

## Iowa LTAP Mission

To foster a safe, efficient, and environmentally sound transportation system by improving skills and knowledge of local transportation providers through training, technical assistance, and technology transfer, thus improving the quality of life for Iowans.

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# SAFETEA-LU highlights: Safety programs for Iowa's local transportation agencies

A sweeping five-year, \$244.1 billion transportation funding bill—Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)—was signed into law in August 2005. Over the next five years, roughly \$2.2 billion will go to projects and programs specifically for Iowa.

Much of the new legislation focuses on improving safety programs, with special attention to the hazards of low-volume rural roads. The four programs listed below reflect the most significant developments in safety funding for Iowa's local transportation agencies.

## Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)

One of the broadest changes under SAFETEA-LU is to replace the Surface Transportation Program's set-aside for safety with a new core federal-aid funding program, the HSIP. HSIP programming will focus on reducing fatal and major injury crashes, with special emphasis on lane-departure crashes. The new program nearly triples Iowa's overall safety budget, providing the state an annual average of \$13 million per year plus another \$1.2 million specifically set aside for high-risk rural roads (more on this in the following section).

On top of the set-aside for high-risk rural roads, local safety projects will be affected by the new program in a few ways. Perhaps most significantly, Iowa's Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan (CHSP), which includes local roads as one of its eight main target areas, will guide the new safety programs. To develop this data-driven plan, the Iowa DOT has conducted a statewide systems crash analysis to identify critical safety projects, including both state and local improvements. Local roads can also be considered for federal funding in Iowa's annual report to the U.S. secretary of transportation, which must describe at least five percent of Iowa's public road locations exhibiting the most severe safety needs.

Additionally, local agencies will continue to be included in the project planning and implementation process. While Iowa has had a good record of state-local collaboration in implementing projects, the HSIP now mandates interagency collaboration. Local agencies should expect to work more closely with the Iowa DOT while implementing the new federal safety programs.

## High-risk rural roads set-aside

A specific set-aside for high-risk rural roads has been created to help local agencies compete for federal safety dollars. While any amount of the HSIP funds can be spent on rural roads, the \$1.2 million annual set-aside specifically targets safety problems on rural roads with disproportionate crash, fatality, and incapacitating injury rates. According to Rod Halverson, design technician at the Iowa DOT, all of Iowa's 99 counties are likely to have local roads eligible for this funding.

The Iowa DOT plans to implement the set-aside in two phases. Phase 1 will put the fiscal year 2006–2007 funding into warning signs shown to have safety benefits, especially those that reduce run-off-road crashes. About \$23,000 per county will be available to pay for signs, posts, and associated hardware. Counties must provide the labor.

Requests for Phase 1 funding will be accepted as soon as the program details are finalized.

Phase 2 will invest the remaining funding, plus any leftover Phase 1 funding, in rural highway construction projects that improve safety. Until the available funds are spent, funding will be awarded on a competitive basis. Applications will be scored according to the estimated cost/benefit ratio, crash density, and crash rate.

Requests for Phase 2 applications are expected to be sent out in November 2006.



### Safe Routes to Schools program (SRTS)

The new SRTS program, which gives Iowa an average of \$1.2 million per year, is designed to enable and encourage children to walk and bicycle to school. Eligible infrastructure projects include, among others, sidewalk improvements, traffic calming and speed reduction, street crossing improvements, and traffic diversions near schools. All projects must be within two miles of schools. States must use between 10 and 30 percent of their funding for non-infrastructure projects, such as public awareness campaigns, traffic education and enforcement near schools, and pedestrian and bicycle safety sessions.

Iowa distributes its SRTS funding via competitive grants. Local officials should identify community needs and partnerships, form SRTS teams, and define specific projects before applying online, [www.dot.state.ia.us/saferoutes/](http://www.dot.state.ia.us/saferoutes/). The deadline is October 1.

### Work zone safety

Iowa's program of work zone safety training, provided through LTAP and the Iowa DOT, will remain relatively unchanged. However, local agencies may expect a couple new regulations to ensure safer work zones.

(1) A new regulation, in the rulemaking process at the moment, will require workers on federal-aid highway projects to wear high-visibility safety apparel. This could apply to anyone in the right-of-way—construction crews, surveyors, law enforcement, etc.

(2) Another set of regulations, written into SAFETEA-LU but not yet acted upon, will improve the existing temporary traffic control measures used on all federal-aid highway projects. Measures being examined include making certain temporary traffic control devices separate pay items when provided by the contractor, requiring concrete barriers between workers and motorized traffic in certain situations, and increasing the use of uniformed law enforcement officers in work zones.

Anyone familiar with the 2003 *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD)

will recognize these regulations; SAFETEA-LU is making some of the manual's guidelines into policies. However, these policies will not be enacted until fall 2006, at the earliest. Check the Federal Register ([http://wzsafety.tamu.edu/legal/laws\\_federal.stm](http://wzsafety.tamu.edu/legal/laws_federal.stm); [www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/)) for updates to these work zone safety regulations.

### For more information

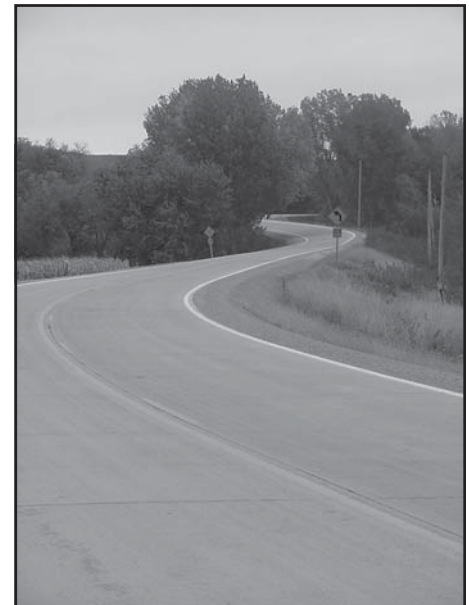
Regarding the Highway Safety Improvement Program, contact Tom Welch, Iowa DOT Office of Traffic and Safety, 515-239-1267, [tom.welch@dot.iowa.gov](mailto:tom.welch@dot.iowa.gov).

Regarding high-risk rural roads, contact Rod Halverson, Iowa DOT Office of Local Systems, 515-239-1147, [rodney.halverson@dot.iowa.gov](mailto:rodney.halverson@dot.iowa.gov).

Regarding the Safe Routes to Schools program, contact Kathy Ridnour, Iowa SRTS coordinator, 515-239-1713, [kathy.ridnour@dot.iowa.gov](mailto:kathy.ridnour@dot.iowa.gov).

Regarding work zone safety, contact Jerry Roche, FHWA Iowa Division, 515-233-7323, [jerry.roche@fhwa.dot.gov](mailto:jerry.roche@fhwa.dot.gov). ■

**Editor's note:** This is the first installment of a series describing the various impacts of SAFETEA-LU on Iowa's local transportation agencies. This first article describes developments in safety programs under the new legislation.



A \$1.2 million annual set-aside specifically targets safety problems on rural roads with disproportionate crash, fatality, and incapacitating injury rates. Photo courtesy of Charlie Purcell, Office of Local Systems, Iowa DOT.

## Work zone safety workshops for 2007

Brochures will be mailed in December 2006. See CTRE's calendar of events online, [www.ctre.iastate.edu/calendar](http://www.ctre.iastate.edu/calendar).

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| Feb. 5   | Ames, Scheman Building, ISU                          |
| Feb. 6   | Ames, Scheman Building, ISU                          |
| Feb. 13  | Calmar, Northeast Iowa Community College             |
| Feb. 14  | Iowa City, Quality Inn & Suites                      |
| Feb. 15  | Iowa City, Quality Inn & Suites                      |
| Feb. 16  | Ottumwa, Indian Hills Community College              |
| March 7  | Mason City, North Iowa Area Community College        |
| March 8  | Mason City, North Iowa Area Community College        |
| March 9  | Creston, Southwestern Community College              |
| March 27 | Council Bluffs, Iowa Western Community College       |
| March 28 | Sioux City, Western Iowa Technical Community College |
| March 29 | Storm Lake, Buena Vista University                   |
| March 30 | Ames, Scheman Building, ISU                          |