

How can LTAPS assisted with the EDC-5 initiative on Reducing Rural Roadway Departures?

Rural Roadway Departures are responsible for approximately 1/3 of all fatalities. It is estimated to almost half of these occur on roads that are typically maintained by local agencies or tribes. These crashes are generally not concentrated so they do not lend themselves to a “hot-spot” approach This makes identifying locations for improvement based on crash history difficult.

The mission of the EDC5 initiative the Focuses on Reducing Rural Roadway Departures (FoRRRwD) is to “Reduce the potential for serious injury and fatal roadway departure crashes on all public rural roads by increasing the systemic deployment of proven countermeasures.”

This mission recognizes the need to work with local and tribal agencies to be able to achieve a reduction in the number and severity of these crashes. This is a monumental task given the number of agencies in the country and therefore it is critical that we partner with the Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) which has the ability to reach more agencies and has a better understanding of local needs in their state.

There are multiple facets to this initiative where the LTAPS could provide assistance. They include:

- Advocating for funding
- Data compilation and organization
- Data and Risk Factor Analysis
- Action Plan development
- Countermeasure Application
- Contracting Assistance

While it is understood that an LTAP may not be able to assist in all of these, the intent is to provide a menu that the LTAP can choose from.

These are further discussed below:

Advocating for funding

While it is understood that LTAPs have very little authority for the allocation of federal or state fund sources, if there is no potential for funding, local agencies have little incentive to pursue safety improvements. LTAP’s may be able to initiate a discussion at the state level and show how funding could be allocated based on data.

What do they need?

- Case study on how states have allocated funding to locals (like Minnesota and Washington)
- FoRRRwD overview video

Data Compilation and Organization

One of the concerns that is raised frequently is “We don’t have enough data to make decisions”. LTAP’s could assist by compiling data for the agencies that show the agencies crash data compared to neighboring counties and the state. This assists the agencies by highlighting areas where they can focus their attention. The LTAPS could also help identify other sources of data such as police, maintenance, and safety circuit riders to could help identify locations for improvement.

What do they need?

- Case studies of how states/LTAPs have provided data to the locals
- Crash tree example and training for use
- Crash Tree software and training/instructions
- Spreadsheets that can be modified for their state
- Examples of other data that can be used.

Data and Risk Factor Analysis

Once the local agency has some data to work with they may need some assistance in analyzing it. As mentioned previously, these crashes are typically not concentrated so solely improving the locations where crashes have occurred may not result in an improvement. The Systemic Safety Approach uses data to identify risk factors that can then be used to identify locations where there is a high risk of a crash. In this way, they can address location before a crash happens.

What do they need?

- Training on Systemic Safety improvements. There is a 4 hour class that has been developed and piloted that would be the basis of the training. This training may need to be focused on FoRRRwd and local agencies
- Possibly develop a web based version of the training.
- Risk Factor examples specific to Rural Roadway Departure

Action Plan Development

The systemic analysis can then be documented in an Action Plan (such as tribal or Local Road Safety Plans) that the agency can use to support grant applications.

What do they need?

- Train the Trainer for the “How-To” training on developing Action Plans
- Examples of Action plans to show varying levels of data that were used to make decisions.

Countermeasure Application

There are proven countermeasures for reducing roadway departures and there are many local agencies that have successfully deployed them. These countermeasures included strategies to

1. Keep the vehicle on the road – Such as delineation and curve signing, rumbles, friction treatments
2. Reduce the potential for a crash a vehicle leave the road – Such as shoulders, SafetyEdge, Traversable slopes and clear zone
3. Reduce the severity of a crash – such as breakaway sign supports, traversable culvert ends, and barriers

What do they need?

- Training to understand the countermeasures. There is a 1 day NHI class that could be the basis for this. We could develop a ½ day version that is geared to local agencies that the LTAP's could deliver. The NYS LTAP has done this and the Ohio LTAP did some in the past.
- Countermeasure videos will be developed for this

Contracting Assistance

Once an agency has collected data, analyzed it and developed a plan that deploys the proven countermeasures, the next obstacle can be the requirements for accessing the funding and contracting.

The LTAP's could assist by helping with forms that are needed at the state or federal level. In addition, to improve efficiency, the LTAPS may be able to assist with bundling projects with multiple local agencies.

What do they need?

- Case studies where LTAPs have assisted with forms, where states have "traded" funding so locals could use state funds that may be easier to administer or in bundling among multiple agencies.