

NEW TOOLS FOR INTEGRATING SAFETY INTO PERFORMANCE BASED PLANNING

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Performance-based planning is not a new concept—for years transportation agencies have been tracking performance metrics. However, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21) and the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST) Act refined the focus on performance measurement, requiring State departments of transportation (DOTs) and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) to demonstrate progress in meeting seven national transportation goals. One of the national goal areas is safety. In addition to this requirement, more states and regions are moving towards policies on zero fatalities, recognizing that even one transportation-related death is unacceptable. The combination of these two developments has sparked a cultural change as transportation planners are being challenged to renew their focus on safety, using performance-based planning methods to:

- Understand past, current, and potential future safety trends—*where we are now*;
- Develop safety goals, objectives, measures, and targets—*where we want to go*; and
- Identify transportation safety programs and projects to achieve results—*how we get there*.

The ***Applying Safety Data and Analysis to Performance-Based Transportation Planning Guidebook*** provides DOT and MPO planners with a step-by-step approach for understanding the types of safety data used during planning and where they can be accessed; analysis techniques (from basic trend analysis all the way to network screening) that can be applied to identify the key safety concerns; and most importantly, how the results of safety analysis can be applied to the performance-based transportation planning process to develop safety goals, objectives, performance measures, and targets; identify and prioritize projects; and evaluate progress towards safety priorities. To inform the contents of the Guidebook, DOT and MPO planners from Alabama, Ohio, Michigan, New Mexico, and Tennessee were interviewed.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) project on ***Integrating Safety into MPO Project Prioritization*** identifies methods that MPO planners can use to ensure safety is fully incorporated into future transportation infrastructure by identifying opportunities to score the safety benefits for all transportation projects (not just safety specific projects). To meet future safety targets, it will be critical for MPOs to prioritize projects that will improve safety. To collect information, planning documents from more than 50 MPO were reviewed and practitioners were reviewed to understand the different methodologies used to incorporate safety considerations into selection of transportation projects. The research documents current approaches for conducting project prioritization and how safety is incorporated into those methods. The project identifies strengths and limitations of the current approaches to using safety as a project prioritization criterion, and recommends a range of approaches with the best likelihood of selecting projects that will reduce fatal and serious injury crashes.