

# TRANSPORTATION SAFETY PLANNING WORKSHOP

Communicating, Collaborating, and  
Coordinating to Advance TSP in Alabama



## **Transportation Safety Planning – National and Alabama Context**

Safety is a national transportation performance goal area, but more importantly, it is the number one priority for all transportation system users. For this reason, state Department of Transportation (DOT), metropolitan planning organizations (MPO), and regional transportation planning organizations (RTPO) are investing in programs and projects to reduce fatalities and serious injuries. Alabama is addressing transportation safety through a “Toward Zero Deaths” approach, which focuses on zero fatalities and the promise to move residents and visitors to their destinations safely. Many different stakeholders play a role in achieving this commitment, with transportation planners leading the way on stakeholder coordination, crash data analysis, prioritizing and programming investments, and tracking and evaluating results.

To assist States and MPOs improve transportation safety, including progress toward zero deaths goals, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Offices of Safety and Planning sponsored a series of *Transportation Safety Planning (TSP) Workshops*. In May 2017, the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) hosted a workshop with participants from the Alabama MPOs, the Alabama Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs), and the FHWA. The workshop provided an opportunity to collaborate on transportation safety and integrate safety in the transportation planning process. The effort consisted of a workshop to discuss strategies and opportunities for collaboration; a follow-up webinar to discuss further opportunities and challenges; and a peer exchange webinar to share successful practices in other states and broaden collaboration.

## **Alabama’s Transportation Safety Planning Strengths**

The *Transportation Safety Planning Workshops* project complimented and highlighted the safety planning work already underway in Alabama and provided new ideas for moving forward. Areas where Alabama excels in transportation safety planning include:

- Available crash data and analysis functionality through the [Critical Analysis Reporting Environment \(CARE\)](#).
- Available CARE training sessions to enhance technical expertise on the database.
- Identification of opportunities to include safety in other transportation projects, most notably resurfacing projects.
- Presence of safety engineers in each region to field questions and provide assistance on safety planning and project identification. One of five positions is in place so far.
- Development of regional safety action plans in four areas of the state to identify the behavioral and infrastructure factors, contributing to crashes.
- Creation of the Safety Technical Assistance for Cities and Counties (STACC) to provide safety technical support to owners, operators and maintainers of local roads.

## Alabama's Best Practices in Transportation Safety Planning

**STACC:** ALDOT has developed the STACC program to provide safety professional and technical support to owners and operators of local roads. The department has authorized a pilot project to fund the STACC with Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funds (\$400,000 for a two-year pilot). The Alabama Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) at Auburn University, with oversight by ALDOT Traffic and Safety Operations Section, will administer the project. The STACC will provide training and assistance with road safety audits, local road safety plan development, and safety outreach, along with peer-to-peer networking opportunities to cities and counties. MPOs and RPOs can request assistance from the STACC on behalf of a local agency in its jurisdiction.

**Regional Safety Planning:** To gather input and buy-in from the Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) partners and stakeholders, ALDOT took a different approach to preparing the third edition of the SHSP. The department used a "bottom up" approach, which involved engaging a multidisciplinary group of safety stakeholders to develop safety action plans at the regional level. The Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) was the first regional coalition to develop a plan. During the plan development process, stakeholders identified distracted driving as one of the emphasis area for the plan. As part of this plan development process, RPCGB formed a partnership with the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). To address distracted driving, one of the emphasis areas in the plan, the two agencies initiated a [distracted driver simulator program](#) to educate young drivers on the dangers of distraction.



**Crash Data:** ALDOT developed the [Alabama Transportation Planner's Guide to Safety Data](#), an overview of the legal and policy implications of reporting of safety data in planning documents. The guidebook provides guidance for MPOs, RPOs, cities, and counties on methods for displaying and sharing safety data pursuant to Alabama and Federal Law. A [video overview](#) of the Guide is also available.

## Next Steps for Transportation Safety Planning in Alabama

- **Interaction** - Institute more regular communication between FHWA, ALDOT, and the MPOs/RTPOs on transportation safety issues and needs.
- **Transportation Safety Planning** - Expand the implementation of the regional safety plans and also better incorporate safety elements into the long range transportation plan.
- **Behavioral Safety** - Identify partnerships and funding opportunities to engage more in behavioral safety initiatives at the regional level.
- **Tools** - Continue information sharing, training, and technical assistance on analysis methods.
- **Safety Education** - Push critical safety information out to the public, stakeholders, local jurisdictions, and elected officials.
- **Project Prioritization** - Develop safety scoring weight or evaluation criteria for LRTP and TIP prioritization processes.