



Photo credit: Arinahabich © 123RF.com

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has prioritized increasing the level of local agency participation in statewide safety planning efforts. The FHWA recommends local agencies take a comprehensive approach in addressing safety issues on local roadway systems and work toward achieving the long-term vision of zero traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries. Local government agencies own and operate approximately 76% of public roads (FHWA, 2015). With 38% of traffic fatalities occurring on local roads (NHTSA, 2015) states face challenges in achieving zero traffic-related fatalities and significantly reducing the number of serious injuries unless local roadway system safety is an integral part of their safety planning and investment initiatives.

A number of states have identified the value of partnering with local agencies to use their state's Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funding to support safety project development.

The FHWA, state Departments of Transportation (DOTs), and local agencies have discussed expanding roadway project development through the HSIP. Increased safety project development and HSIP support for investment in local roadway projects requires an understanding of the needs, resources, and staff capabilities of local agencies. Local agencies have fewer professional staff than state DOTs, limited budgets for project development, and a wide variety of responsibilities. The level of complexity and technical expertise necessary to acquire HSIP funding can present substantial barriers to local agency staff. Frequently, the additional effort required to implement local safety projects supported by HSIP funds results in many local agencies either declining funding or being unable to participate in the HSIP.

This Noteworthy Practices Manual identifies several common barriers faced by many local agencies in implementing HSIP projects. Best practices—identified through a series of interviews with state and local agency staff nationwide—are broken into four sections—Resources and Information, Training and Development, Technical Assistance, and Implementation.

Within the following four sections, 17 noteworthy practices are presented as case studies to illustrate how state and local agencies have overcome challenges in implementing local HSIP-funded projects. Agencies include metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), local agencies, and state DOTs. State DOTs manage the HSIP; many have developed creative approaches to support local agency implementations.

Section 1. Resources and Information – Case studies describe common barriers faced by local agency staff during statewide planning activities (for example, few best practices resources, a lack of accessible/user-friendly data, and no prior experience in completing the application process). The case studies identify highway safety priorities, policies, and best practices for overcoming the barriers and engaging local agencies in statewide safety planning efforts.

Section 2. Training and Development – Case studies describe how the lack of training is a barrier to identifying and developing safety projects for HSIP funding. Without adequate training and staff development, safety practitioners cannot address safety challenges and integrate road safety (including crash analysis and development of traffic safety solutions) into their existing responsibilities. Even though a large percentage of fatalities occur on local roads, local agencies do not take full advantage of the resources available to counteract those fatalities. The case studies provide local agencies with training resources on how to perform data-driven evaluations of roadway systems and identify and prioritize locations for safety investment.

Section 3. Technical Assistance – Case studies describe how support for technical assistance allows local agencies to overcome such barriers as a lack of funding and a limited number of practitioners with institutional knowledge. The case studies identify staffing and financial resources available to local agencies.

Section 4. Implementation – Case studies describe how local agencies can implement safety strategies using time- and cost-saving efficiencies during the final phases of HSIP projects (contracting, permitting, and design). Barriers to implementation include limited resources for local agencies to comply with FHWA, varying level of expertise, and limited funding. The case studies describe how to overcome these barriers.

FHWA developed the *Noteworthy Practices Manual* for local agencies to use when developing and administering federally-funded HSIP projects. It shares best practices in implementing federally-funded safety projects and provides solutions for local agencies to implement—independently or cooperatively—with other agencies. By sharing the types of best practices described in this Manual, FHWA hopes local agencies and their DOT partners will be better prepared to face the challenges of implementing federally-funded HSIP projects.

A Technical Oversight Working Group (TOWG) provided guidance in developing the Manual. Representatives include city planning, county engineer, and state DOT offices, the National Association of County Engineers and National League of Cities, and a Native American Tribe. TOWG members are listed in Appendix A.

References:

1. U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). 2015. Highway Statistics 2014. *Public Road Length – 2014, Miles By Ownership*. <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/statistics/2014/hm10.cfm>. Accessed November 20, 2017.
2. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). 2015. *Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) Encyclopedia*. <https://www-fars.nhtsa.dot.gov/Main/index.aspx>. Accessed November 20, 2017.