Florida Department of Transportation Research

Feasibility of a Web-Based System for Police Report Review and Information Recording

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Current Situation

Florida's highways are traveled annually by millions of residents and visitors, making safety and crash prevention top goals of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). Understanding why crashes happen fuels prevention efforts. In addition to driver-related issues, unanticipated issues in road design, lighting, signage, etc. can be revealed by crash investigations and then addressed to reduce the potential for collisions. To that end, FDOT's safety specialists are constantly reviewing crash summary reports; however, these reports rarely contain sufficient detail for safety specialists to fully analyze collisions. For site-specific analysis of crashes, specialists must examine police crash reports. Accessing these files can be complicated by mislabeling or misidentified crashes or incorrectly transcribed dates. Then, comparing and reconciling what may be multiple reports and preparing reviews presents its own challenges.

Police reports contain details that are critical to understanding the causes of crashes and other traffic incidents.

Research Objectives

In this project, Florida International University researchers developed software that can be used in a browser to access, organize, and compare police crash reports, as well as integrating a means of preparing reviews.

Project Activities

The researchers began with software they had created for another project as a starting point for the desired product. The software had the capacity to search for crash records based on crash number and locations, retrieve and view police reports, display crash locations on Google Maps, navigate to police reports quickly, and record police report review information. The researchers outlined the features that would need to be added to the software to provide administrative capabilities, end user customizability, and help functions to support general users. Discussions with FDOT helped researchers identify additional tools to incorporate into the system to meet their needs, such as a feature that allows corrections to be made to the police crash reports and improve stored data.

The final system, the Police Crash Report Review System (PCRRS), was beta-tested by individuals from FDOT, consulting companies, and universities. The beta testers challenged the software with a wide range of user needs and returned numerous comments. The researchers analyzed and compiled the comments, many of which resulted in changes that significantly improved the system. PCRRS will soon be implemented on the FDOT network.

Project Benefits

More thorough crash report reviews can lead to safer roads and reduced vehicle collisions.

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