

# The Center Line

Local Technical Assistance Program

Serving North Dakota Transportation Agencies

North Dakota Transportation Technology Transfer Center

North Dakota State University

## MEET ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER JON MILL - BURLEIGH COUNTY ENGINEER

by Vernon Monger, ND LTAP

Jon Mill is the Burleigh County Engineer and since shortly after becoming the engineer he became a member of the LTAP (T2C) advisory committee. He asks the question of how long he can serve on the committee and receives the answer from the director that it is a lifetime appointment, and I believe Jon is now starting to believe that.

Jon has been the Burleigh County Engineer since 1981. He comes from "Two Dot", Montana, which he is apparently proud of, as evident by the hat he normally wears. He received his Civil Engineering degree from Montana State University in 1970. With a job offer from the North Dakota Department of Transportation he told his wife (Marie) that "lets go to North Dakota for a little while" and then we will return to the mountain areas of Montana, which she was agreeable to. So, 33 years later, we are very pleased that he hasn't returned "home" yet.

Jon worked for the ND DOT at the Valley City district as project coordinator on construction prior to

his accepting the Burleigh County Engineer position at Bismarck. In that position he was involved in the grading and paving of various roadway projects throughout the district.

In addition to being a Registered Professional Engineer, Jon is also a Certified Land Surveyor. With Bismarck being located within the

county, there is a lot of rural development outside the city which contributes to Jon's work activities. He serves on various committees such as County Planning Commission, member of the Metropolitan Planning Organization and advisor to the Park and Water

Management boards. Jon is a past president of NDACE and has been selected as the NDACE "Engineer/Superintendent of the Year" award and also at the Association of Counties as the "Outstanding Appointed County Official". Jon was also appointed by the Federal Highway Administration as North Dakota's representative to the "County Road Advisor Program" advisory committee.



Jon Mill, Burleigh County Engineer

Vol. 20, No. 3

**Spring 2004**

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### Routing Slip

Don't file this newsletter too quickly. Read it, photo-copy what you want, sign below, and please pass it on - especially to the front line troops.

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Jon Mill poses with his summer-time toy.



Jon Mill poses with his winter-time toy.

When asked about his hobbies or recreational activities, he says he is interested in anything that has a motor on it. With summer coming on he is bringing his “Harley” out of storage and also getting the boat out for some fishing excursions. And of course in the winter it is the snowmobiling excursions. Jon and Marie enjoy all seasons in North Dakota.

As a member of the LTAP advisory committee Jon has made many valuable contributions to our program. His outstanding knowledge of local governments and the needs of the local communities has been a great asset to preparing the work activities of LTAP. He has been very outspoken to the State and Federal agencies about the value of the program. Two of the major items he speaks highly of are the various workshops conducted and the computer programs developed by LTAP. The county utilized the Microcomputer Data Management Program (MDMS) and he says this program serves their needs very well. Jon feels that there are several counties and cities that are not taking full advantage of the program and he would like to see that changed. ▀

**Editorial Comment**

So it is not “all work and no play” as Jon has tried to convince us all these past years.

# TOWNSHIP REGIONAL MEETINGS

by Vernon Monger, ND LTAP

The North Dakota Township Officers Association (NDTOA) held their biennial regional meetings throughout the state at 18 locations in February, with approximately 600 township supervisors and clerks in attendance. The purpose of these meetings is to update the township officers on the latest legislative changes, give support and encouragement to local township government and discuss problem areas such as local road safety and liability issues. Also the Internal Revenue Service explained the necessary administrative requirements to comply with their directives.

Township government remains quite strong in spite of many townships losing population and in some cases only a handful of people left residing in the township. The dedication of the township supervisor in many cases becomes almost a lifetime commitment.

One such individual we would like to highlight in this article is Ken Yantes. Ken is currently the secretary to the association and has also served as lobbyist for the townships for the legislative sessions for the past 20 years.

It is quite interesting visiting with Ken about how he got involved in township government. Ken was born in Cando and raised in Towner County. In 1967, he began farming in the Starkweather area as a farm hand, then part owner and eventually owner of a farm. The township road he lived on was quite bad, needing gravel, so he went to the DeGroat township supervisors meeting and asked for help to improve his road. They immediately placed gravel on the roadway and he was impressed by the quick

response. He realized the value and importance of township government. Two years later they elected him as a township supervisor. He then went to the county association and became a member and then president of the county association. As county president he went to the state township officers association and was elected as a director from his district. He then served as president of the state association for four years and then vice president for two years. He is currently in his third term as secretary. His involvement in township government has been ongoing for over 35 years.

Ken states one of the highlights in working for townships is his involvement as their lobbyist during the legislative session. Each session for the past 20 years has involved his moving to Bismarck for the sessions. This past session (2003) he and his wife, Darleen, lived at Bismarck for the session. There were 67 bills affecting the townships for the last session. Ken felt very good about the fact that 65 of the bills were acted on positively from the townships concerns.

Ken feels that the most important legislation passed was a revision to section 24-07-06 pertaining to roadway access. This was partially revised to read "may open a public road to gain access to any such tract or tracts when in the judgment of such board such public road is necessary and that it is of sufficient benefit to the county or township as a whole". The township is no longer required to build a road when it is not in their best interest.

Ken and Darleen now reside in rural Cooperstown. They have two daughters and 5 grandchildren, with two sets of twins. Ken is a farm

equipment salesman in the Devils Lake area.

Information on township activities can be found on their web page, [www.ndtoa.com](http://www.ndtoa.com)



President Donny Malcomb



Secretary Ken Yantes



Attorney Tom Moe



Attendees

# NORTH DAKOTA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY ENGINEERS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

by Vernon Monger, LTAP



Executive Committee members from left to right are Dana Larson, Tim Schulte, Rodney Ness, Jerry Krieg, Chuck Glynn, Trevor Christianson, and Damon Devillers



President Jerry Krieg



Roger Kluck presents "Employee of the Year" award to Ron Wagner



Gene Hebl presents the Scholarship award to Zachary Feichner

The North Dakota Association of County Engineers/Superintendents (NDACE) held their annual conference at Dickinson on January 28 - 30. The session was opened by President Rodney Ness, Burleigh County Highway Supervisor. The federal and state perspective for the coming years was discussed by Dave Sprynczynatyk, DOT Director and Al Radliff, Federal Highway Division Administrator.

Al Radliff discussed the new highway legislation being proposed in congress. The previous highway bill was completed on October 1 and we are currently operating on extensions. The present timetable is that a bill should be completed and signed by May. Dave Sprynczynatyk indicated the proposed federal legislation should provide additional funds to the state compared to previous years, and how these funds can be utilized.

The DOT Local Roads division staff, Paul Benning and Blane Hoesel, discussed the conditions for utilizing federal funds for local road projects, such as engineering costs, funding sources, project development considerations, concept reports, public hearings and consideration of other impacts on a project. Lead time to get a project on a scheduled letting date is a critical element, requiring submittal to the DOT 10 weeks before the bid opening.

The annual convention of the National Association of County Engineers (NACE) will be held in Bismarck in April of 2005. Planning activities concerning this were also conducted at the conference. Co-Chairmen of this event are Jerry Krieg and Jon Jennings. Any concerns anyone has

relative to this can be directed to them or to the executive committee.

One of the highlights of this was the evening banquet. Jerry Krieg assumed the president position. Other officers of the executive committee are Vice President: Damon Devillers, Secretary-Treasurer: Trevor Christianson, 1st year director: Tim Schulte, 2nd year director: Dana Larsen, 3rd year director: Chuck Glynn.

The county "Engineer/ Superintendent of the year" was presented to Ron Wagner, McLean County Highway Supervisor. Ron served as president of the association in 2003. Ron has been a McLean County employee for 31 years, and for the past 21 years has been the highway supervisor. Ron and his wife reside at rural Washburn.

Again this year a fund raising was conducted for funding additions to the scholarship fund, initiated several years ago. This year a \$500 scholarship award was presented to Zachary Feichner. Zach is a Bismarck Century graduate and a senior civil engineering student at NDSU.

The members of the NDACE are looking forward to a busy year with the planning and organization of the NACE convention in April 2005. ■

## COMPUTER CORNER



**SPRING 2004**

by Russ McDaniel, NDLTAP

In the 1999 Fall issue of our newsletter, *The Center Line*, I introduced our readers to Mr. John Wright. John is the office manager for the Traill County Highway Department at Hillsboro, North Dakota. He is a Hillsboro native and a graduate of Mayville State University. It was more than 10 years ago that I started working for the North Dakota LTAP Center and John was one of my first contacts. He and I have worked closely together since that time.

John started working for Traill County 19 years ago at a time when desktop computers were not yet available. But not having a computer did not stop him from developing and maintaining an excellent record keeping system. Without a computer it was a lot of work but, even then, John knew where every dollar was spent. He knew the source of every dollar by funding category. He maintained a record of expenditures by line item complete with remaining balances by budgeted line item and funding category.

He has another special quality that has always impressed me. A friend of mine often commented that data is of little or no value until someone converts it to information and nobody does this better than John. He doesn't just

collect data but he also knows how to apply these data and present them in a manner useful to county officials who are responsible for management decisions.

John was one of the first North Dakota users of our Microcomputer Data Management System (MDMS) software. As a user, he has contributed a number of ideas and suggestions for improving the program.

In the 1999 newsletter article, I reported that John and I, along with Lois Bjornson from Barnes County Highway Department, were in the process of developing a program we called the "Accounts Payable/Receivable Program." The idea was to develop an automated process for tracking dollars spend and dollars received by funding category and budgeted line item. In addition, it was intended that the process would maintain a record of expenditures along with current remaining budget balances by line item. In other words, it was intended to automate the Traill County process John had been using for years.

This process did not work well but John was not discouraged. He concluded that including accounts receivable with the accounts payable feature was the problem. Accounts receivable transactions are more difficult to track because the customer must be billed, payments which are sometimes made in installments must be recorded, overdue notices must be generated, and sometimes invoices generated in one fiscal year are not paid until a later fiscal year.

So, John suggested we lower our sights a little and develop a process that would include only accounts payable and we have done just that. I spent most of the week of March 22nd at Hillsboro where we fine-tuned the procedure. The fine tuning included fixes for some of my program errors but also included revisions offered by



John Wright



Ben Baukol

John that significantly improved procedures.

The program includes procedures for generating a variety of reports that I will not attempt to describe here, but John seemed to be especially

impressed with a report titled "Claim Voucher." A sample of that report is included with this article. It is this report that he submits to the County Auditor each month authorizing payment for goods and services rendered.

The program is still in the development stage and is not yet ready for distribution. However, when and if John gives me the OK, we will make it available to other users. If in the meantime you would like to learn more about it, I'm sure he would be happy to visit with you. His phone number is 701-636-4341.

I want to digress a little now to another subject. During my recent visit to Traill County I met a young coop student working for John. His name is Ben Baukol. Ben is a senior at Hillsboro High School and this will be his third summer working for the Traill County Highway Department. He is a modest individual but I noticed a patch on the sleeve of his jacket indicating he is a member of the "National Honor Society." John pointed out that in addition to being a reliable and dependable employee, Ben also is a member of the Hillsboro Fire Department.

Summer months, Ben works in the field on a variety of assignments but during the school year, he works an hour each morning helping John in the office. I couldn't help but think this must qualify as a win-win arrangement for both Ben and Traill County. The County felt they had an obligation to provide an opportunity for a deserving student to gain a wide range of work experience and Ben recognizes this is a great opportunity for him to gain from that experience.

Both John Wright and Scott Stammen, Traill County Road Superintendent, had high praise for Ben's contributions. He will be missed when he leaves for college this fall. █

CLAIM VOUCHER TRAILL COUNTY % County Auditor, PO Box 428, Hillsboro ND 58045			
Claimant's Name: JOHN WRIGHT ENGINEERING		Date: 4/16/2004	
Mailing Address: P.O. BOX 153			
City/State/Zip: HILLSBORO, ND 58045			
DESCRIPTION OF ITEMS SOLD OR SERVICES RENDERED			
As Per Statement & Invoice, Discount Applied If Allowed			
INV. DATE	PURPOSE	INVOICE AMT.	DISCOUNTED AMT.
3/23/2004	1202	\$1,319.87	\$1,319.87
	** Subtotal **	Hardware Distribution	\$1,319.87
3/23/2004	SC-1838052)	\$297.37	\$297.37
	** Subtotal **	Eggs To Market	\$297.37
3/23/2004	HRO-#(013)	\$5,890.00	\$5,890.00
3/23/2004	HRO-#(017)	\$5,890.00	\$5,890.00
	** Subtotal **	Bridge Fund	\$11,780.00
<b>TOTAL AMOUNT OF CLAIM</b>			<b>\$ 13,377.44</b>
I do hereby certify that the above claim is correct and that the goods were received for the items noted.		TO TRAILL COUNTY AUDITOR: The above account has been carefully audited and you are hereby directed to draw your warrant upon the county treasury to the above amount payable from various tax monies.	
OFFICER IN CHARGE OF DEPARTMENT		Chairman, Board of County Commissioners	

Warrant Number \_\_\_\_\_

Date Paid \_\_\_\_\_

Date Filed \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ County Auditor

By \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

**CERTIFICATE**

I do hereby certify that the within bill, claim, account or demand is just and true; that the money therein charged was actually paid for the purpose therein stated; that the services therein charged were actually rendered and are of the value therein charged; that no part of such bill, claim, account or demand has been paid and that the goods therein charged were actually delivered and were of the value charged.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**TAKE NOTICE**

North Dakota Century Code .54-14-06. Penalty for certifying to false claim. - Any person, firm, or company falsely certifying, or certifying to any false bill, claim, account, or demand against the state or any political subdivision therein, is guilty of a misdemeanor and shall forfeit his right to collect such bill, claim, account, or demand, or any part thereof.

**NOTE:** If deemed necessary by any officer or board passing this bill, claim, account or demand further statements under oath may be required.

# Roadway Safety Assessment *Showcase*

**Ukiah, California**

**September 28–29, 2004**

**Mendocino County, California, Reduces Road Accidents 42%  
Unbelievable, But True!**

*by Gib Peaslee, Coordinator, National LTAP  
Association Product Demonstration Showcase Program*

Mendocino County lies on the coast of California, one hundred miles north of San Francisco. Mendocino County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) is responsible for just over one thousand centerline miles of roadway and serves a population of 87,000 people inhabiting an area of 3,510 square miles.

While a 42% reduction in low volume road crashes may appear to be beyond the realm of believability to many safety professionals, let's stretch plausibility even further by mentioning this program is delivering a cost-to-benefit ratio of 1:299 – and the program cost is within every county's reach, including even the most sparsely populated farm-to-market county, parish, or township. The total cost to conduct the reviews and implement the recommended changes from 1987 through 1995 was just \$79,300!

## **How did they do it?**

You and your highway safety management team are invited and encouraged to experience the entire MCDOT process start to finish at the Mendocino County Road System Traffic Safety Review (RSTSR) Showcase in Ukiah, CA, September 28-29, 2004.

At this Showcase, MCDOT staff will share every detail including all the start-up, roadway selection, field review, and deficiency correction

subsequent treatment evaluation, treatment selection methodology, and cost-benefit measurement process details.

An integral part of this Showcase experience will be guided visits to previously improved field sites. Each field site will be clearly defined and will show both the previous condition factors and the corrective measure implemented. Participants, as a group, will review and evaluate prior conditions and the applied corrective action.

Another important element to this Showcase experience will be guided team visits to untreated roadway sites to gain personal experience evaluating and selecting potential corrective action. Upon returning to the Showcase auditorium, each team will share reports and their proposed corrective action, and we will all discuss the potential solutions.

This Showcase is committed to provide all the information and post-showcase support an agency will need to return home and begin immediate implementation of their own RSTSR program. To meet this commitment, these key additional support items will be included:

- *A Grant Resource Specialist will be available during the Showcase. Each participant or county team will be able to schedule a one-on-one meeting with this specialist.*



Stephen Ford, MCDOT, discussing T intersection treatment with David Grouchy, FHWA.



General view of county road system.



General view of county road system.



General view of county road system.



Ford and Grouchy viewing countywide standardized culvert treatment.

- A post-Showcase support group will be available to all participating agency teams for “on call” assistance throughout their entire implementation process back home.
- A Travel Stipend Scholarship Program (TSSP) will be available for agencies that serve populations less than 50,000, and that maintain extensive low-volume road miles and face restricted travel. The stipend will cover air travel, overnight accommodations, and motor coach transportation fees directly related to this Showcase.
- An easy to use Sign Management System (SMS) software package, developed by the New Hampshire LTAP Center, will be demonstrated and distributed at no cost to interested participants. Post-showcase user support is available through the New Hampshire LTAP Center.
- A user-friendly Asset Management software package, developed by the Utah LTAP Center, will be demonstrated and distributed at no cost to interested participants. Post-showcase user support is available through the Utah LTAP Center.

Everyone, including public officials, concerned about low volume roadway safety should attend this Showcase. There are no excuses: now every county agency, large and small, has an equal opportunity to take advantage of this learning experience.

We tip our hats to Stephen H. Ford, RCE, with MCDOT for developing and setting this program in motion, and to Eugene Calvert, P.E., MCDOT Director, for guiding the development of the award-winning TRB paper calling attention to this program.

### Registration Information

The registration fee is \$125 per person for the two-day showcase. This includes lunch during the showcase, a buffet dinner Tuesday night – perfect for networking – a complete manual containing illustrations and text of all presentations, and MCDOT sample final report tables. Registration fees are not refundable but substitutions are welcome. AAA Travel is available (800-88`1-6707 ext. 2234) to assist with airline and hotel accommodations for this showcase. Area location maps for Ukiah, CA will be provided upon registration.

To register, or for more information, please visit [www.pdshowcase.org](http://www.pdshowcase.org) or call Chris Ritch at the Florida LTAP Center, 352-392-2371 ext. 223, email: [chris@ce.ufl.edu](mailto:chris@ce.ufl.edu); or Daiana Mathis at the California LTAP Center, 510-231-5672, email: [daianam@berkeley.edu](mailto:daianam@berkeley.edu). ▀

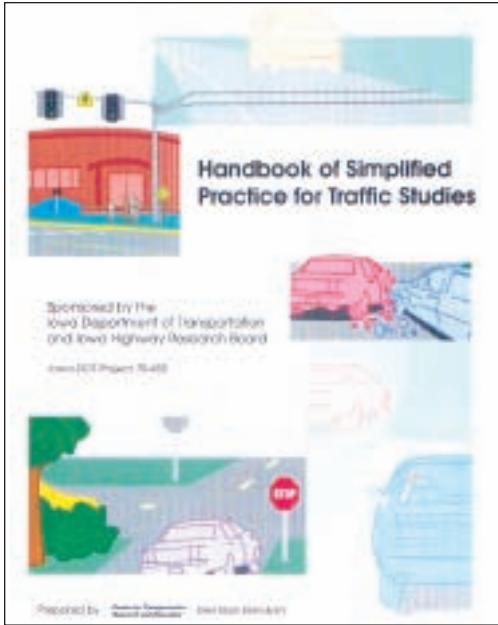
### Handy Guide for Conducting Simple Traffic Studies

by Courtney Hansen, KS LTAP Center

“A well-executed, well-documented (traffic) study is critical in the decision-making process for many transportation-related projects and I reporting to elected officials and members of the community.” This statement, from the **Handbook of Simplified Practice for Traffic Studies**, describes the reason this handbook is so helpful to civil and traffic engineers in local jurisdictions. Not only does this publication describe several common, useful types of simplified traffic studies, but it does so in a way that is easy to understand.


This guide contains five main chapters: spot speed, traffic volume counts, sight distance, crash analysis, and school zone program. Each of the chapters serves to inform readers of considerations to take into account for each type of study.





Instructions for common methods for conducting these studies, including checklists, make up the greatest part of the handbook. Also included are examples applicable to each situation.

The **Handbook** includes numerous useful illustrations and charts to aid in understanding. The appendix contains forms for conducting studies and a chart for determining which studies might be most useful, based on accident patterns. This useful guide was published in November 2002 by the Center for Transportation Research and Education (CTRE) at Iowa State University. The entire publication can be found at, [www.ctre.iastate.edu/pubs/traffichandbook/](http://www.ctre.iastate.edu/pubs/traffichandbook/). The PDF downloads found at this web site are divided into individual chapters - a handy feature that allows readers to obtain desired information without waiting for large PDFs to download.

If you don't have internet access, contact the North Dakota LTAP Center at 1-800-726-4143 or 1-701-231-7051 or send an email request to [Donna.Theusch@ndsu.nodak.edu](mailto:Donna.Theusch@ndsu.nodak.edu) to obtain a CD of the handbook. 

Modified and reprinted with permission from the winter 2004 issue of the Kansas LTAP center newsletter, KUTC Newsletter

## Transportation Safety

The safety of the traveling public is of major concern for the U.S. Department of Transportation. Although progress has been made in reducing fatalities, roughly 45% of U.S. deaths due to unintentional injury involve transportation. Roughly 95% of these transportation fatalities arise from motor vehicle crashes.

Reprinted with permission from the Fall 2003 issue of the South Carolina LTAP Center newsletter, T's Quarterly

MODE	1970	1980	1990	2000	2001
Large air carrier	146	1	39	92	531
Commuter air carrier	N	37	7	5	13
On-demand air taxi	N	105	51	71	60
General aviation	1,310	1,239	767	592	553
Highway <sup>b</sup>	52,627	51,091	44,599	<sup>R</sup> 41,945	42,116
Railroad	785	584	599	512	548
Transit <sup>d</sup>	N	N	339	295	U
Commercial ship	178	206	85	32	U
Small vessel	420	281	101	87	U
Recreational boating	1,418	1,360	865	701	U
Gas and hazardous liquid pipeline	30	19	9	38	7

a Includes people on planes and on board aircraft. For large air carriers, fatalities resulting from the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks includes only persons on board aircraft.

b Includes occupants, nonoccupants, vehicle fatalities at rail crossings.

c Includes fatalities from incidents as well as incidents and also includes train occupant fatalities except motor vehicle occupant fatalities.

d Fatalities resulting from accidents, not just accidents. Includes commuter rail, heavy light rail, bus, demand-responsive pool, and automated guideway.

e Fatalities unrelated to vessel accidents and individual equipment failure.

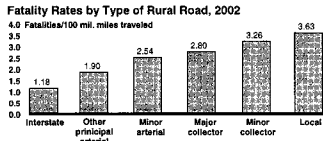
Key: N = data do not exist or are not cited or reporting changes

R = revised

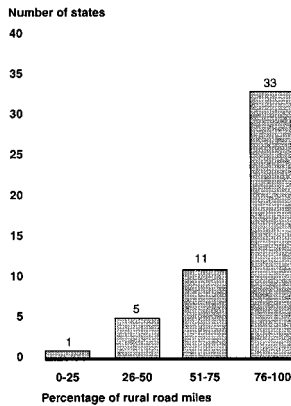
U = unavailable

# GAO Report no. 04-663 - HIGHWAY SAFETY: Federal and State Efforts to Address Rural Road Safety Challenges

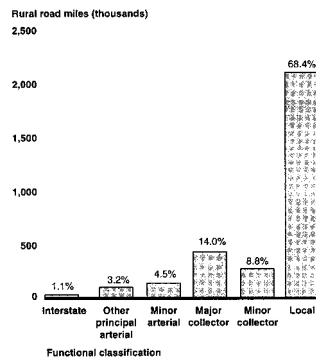
## Results in Brief



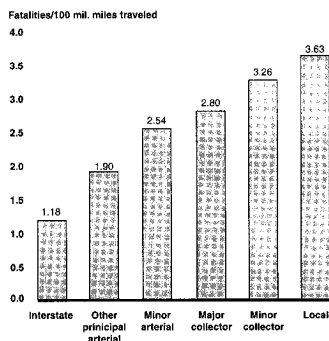
Source: GAO presentation of NHTSA and FHWA data.



Source: GAO presentation of FHWA data.



Source: GAO presentation of FHWA data.



Source: GAO presentation of NHTSA and FHWA data.

One or more of four factors contribute to rural road fatalities: human behavior, roadway environment, vehicles, and the medical care victims receive after a crash.

Human behaviors are the actions taken by or the condition of drivers and passengers, including the use or nonuse of safety belts, alcohol impairment, and speeding. Human behaviors are important to rural safety because, according to NHTSA data for 2000 through 2002, rural crashes accounted for about 68 percent of unrestrained (unbelted) fatalities, about 63 percent of all alcohol-related fatalities, and 62 percent of speeding-related fatalities. In addition, over 80 percent of fatalities at speeds of 55 miles per hour or higher occurred in rural areas in 2001.

Roadway environment characteristics that contribute to crashes and fatalities include the design of the roadway and roadway conditions: narrow lanes, sharp curves, lack of medians, small or non-existent shoulders, trees, utility poles, and animals. Such factors are important in rural crashes—more than 70 percent of the nation's fatalities from single vehicle run-off-the-road crashes occur on rural roads.

Vehicle factors include any vehicle-related failures that may exist in the vehicle or the design of the vehicle and are important in both rural and urban crashes. For example, when heavy sport utility vehicles or pickup trucks collide with small compact cars, the occupants in the lighter and lower vehicle are more likely to die as a result of the crash, particularly if struck in the side. Finally, the lack of prompt and effective emergency medical services contributes to rural

road fatalities. For example, NHTSA data for 2002 show that for 30 percent of the fatal crashes on rural highways, victims did not reach a hospital within 1 hour of the crash, while only 8 percent of victims in fatal urban crashes did not reach a hospital within 1 hour.

Federal and state agencies' efforts to improve rural road safety are generally included within programs that address broader aspects of highway construction or highway safety. For example, in fiscal year 2003, FHWA provided the states and the District of Columbia approximately \$27.4 billion in federal-aid highway funds, most of which can be used to construct new highways or to maintain or improve existing highways. While many of these highway improvement projects may include safety features that affect rural roads, the safety features are not specifically segregated for reporting purposes.

Within the overall federal-aid highway funding for states, about \$648 million was specifically identified for safety purposes—about \$330 million of which went to rural road safety for highway Hazard Elimination or Rail-Highway Crossing Programs. These programs enable states to address safety concerns on all rural roads through construction improvements. In addition, in fiscal year 2003, FHWA budgeted about \$10.9 million for research into safety advancements and provided oversight and assistance to states that benefits both urban and rural roads. In fiscal year 2003, NHTSA provided states with about \$671 million for use in programs designed to reduce both rural and urban crashes caused by human behaviors.

The five states we visited used a portion of the federal funding they received to support rural road safety improvements. However, the states did not track all funds used by rural and urban categories so the total amount spent on rural road safety is unknown. Most state officials we spoke with supported the current flexibility they have to use the funds provided in areas they determine are the most important and did not favor having a separate rural road program or initiative.

Many challenges hinder efforts to improve rural road safety. For instance, not all states have adopted safety belt and alcohol laws that meet federal standards. For example, 30 states have not enacted primary safety belt laws, which allow police officers to pull over and cite motorists exclusively for the infraction of not using their safety belts, and 23 have not enacted alcohol laws that meet federal requirements relating to penalties for repeat drunk driving offenders and prohibiting open containers of alcohol in vehicles.

In addition, the sheer volume of rural roads and the low volume of traffic on some of them, combined with the high cost of major construction improvements, make it difficult to rebuild rural roads with safer designs. Furthermore, while states can use federal safety funds for any public road, they are limited in using their federal construction funds on certain rural roads—particularly two-lane rural roadways that provide access to farms, rural residences, and other rural areas.

Efforts to improve rural road safety are further complicated because most rural roads are not owned by states but rather are the responsibilities of municipal, county, or township

Excerpt from GAO Report  
no. 04-663: Highway Safety

governments. These local governments may not have resources available to undertake significant projects to increase rural road safety. Further, some states lack information upon which to make informed decisions on potential road safety solutions, regardless of whether the road is rural or urban. In addition, the ability to reduce rural road fatalities is hampered by difficulties in providing prompt medical services in rural settings. For example, rural areas are less likely to have 911 emergency dialing and it may take longer to reach a hospital.

Legislation has been introduced in the Congress as it considers the reauthorization of Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century, which would address some of the factors that contribute to rural fatalities or that make it difficult to improve rural road safety. Some of the proposals include provisions for providing incentives for enacting stronger state traffic safety laws; funding for high-risk rural roads, state safety data systems, new safety research, and emergency medical services; and additional flexibility in states' use of some federal funds.

We provided copies of a draft of this report to the Department of Transportation for its review and comment. The department generally agreed with the report's content. In discussing this report, agency officials noted that safety should be part of every project designed and built with federal-aid funds. In addition, the department provided technical clarifications, which we incorporated as appropriate. ▀



## COMING EVENTS

### **ND LTAP Events**

**National LTAP  
Annual Conference**  
August 1-4, 2004  
Bernalillo, NM

**APWA Click  
Listen & Learn**  
[http://www.apwa.net/  
Education/](http://www.apwa.net/Education/)

**TARGET FINANCE 3 -  
Creative Financing:  
Linking Budget Know  
How with Strategic  
Planning**  
August 12, 2004

**Right-of-Way  
Cooperation for  
Consistency and  
Simplicity**  
August 18, 2004

### **Other Events**

**NACO Annual  
Conference &  
Exposition**  
July 16-20, 2004  
Phoenix, Arizona

**ITE 2004 Annual  
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Services Exhibit**  
August 1-4, 2004  
Lake Buena Vista, FL

**APWA International  
Public Works  
Congress**  
August 12-15, 2004  
Atlanta, GA

**National Rural ITS  
Conference**  
August 22, 2004  
Duluth, MN

# Transportation Technology Transfer Center

Civil & Industrial Engineering Building, Room 201H  
North Dakota State University  
Fargo, ND 58105

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U.S. Postage  
**Paid**  
Permit No. 818  
Fargo, N. Dak.

The Center Line is published quarterly by the North Dakota Transportation Technology Transfer (ND TTT) Center, Civil & Industrial Engineering Building, Room 201H, North Dakota State University, Fargo, ND 58105.

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The Transportation Technology Transfer Program is a nationwide partnership under the Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) of the Federal Highway Administration, state departments of transportation, universities, and others. The program's purpose is to translate into understandable terms the latest transportation research and technologies. This information is made available to local officials transportation personnel in towns, cities, counties and townships.

Federal support for operation of the North Dakota TTT Center at North Dakota State University (NDSU) is matched by the North Dakota Department of Transportation, NDSU, the North Dakota Insurance Reserve Fund and the ND TTT Center. Guidance for the ND TTT Center is provided by an Advisory Board composed of members representing the federal, state, local and private sector transportation community. This newsletter is designed to keep you informed about new publications, videos, innovative technologies and training opportunities that will be helpful to you and your local unit of government.

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