, the projects were unlikely to be funded. Minnesota DOT developed robust and targeted resources providing everything from crash data statistics to standard language to be included in plans on both Federal law and Minnesota State law.

The CRSP update in Minnesota is estimated to complete in 7 years. Counties looking to participate will be asked to contribute up to \$20,000; however, there will be more face-to-face time and consultant support to the county.

LESSONS LEARNED TO MOVE FORWARD

At the end of the event, participants broke out by state to discuss strategies for moving forward and developing an action plan based on lessons learned during the workshop. States noted the desire to restart safety efforts which had lost momentum over time (e.g. safe routes to schools and risk assessments on rural roads). States with pilot programs underway wanted to evaluate their programs more closely, and highlight the improvements to foster safety culture and the desire to expand the programs. Marketing and improving access to data, funding information, and technical assistance resources were action items noted by most all states in attendance.

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT LIST

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APPENDIX B: EVENT AGENDA



LOCAL ROAD SAFETY PLAN PEER EXCHANGE

AGENDA

June 14-15, 2016
Columbus, Ohio

DAY 1

- 8:00 – 8:30AM **Welcoming Remarks**
Michelle May, Highway Safety Program Manager, Ohio DOT
Ron Garczewski, Safety Engineer, FHWA Ohio Division
- Workshop Overview
- 8:30 – 9:30 **Participant Introductions**
- 9:30 – 10:00 **Local Road Safety Plan Overview**
Rosemarie Anderson, FHWA Office of Safety
- 10:00 – 10:15 **BREAK**
- 10:15 – 11:30 **Starting Local Road Safety Plans**
Overview and discussion – getting buy-in from county engineers and administration; challenges and barriers to getting started; strategies addressing barriers; federal, state and county roles; other stakeholders involvement
- *Mark Vizecky*, Minnesota DOT
 - *Richard Ke*, Caltrans
 - *Marc Jacobson*, City of San Antonio, TX
- 11:30 – 12:00PM **Facilitated Roundtable Discussion: Local Road Safety Plan Content– One size fit all?**
- 12:00 - 1:00 **LUNCH**
- 1:00 – 2:15 **Developing Local Road Safety Plans**
Presentations on funding plan development, contracting process, the requirements, challenges and benefits of the process including time commitment, coordination and stakeholder involvement, SHSP/LRSP coordination
- *Nicole Fox*, Iowa DOT & *Brian Moore*, Wapello County, IA;
 - *Nicole Frankl*, NE LTAP & *Larry Legg*, Nebraska DOR
 - *Joseph Marek*, Clackamas County, OR
- 2:15 – 2:30 **BREAK**
- 2:30 – 3:45 **Data Analysis**
Discussion on Crash and Roadway Data needs for LRSP
- *Michael McNeill* & *Cory Hopwood*, Ohio DOT
 - *Matthew Enders*, Washington State DOT
 - *Victor Lund*, St Louis County, MN



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3:45 – 4:45 **Breakout Session – Plan**
The attendees will breakout to discuss the Plans – content, process, funding; making it work in different situations/locations; varying available resources, getting local agency buy-in. (Possibility of discreet discussion and specific information sharing with counterparts from other states and providing networking opportunity)

4:45 – 5:00 **Wrap Up**

DAY 2

8:00 – 8:30AM **Day 1 Recap**

8:30 – 9:30 **Local Road Safety Plan Implementation**
Presentation and discussion on – project selection, project development; project packaging (grouping projects) funding sources; funding systemic projects versus hotspots and methods for the plan implementation –
Jodi Teich, Stearns County, MN
Christopher P. Andrews, Cowlitz County, WA
Michelle May, Ohio DOT & Matt Hill, Licking County Area Transportation Study

9:30 – 9:45 **BREAK**

9:45 – 11:00 **Breakout Session – Committing to LRSP**
The attendees will breakout to discuss lessons learned – local agency involvement, benefits to safety in the county; stakeholder feedback; management support; cost to counties; what worked well and what did not and why; hints for counties moving forward

11:00 – 12:00PM **Moving Forward – Lessons Learned**
Presentations and discussions on: revising LRSP – when and how; lessons learned; resources needed; overcoming liability concerns; maintaining stakeholder interest; agency roles and responsibilities
Matthew Enders, Washington State DOT
Mark Vizecky, Minnesota DOT

12:00 – 1:00 **LUNCH**

1:00 – 2:15 **Action Planning – Breakout Group by State**
The attendees will breakout by State to discuss strategies for moving forward and develop an Action Plan based on lessons learned during the workshop
Ideas on proceeding with the development and implementation of LRSP and identifying commonalities

2:15 – 2:45 **Report Out**

2:45 – 3:00 **Wrap Up (Next Steps), Adjourn**



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