

Making our local roads safer through Local Road Safety Planning

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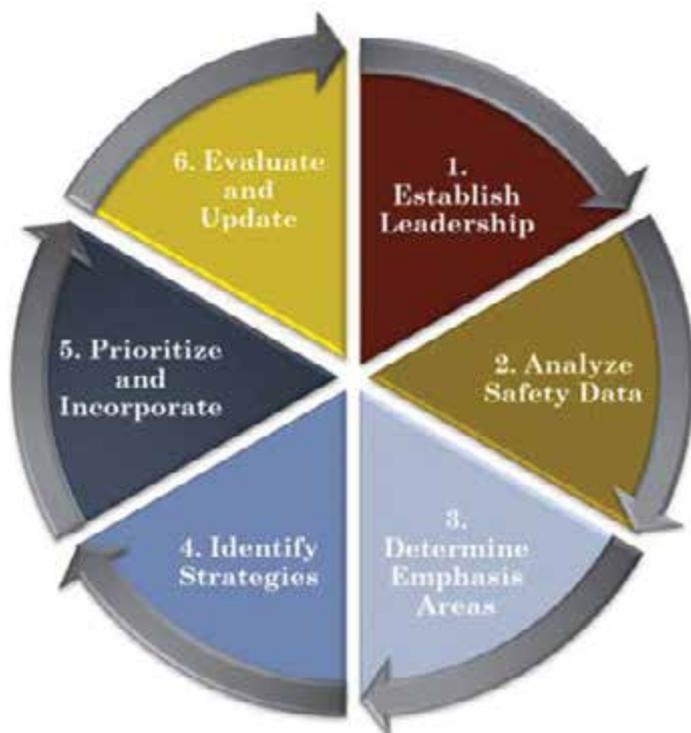
Many state departments of transportation (DOT) have embarked on a comprehensive approach to the development of local road safety plans whereas in other states the local agencies are taking the initiative to develop their own plans and have experienced changes in their road safety programs. Washington State DOT (WSDOT) has taken a hybrid approach with both the state DOT and local agencies involvement resulting in local agencies receiving over \$25 million per year in Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funds for safety projects.

What are Local Road Safety Plans?

With the passage of the transportation legislation in 2005, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), *safety* was established as a new core funding program through the new HSIP. Subsequent transportation legislation, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) and currently the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act), continue these provisions. The HSIP is structured and funded to make significant progress in reducing highway fatalities and requires states to develop a Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP), focusing on results. The SHSPs are statewide-coordinated safety plans that provide a comprehensive data-driven framework for reducing highway fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads. Local Road Safety Plans (LRSPs) are based on the same concept as the state SHSPs.

The State SHSP can assist local practitioners in addressing safety on local roads, but a locally-focused plan is often needed to address the unique conditions in each community. Local road practitioners across the country play a critical role in addressing crash risks at the local level and may be able to identify the specific or unique conditions that contribute to crashes in their jurisdictions which result in fatalities and serious injuries. An LRSP

6 Steps of the LRSP Development Process
(Source: FHWA Office of Safety)



offers a foundation for consensus and focus. It defines key emphasis areas and strategies that impact local roads and provides a framework to proactively accomplish safety enhancements to save lives in local communities.

In general, the success of an LRSP is dependent on critical components including the following:

- **Having a champion:** A champion advocates for the LRSP and gathers support to assist in its implementation.
- **Developing a clear vision and mission:** A strategic vision and mission unite all stakeholders with a common goal.
- **Assembling collaborative partners:** Partners collaborate to implement the plan.
- **Allocating appropriate resources:** Manpower and management are essential for ensuring a plan's success.
- **Establishing open communication:** The LRSP owners should foster open and frequent communication with stakeholders, community partners, and citizens as they develop and implement the plan.

Washington State Experience

Why LRSPs? Since 2009, counties applying for HSIP funds in Washington have been required to implement low-cost, widespread safety improvements. Since then, all 39 counties have participated and have been awarded HSIP funds for the implementation of safety projects. Counties were allowed to identify which countermeasures were implemented and where they were implemented, but they must

address fatal and serious injury crash types using proven countermeasures. The counties were also responsible for the identification of priority locations using the risk-based approach to safety. In 2014, WSDOT required county governments to develop an LRSP to apply for HSIP funds for safety projects. This was to ensure a data-driven approach to the location identification process in order to maximize the benefits from the HSIP investment.

The basic requirements for the LRSP were to focus on low-cost, widespread projects that would reduce the risk of fatal and serious injury collisions on county roads and be based on priorities using a data-driven approach. This resulted in 31 of the 39 counties in Washington completing LRSPs to help prioritize and select their HSIP projects.

The Process. WSDOT did not fund the development of the LRSPs; however, the counties were provided



Curve delineation project in Thurston County, Washington

with training, technical assistance, and data summaries to assist with the development process. Counties were provided with summary data to help them prioritize crash types, roadway characteristics, and conditions that were prevalent in fatal and serious injury crashes. Included in the data summaries were comparisons to all county roads and all statewide roads. Roadway factors with higher crash occurrences were highlighted for further investigation.

Workshops were held to share the requirements of the LRSP and provide practitioners with tools and resources. LRSP development instructions included:

- Use of existing resources without additional data collection
- Utilize existing databases along with local knowledge and engineering judgment
- Qualitative values could be applied to key roadway characteristics with no data (good/fair/poor) for ranking purposes
- LRSP should be customized for each individual county's needs

Additionally, counties were provided with resources, such as the Systemic Safety Project Selection Tool and the state SHSP recommended countermeasures.

After the workshops, training specific to the Systemic Safety Project Selection Tool was made available to counties. This provided counties with more knowledge and understanding of how to use the tool to complete a systemic safety analysis. In addition, technical assistance was provided for any county that requested assistance in the

development or review of the LRSP and HSIP application.

Successes/Challenges. With 80 percent of counties in Washington developing and submitting an LRSP with their own resources the program has been a success. By creating their own plans, counties became invested in the process and became more aware of safety issues. HSIP funding was directed to high priority locations around the county road system. Several factors contributed to the success:

- Counties had prior experience with the HSIP process—all 39 counties had previously delivered HSIP projects
- Training and technical assistance provided: Safety Data Analysis and LRSP workshops; LRSP and HSIP application review and development

The program was not without challenges and WSDOT and counties are working to address them. Main challenges:

- Lack of example plans to guide the LRSP development process
- Counties had to invest their own time and resources to develop LRSP to access HSIP funds

Lessons Learned. A review of the program and county-based survey provided the following:

- Providing the counties a template for the development of LRSPs will be beneficial to the process. The best LRSPs will be shared with counties to use as a template.
- Additional helpful data elements were identified during the statewide workshops. These will

be incorporated into the data summaries for the next round.

- Quality HSIP projects were selected as a result of the LRSP effort.
- For the most part, the process will remain consistent with the 2014 process. Counties indicated they would submit an application again if the process remained the same.

Resources

Various organizations and agencies may be able to assist in the creation of an LRSP: Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) Center; Regional Planning Organization; State DOT. Additionally, FHWA Office of Safety developed *Developing Safety Plans: A Manual for Local Road Owners*, an easy-to-read, step-by-step guide to developing LRSPs with templates, tables, and additional resources. The manual can be accessed for download: http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/local_rural/training/fhwasa12017/. Hard copies are also available.

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