

“We work to continually get the message out to our local elected officials that we’re working day-in and day-out toward addressing the traffic-safety-related concerns of Mohave County residents.”

—Steve Latoski, Public Works Director,  
Mohave County, Arizona

“You don’t need tons of technical jargon to talk about things that are really common sense.”

—Joe Marek, County Engineer,  
Clackamas County, Oregon

Local agency practitioners across the country are communicating successfully with local elected officials.  
You can, too.

## Resources

- Communicating About Local Road Safety with Local Elected Officials Video—[http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/local\\_rural/](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/local_rural/)
- Local Elected Officials: Leading the Way in Local Road Safety Video—[http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/local\\_rural/](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/local_rural/)
- Local Elected Officials: Leading the Way in Local Road Safety (brochure)—[http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/local\\_rural/](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/local_rural/)
- FHWA Federal Aid Essentials Video: Roadway Safety Fundamentals—<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/federal-aidessentials/>
- FHWA Federal Aid Essentials Video: Introduction to HSIP—<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/federal-aidessentials/>
- Local-focused safety tools and information—[http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/local\\_rural/](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/local_rural/)



U.S. Department of Transportation  
**Federal Highway Administration**

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# Communicating About Local Road Safety

with Local Elected Officials

Techniques for Local Agency Practitioners



Local elected officials play a major role in local road safety. They set goals, adopt policies, build coalitions, and approve the budgets for the roads you operate.

These officials, however, typically face many demands for their time and many requests for funding. When you work with them, you need to make every minute count.

## Communicate

### Keep it simple

Provide the facts in clear, concise language. Use terms that lay people will understand. Avoid acronyms and engineering jargon—for example, use “federal sign regulations,” not “MUTCD.”

### Tell a story

Supplement facts and figures with stories of actual crashes. Explain how your plans may reduce these crashes.

### Highlight successful examples

Share success stories from similar communities to show what has been proven to work. Use statistics about effective countermeasures.

### Use creative presentation tools

- Utilize visual aids: photos of a problem site or feature; plans, graphics, or other images of your proposed solutions.
- Consider props: Washington County, MN, for example, created a roundabout “rug” that people can walk on to understand roundabout navigation.

## Network

Build and maintain relationships with other safety stakeholders, such as:

- Elected officials’ staff
- Your state’s department of transportation practitioners
- Law enforcement
- Public health officials

These stakeholders can help you gather safety information and reinforce support for safety initiatives when you communicate with your elected officials.

## Know the facts

Have the facts at hand about road safety in your community. You are the roadway expert, and the elected official looks to you for guidance:

- Know the problem locations, crash data, causes, and citizen concerns.
- Know State and Federal funding options and relevant safety policies.
- Know potential safety strategies and countermeasures to address issues.

## Inform and educate

Inform and educate your elected officials:

- Present your data, proposed solutions, and costs.
- Scale your proposed solutions to a level your officials are able to address.
- Educate listeners about proven, effective, low-cost solutions.
- Anticipate opposing views, and prepare responses to address them.
- Prepare a one-page summary of your main points.



## Involve officials in safety

Provide regular updates on safety issues and projects. Include your local elected officials in road safety events to keep them involved and focused on safety:

- Invite your local elected officials and their staff to open houses and road safety events, and include them in the event planning.
- Offer public acknowledgment of their support, such as a speaking role at a ribbon-cutting ceremony and safety meetings.

Working together, you and your elected officials can reduce crashes and save lives.

