

2016 Transportation Safety Activities at the Transportation Research Board (TRB) Annual Meeting & the latest in Transportation Safety News

By Tony Giancola, P. E., Transportation & Local Government Consultant

(Tony Giancola is a APWA Life Member & Past President VA-DC-MD (now Mid Atlantic) APWA Chapter, member of the TRB Rural Road Safety Policy, Programming & Implementation Joint Subcommittee, Roadway Safety Cultures Subcommittee, Transportation Safety Planning Subcommittee, Toward Zero Deaths Subcommittee, Secretary of the Roadway Safety Foundation, former Chair, TRB Low Volume Roads Committee, former member of the AASHTO Standing Committee on Highway Traffic Safety, and Retired Executive Director, National Association of County Engineers)

Over 12,000 transportation professionals attended the 2016 TRB annual meeting held every January in Washington D. C. For many years several TRB committees have focused on safety on local and rural roads. They include the Transportation Safety Management Committee, which has several subcommittees (Rural Road Safety Policy, Programming and Implementation Joint; Transportation Safety Planning; Toward Zero Deaths; School Transportation; Emergency Management; Global Safety; and Roadway Safety Cultures subcommittees). The following activities, initiatives, and publications of interest to local road practitioners are summarized. Specific projects are normally funded through the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) unless otherwise indicated.

Transportation Safety Management

This parent standing committee is being reconstituted under its new chair, Dr. Susan Herbel. Visit the committee website for more information.

<https://sites.google.com/site/trbcommitteeanb10/>

One recently completed synthesis project (No. 486), “*State Practices for Local Road Safety*” explores state programs and practices that address local agency road safety. The report focuses on changes in local road safety programs since the legislation of Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), and the use of Engineering, Enforcement, Education and Emergency Services (4E) approaches to local road safety. Three-quarters of all road miles in the United States are owned and maintained by local entities. More than half of all fatal crashes occur on rural roads, which are mostly owned by local entities. NCHRP Synthesis 486 documents the state transportation agency programs and practices that address local agency road safety. The report includes information on state program size, funding sources, and administrative procedures; and noteworthy local/state program partnerships and initiatives to improve safety.

<http://www.trb.org/Publications/Blurbs/173789.aspx>

Rural Road Safety, Policy, Programming & Implementation Joint Subcommittee (ANB10 & AFB30)

This mission of this joint subcommittee is to provide a focal point/forum within TRB for research-based activities and current activities related to improving rural roadway safety through policies, programming, and countermeasure implementation.

The National Center for Rural Road Safety (Safety Center) opened in December 2014. Funded by the Federal Highway Administration, this Center of Excellence is focused on enhancing safety on rural roadways by supporting local, state and tribal road owners and their stakeholders. <http://ruralsafetycenter.org/>

Noteworthy Roadway Safety Practices are included in the following FHWA link. <https://rspcb.safety.fhwa.dot.gov/noteworthy/default.aspx>

Low Volume Roads Committee (AFB30)

This committee is concerned with all aspects of low-volume roads including planning, design, construction, safety, maintenance, operations, environmental and social issues. To view the committee website visit

<http://sites.google.com/site/trbcommitteeafb30/>

One NCHRP synthesis project, No. 485, “*Converting Paved Roads to Unpaved*” found the practice of converting paved roads to unpaved is relatively widespread. Recent road conversion projects were identified in 27 states. These are primarily rural, low-volume roads that were paved when asphalt and construction prices were low. Those asphalt roads have now aged well beyond their design service life and are rapidly deteriorating. It is both difficult and expensive to maintain. Many local road agencies are now converting these deteriorated paved roads to unpaved as a more sustainable solution. To view this publication, visit <http://www.trb.org/main/blurbs/173716.aspx>

Transportation Safety Planning Subcommittee (ANB10 (3))

Several reports were noted of interest including NCHRP Report 811: “*Instituting Safety in Transportation Planning Processes: Techniques, Tactics and Strategies*”. It can be viewed at http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp_rpt_811.pdf

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

FHWA has produced several resources for use by local officials. For more information on these publications contact Rosemarie Anderson, FHWA Office of Safety at rosemarie.anderson@dot.gov

Local Elected Officials: Leading the Way in Local Road Safety Video available at http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/local_rural/

FHWA Federal Aid Essentials Video: Roadway Safety Fundamentals available at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/federal-aidessentials/>

Local-focused safety tools and information available at http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/local_rural/

Systemic Safety Analysis Tool

FHWA has developed the Systemic Safety Project Selection Tool. The tool includes three main components. The first is the systemic planning process, which provides step-by-step instructions and illustrative examples to identify and prioritize systemic safety improvement projects. The second element of the tool presents a mechanism for agencies to determine the appropriate balance of funding between site analysis and systemic

projects. The third tool presents a mechanism to evaluate systemic safety improvements. For additional information contact Karen Scurry at Karen.scurry@dot.gov or visit <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/systemic>

Using Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) on local roads has been a focus for several reports by the FHWA. These reports include:

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/08063/>

http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/local_rural/training/fhwasa14086/

http://nationalruralitsconference.org/downloads/Presentations13/Myers_B2.pdf

Finally, the FHWA offers the Safety Compass online newsletter that provides an important resource for the latest information on national, state and local issues in roadway safety. <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/newsletter/safetycompass/>

Roadway Safety Cultures Subcommittee

The current mission of the subcommittee is to provide a public forum for framing issues, identifying research needs, and disseminating research findings related to all aspects of roadway safety cultures. The committee brings together a partnership of organizations and people capable of influencing roadway safety cultures. Their goal is to assist in the elimination of roadway fatalities and increased safe driving experiences. The subcommittee hopes to elevate roadway safety as a critical need for social change, public health and quality of life.

Last fall, the subcommittee coordinated the “2nd Annual National Roadway Safety Culture Summit” held at the TRB Keck Center in Washington DC. The Summit’s focus was “*Moving Toward Zero Deaths through Organizational Transformation*” – what this means, what it looks like, and how to make it happen. In particular, participants engaged in active dialogue addressing three key factors impacting safety culture changes in transportation organizations:

- Leadership – The role leadership plays in creating and sustaining changes in organizational safety culture
- Communications – Effective ways to foster and use all forms of communication to support organizational transformation
- Impetus for Cultural Change – The use of data and other information and events to highlight and create an impetus for change

In February 2016, the AAA Traffic Safety Foundation issued its *Safety Culture Index* for 2015 outlining major findings in speeding, distracted driving, etc. The report can be viewed at https://www.aaafoundation.org/sites/default/files/2015_TSCI.pdf

A current active NCHRP project “*A Strategic Approach To Transforming Traffic Safety Culture to Reduce Deaths and Injuries*” is conducting research to develop a strategic approach for state DOTs and their traditional and non-traditional traffic safety partner organizations. They hope to enhance the public and organizational traffic safety culture by instilling new and sustainable improvements for all motorized and non-motorized road

users.

Other Organizational News

The Roadway Safety Foundation's (RSF) publication "*Roadway Safety Guide*" was completed last year and can be viewed at the RSF website. This publication is a revision and rewrite of the publication produced 10 years ago. It serves as a resource for elected officials, community leaders, civic groups and all stakeholders interested in improving safety on their highways and roads. Visit <http://www.e-digitaleditions.com/i/418038-roadway-safety-guide> for the publication.

The RSF also developed a transportation safety clearinghouse, in partnership with the US DOT and two leading technical firms. It is a one-stop shop for everything related to older driver, pedestrian, and cyclist safety. This online resource is user friendly and easy to navigate for all, including older adults, highway professionals, policymakers, medical professionals, and law enforcement. The Clearinghouse for Older Road User Safety (CHORUS) can be found online at www.roadsafeseniors.org

NCHRP project 03-104 "*Unsignalized Intersection Improvement Guide*" is completed and can be viewed online at the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) website at the following link: www.ite.org/uiig This comprehensive guide offers research and recommendations to enhance the safe operation of unsignalized intersections. The guide can aid practitioners in selecting design, operational, maintenance, enforcement, and other types of treatments to improve safety, mobility, and accessibility.

For more information, contact Tony Giancola at tonygiancola@rcn.com.