



## Florida Department of Transportation Research

### Safety Project Development Capacity for Small Communities in Coordination with Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) Center BDK77 977-21

The goal of Florida's 2012 Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP 2012) is to reduce serious and fatal crashes on Florida roadways, which requires collection and analysis of crash data, and in turn, resources, equipment, and expertise. For roads in the State Highway System (SHS), under Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT) authority, department resources are available to collect, analyze, and respond to crash data. However, for local and rural roads, local transportation agencies often lack the resources or technical capabilities to collect and analyze crash data.

University of Florida researchers investigated how the Local Transportation Assistance Program (LTAP) could act as a training hub for local agencies. LTAP is a network of 58 centers throughout the U.S. established in 1982 to supply local transportation agencies with training and information to help them improve roads and bridges. The overlap of Florida LTAP's mission and capabilities with the needs implied by the goals of SHSP 2012 made LTAP a logical partner to help develop local crash data capabilities.

The researchers reviewed best practices in Florida and other states. They found that a key in adapting others' practices to Florida was understanding agencies' structures, funding mechanisms, and scopes, which vary greatly among states. In many states, the LTAP center is located within the department of transportation, but not in Florida. So, the researchers developed a list of states comparable to Florida and most likely to yield workable ideas. These programs were then reviewed in greater detail.

The researchers assessed safety issues in small Florida counties, specifically, crash statistics on local roads, limitations of local agencies in conducting safety studies, and limitations facing FDOT in helping local agencies. Researchers analyzed county crash data for 2009-2011. Data revealed higher crash rates on local roads in lower populated rural counties compared to statewide



*Reducing crashes means identifying hot spots and addressing road characteristics that lead to higher crash rates.*

crash rates for local roads. An email survey was sent to the public works department in each county in Florida to determine local resources and capabilities that could be applied to crash analysis. Personnel and technical expertise at the county level for these analyses were very limited.

The research team used Union County as a case study to develop a template for further field work and analysis of counties' needs. The team worked with county staff and visited various sites to select those where crashes could be mitigated with low-cost improvements. A study team comprising the research team and local representatives, worked together to review crash data and examine road characteristics for the selected sites, developing proposals to enhance safety at those locations.

The template developed in this project for bringing crash analysis expertise to local agencies can be implemented on a continuing, statewide basis through the existing LTAP center and its network. The result will be safer Florida roads and fewer crashes.

Project Manager: Joe Santos, FDOT Safety Office  
Principal Investigator: Ilir Bejleri, University of Florida  
For more information, visit <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/research-center>