

Collaboration in the Name of Roadway Safety

Introduction

Collaboration can be broadly defined as any joint activity that is intended to produce more public value than could be produced when organizations act alone.¹ In the case of rural and local road safety, collaboration means bringing together partners to work jointly on improving road safety. As a result of collaboration, partners working together are better able to achieve a shared goal than individuals and agencies working independently to address a need. The purpose of this document is to describe the nature and importance of collaboration to improve safety on local and rural roads.

Collaboration is especially important for local and rural road owners, who often do not have a large resource base to address safety issues and need to leverage the capability of all partners; jointly sharing responsibility for improving road safety through maintenance and capital improvements. These partners represent the “4Es” of safety:

- Engineering (e.g., roadway design, traffic, maintenance, operations, planning);
- Enforcement (e.g., State and local law enforcement agencies);
- Education (e.g., driver education, citizen advocacy groups, educators, prevention specialists); and
- Emergency response (e.g., first responders, paramedics, fire, and rescue).

Collaboration among agencies offers a number of benefits including:²

- Preventing agencies from working at cross purposes by encouraging consistency in policy;
- Leveraging resources to improve the effectiveness of agency policies;
- Making agencies aware of different perspectives and orientations, which enhances communication and minimizes misunderstanding;
- Mitigating conflict among agencies, thereby facilitating a coordinated approach;
- Maximizing the use of available agency resources to enhance efficiency, reduce redundancy, and cut costs; and
- Transforming organizational cultures to support and encourage positive change.

Collaboration for Local and Rural Road Safety

While a formal plan is not required to accomplish successful collaboration, it is important that each partner agency agree and understand their role in achieving the common goal. Understanding roles and responsibilities will increase productivity, reduce the potential for duplication of effort and conflicts, and potentially maximize the return on investment.



Collaboration can be achieved through a number of means such as:

1. Establishing joint working groups or committees to meet and discuss common issues or needs;
2. Preparing plans or guidance documents outlining roles and responsibilities, shared actions; and
3. Sharing funding to achieve common goals.

Examples of Collaboration

Road Safety Audit (RSA)

A team consisting of individuals from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, North Dakota State University, Northern Plains Tribal Technical Assistance Program (TTAP), the North Dakota and South Dakota FHWA Division Offices, as well as VHB and Opus Hamilton was assembled to conduct a RSA of existing two-lane, rural, trial roads on the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Tribe (SRST) reservation in North and South Dakota.

The collaborative effort integrated the knowledge of a wide range of experts from Federal, State, regional, and tribal agencies' jurisdictions. At the time, a series of transportation improvements were being considered for streets, sidewalks, street lighting, and storm sewers. Transportation maintenance was an important element in building a cohesive reservation community and promoting economic activity. The RSA report included recommendations for infrastructure improvements and maintenance issues including the installation of traffic control devices, marked pedestrian crossings, improved lighting, and speed reduction.³ The process demonstrated the value of collaboration among technical experts covering diverse topics such as pedestrian safety, pavement management, hydrology, and tribal transportation policy.

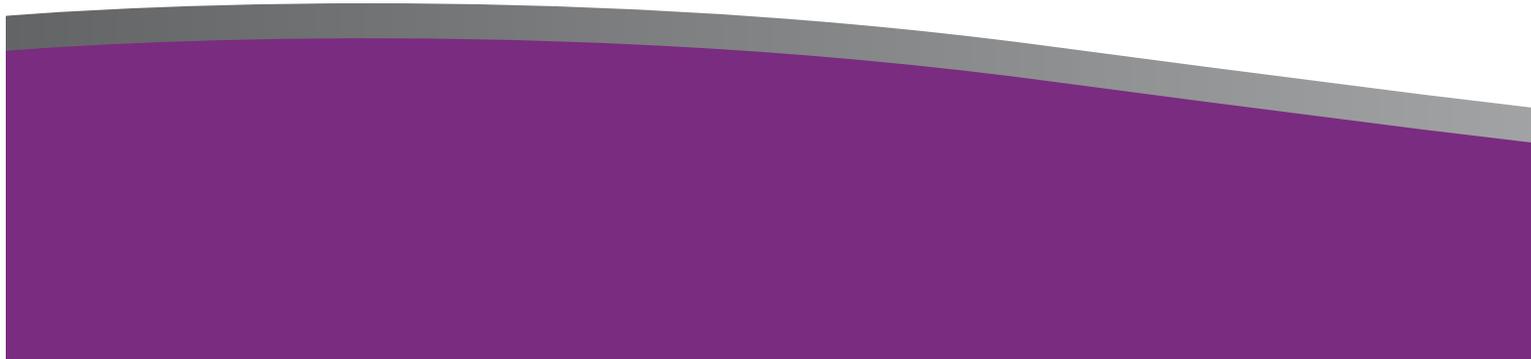
Safety Data Service

Efficient safety data is the foundation of an effective road safety program. Through the coordination of the Iowa Department of Transportation and the Governor's Highway Safety Bureau, Iowa Traffic Safety Data Service (ITSDS) was funded to provide timely and robust roadway and crash data as well as data analysis to local and rural road owners and operators. ITSDS coordinates with local and State law enforcement to collect crash reports from for all public roads in Iowa. It then stores these data and processes it for State and local agencies. Local governments can request crash histories for specific areas, roads, and intersections for the purpose of identifying high-crash locations, developing safety plans, and analyzing safety programs. This collaboration not only reduces duplication of effort among agencies, it also gives local governments access to timely and accurate crash data and analysis so they can develop safety plans and programs without expending limited resources.

Roadway Safety Coalitions

Missouri

In 2004, a partnership of Missouri safety advocates, including law enforcement agencies; health care providers; courts; local, State, and Federal government agencies; advocacy groups; planning organizations; concerned citizens; and others banded together to form the Missouri Coalition for Roadway Safety. This group collaborated



with regional safety coalitions to implement the first Strategic Highway Safety Plan, which resulted in a 40 percent reduction in roadway fatalities between 2005 and 2013 on all roadways. To achieve this level of success, the coalition focused on the following:

- Working with key transportation engineers, law enforcement officers, educators, and emergency response leadership from State and local agencies throughout Missouri to gain endorsement of the Plan;
- Creating 10 regional safety coalitions and engaging the membership in developing road safety plans for these regions; and
- Developing performance measures and participating in outreach events such as the annual conference and awards program, and developing relationships with local law enforcement.

The Missouri Coalition for Road Safety demonstrates the importance of State, regional, and local collaboration in addressing safety needs on local and rural roads. The resulting safety program provided a forum to address road safety on a statewide level by incorporating regional and local needs and concerns. This enabled the development of a clear and consistent safety program that leverages the resources of a full range of State and local agencies.

Wisconsin

All counties in Wisconsin are required to establish Traffic Safety Commissions to bring together local and State expertise to minimize the frequency and severity of traffic crashes.⁴ Each Commission works to promote traffic safety activities and recommend specific traffic safety improvements. Commission membership is broad based and draws from a range of traffic safety professionals, agencies, and citizen groups, including the State's highway engineer, county highway commissioner, chief of the State Patrol, the chief county traffic law enforcement officer, the State's highway safety coordinator, and county executive appointments.

Commissions must meet at least quarterly, and State law specifies these duties:

- Review local crash data and other traffic safety-related matters;
- Prepare "spot maps" showing crash locations on county and town roads and on city/village streets of places under 5,000 population; and
- For municipalities of 5,000 or more, while spot maps aren't required, the commission must look at the crash data.

Based on their review of this data and reports of citizens' concerns, commissions can recommend corrective action to the DOT, the county board or highway committee, or any other appropriate branch of government.

Commissions can also:

- Ask the State Patrol or local law enforcement to increase patrols in problem areas;
- Ask DOT to review possible engineering problems on a State highway, and advise DOT on planned work zones or detour routes;
- Review proposals for local traffic safety improvements;
- Review fatal or other high-profile crashes (by using in-squad video or by taking a bus to make a site visit);
- Foster public awareness of traffic safety issues and initiatives (e.g., by working with local news media); and
- Encourage and sponsor local activities (e.g., bike rodeos, Safe Routes to School campaigns).

Resources

Additional information is available to assist local and rural road owners in establishing collaboration among safety partners:



Federal Highway Administration, *HSIP Noteworthy Practice Series: SHSP Stakeholder Involvement*, FHWA-SA-11-02 (Washington, DC: 2011). Available at: http://rspcb.safety.fhwa.dot.gov/noteworthy/pdf/FHWASA1102_shsp_stkholderinlvmnt.pdf



Government Accountability Office, *Results-oriented Government: Practices that can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration among Federal Agencies*, GAO-06-15, (Washington, DC: October 2005). Available at: <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-06-15>



F. Kaiser, *Interagency Collaborative Arrangements and Activities: Types, Rationales, and Considerations*, for the Congressional Research Service 7-5700, R41803 (Washington, DC: May 31, 2011). Available at: <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41803.pdf>

¹ Government Accountability Office, *Results-oriented Government: Practices that can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration among Federal Agencies*, GAO-06-15 (Washington, DC: October 2005). Available at: <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-06-15>

² F. Kaiser, *Interagency Collaborative Arrangements and Activities: Types, Rationales, and Considerations*, for the Congressional Research Service 7-5700, R41803 (Washington, DC: May 31, 2011). Available at: <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41803.pdf>

³ Federal Highway Administration, *Tribal Road Safety Audits: Case Studies*, FHWA-SA-08-005 (Washington, DC: December 2008). Available at: http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/rsa/tribal_rsa_studies/tribal_rsa_studies.cfm

⁴ Wisconsin DOT, *Wisconsin County/City Traffic Safety Commission Guidelines* (n.d). Available at: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/library/publications/topic/safety/tsc-booklet.pdf>