



Technology Exchange

VOLUME 34, ISSUE 1
SPRING 2022



LTAP Staff (l to r): Rudynah Capone, Mia Bosco, Steve Strength, Leo Mareta, Courtney Dupre

LTAP Director Receives NLTAPA Achievement Award

The Louisiana LTAP center and the Louisiana Transportation Research Center proudly share this wonderful news with you all! Our very own LTAP Director Steven Strength received this year's NLTAPA Achievement Award. This award is presented to an individual (or individuals) in recognition of their dedication, leadership, and effectiveness in promoting the goals and purposes of the National Local and Tribal Technical Assistance Program through service to the Association (NLTAPA). Read more about the selection process: <https://nltapa.org/about/awards/>

Steve is the ultimate advocate for local agencies—a distinguished leader in the field of engineering, public works, traffic/work zone safety, and workforce development and *cont. on pg. 2*

Heavy Equipment Safety & Maintenance for Local Agencies

By Chris Melson

For the first time in several years, LTAP is offering a round of classes of our Roads Scholar #6: Heavy Equipment Safety & Maintenance for Local Agencies course. The course has been completely revised and includes a new instructor, Dwight Hutchinson. Dwight began his career as a fleet mechanic and specialized in heavy duty equipment maintenance, OSHA inspections on aerial lift equipment, and environmental health and safety training. After a 37+ year career with Bell South and AT&T, Dwight worked as supervisor of the DOTD's Heavy Equipment Shop from 2016 until his retirement in 2021.

The course is designed to provide safety and maintenance best practices for those who work on and around heavy construction equipment. It will discuss organizational responsibilities for implementing a safety and maintenance program, how to conduct pre-trip inspections, benefits of job site planning, how to identify job site hazards, and all aspects of heavy equipment maintenance (from pre-start and shutdown inspection, to operator checks, to periodic maintenance).

LTAP just finished a successful pilot of the course—involving participants from the City of Baton Rouge, St. James Parish, Tangipahoa Parish, West Baton Rouge Parish, and DOTD. Their feedback has been reflected in the course to ensure content is applicable to our locals. If your agency is interested in well-done, cost-effective heavy equipment safety and maintenance training, look no further.



LTAP just finished a successful pilot of the course—involving participants from DOTD and four local agencies. **See page 7 for schedule of classes.**

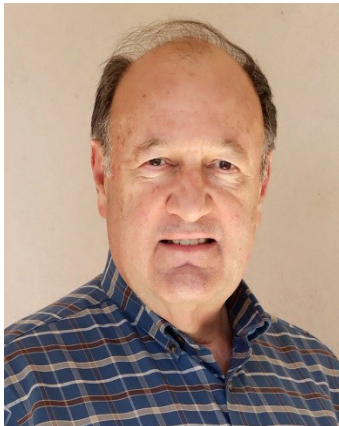
IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 Director's Corner
- 3 Funding Opportunities for Locals
- 4 Tips and Tricks for Online Meetings
- 5 Leadership Spotlight
- 6 Reducing Rural Roadway Departures Workshops
- 7 LTAP Training News

Visit www.louisianaltap.org for our current classes, training requests, free resources, and much more...

Spring Is Here and the Masks Are Off!

By Steven Strength



Things are looking brighter as we continue to improve with our reopening from the COVID pandemic. The past two years have been challenging for our local agencies and their families, but you have continued to serve our state and its local agencies with dedication. Here at the LTAP center in LTRC, we have many exciting initiatives underway

to help you provide safer and better roads and infrastructure for the people of Louisiana. We have been focusing on classes and conferences with more to come in the next few months, and you can read more about our activities elsewhere in this edition.

One of the best aspects of working with LTAP and its partner organizations is taking advantage of opportunities to get to know people from around the country and benefitting from their expertise. Our LPESA conference in Sulphur, April 20 and 21, will feature a visit from NACE Executive Director Kevan Stone, who will share some of his knowledge on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and what it means for local agencies. Kevan has been advocating for local agencies for years with both NACE and NACo and has many valuable insights on the workings of Congress and the federal government. In addition, our NACE Regional Director Jacob Thorius, county Engineer from Washington County, Iowa, will join us and participate in a panel discussion on “How Local Agencies Can Address Roadway Fatalities.”

In May, LTAP will be joined by Dick Albin of the FHWA Resource Center in presenting our Roadway Departure Workshop at several of our training locations. Dick joined us in presenting our virtual Roadway Departure series back in October 2020, and we look forward to hearing the latest on safety analysis and countermeasures as we further engage our local agencies in road safety. We will also be involving our regional safety coalition coordinators in the classes. They are key participants in helping our locals to reduce fatalities and serious injuries on locally owned roads, and I highly recommend you take the time to get to know the coordinator in your region.

Speaking of FHWA, we are continuing to receive more information on new infrastructure funding from our Louisiana

Division office as those details are promulgated. Betsey Tramonte and John Broemmelsiek have participated in DOTD's Safety Road Shows this spring to talk about existing and new funding opportunities, and Mary Stringfellow will join us in Sulphur to provide her perspective. LTAP is joining in these efforts by posting information on infrastructure grant programs on our website and in our periodic Local Connections email blasts as the particulars become available. As always, please don't hesitate to contact us by phone or email if you have any questions or just want to share your ideas. Stay safe out there, and we'll see you on the road!

NLTAPA Achievement Award

Cont. from page 1

training. He is a huge advocate of Louisiana's road safety initiative called the Destination Zero Deaths where he serves as a statewide co-chair of the Strategic Highway Safety Plan's (SHSP) Infrastructure & Operations Emphasis Area.

Steve's history with LTAP and TTAP is shorter than some LTAPers as he came to LTAP after a long and esteemed career with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development. However, he wasted little time in embracing the spirit of LTAP in Louisiana and being amazed at the professionalism and energy of the NLTAPA/TTAP. He sought out roles that he could play in NLTAPA becoming the regional representative to Region 6, a member of the Executive Committee and getting involved with the NLTAPA Training Resources Work Group.

As Louisiana LTAP center's director, Steve oversees training, technical assistance, and outreach activities that benefit the local public agencies in Louisiana. Prior to joining LTAP as the program manager in 2013, he spent 31 years with Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) District 02 in New Orleans, including 22 years as district traffic operations engineer.

Steve currently serves as coordinator of the NLTAPA Instructor Users Group, has served as NLTAPA's co-chair of the Training Resources Work Group, and is currently co-liaison to the National Association of County Engineers (NACE). He also serves as secretary of the Louisiana Parish Engineers and Supervisors Association (LPESA).

Read more about Steve here: <https://adobe.ly/3qa2HSd>

Louisiana's Federal Lands Access Program

Application opens on April 1

An estimated total of \$4.3 million will be available for Louisiana agencies to implement projects such as restoration and construction of roads, bridges, and multiuse trails through the Eastern Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) for FFY 2023-2026.

The application period runs from April 1 until July 1, 2022.

FLAP bridge projects will be processed through DOTD. All other projects, including roads, will be processed through FHWA's Eastern Federal Lands Division or the appropriate Federal Land Management Agencies (FLMA) unit.

Who Can Apply?

Eligible applicants include state, county, tribal, or city government agencies that own or have maintenance responsibility of the transportation facility or supply a letter from the facility owner/maintainer indicating the application is being submitted on their behalf.

Eligible Projects

Projects considered for funding include capital improvements such as rehabilitation, restoration, and construction of roads, bridges, and multiuse trails. Enhancements like trailheads, pedestrian and bicycle provisions, trail signing, and kiosks are also considered. Other types of eligible projects are surface preservation, transit, planning, and research projects. Proposed projects or studies must be associated with a public highway, road, bridge, trail, or a transit system.

Now that the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law or BIL) has been passed, the match requirement for FLAP funding has been removed. A revised application is posted here: <https://highways.dot.gov/federal-lands/programs-access/la>



Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equipment (RAISE) Discretionary Grants

Application closes on April 14

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) appropriated \$1.5 billion to be awarded by the U.S. Department of Transportation for National Infrastructure Investment grants under the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Transportation Discretionary Grants program.

RAISE discretionary grants, which were originally created under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act as TIGER grants, can be used for a wide variety of projects. Recent examples of funded projects include dedicated bus lanes in Baltimore, highway and bridge repair in New Mexico, dock replacements in Alaska, and a rail-to-trail project in Arkansas. Overall, USDOT has awarded \$9.9 billion to more than 700 projects.

Read more on: <https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants>



Tips and Tricks for Online Meetings

By Steven Strength

One of the things we here at LTAP learned from the COVID lockdowns was how to communicate better online. Some of the remote meeting technologies will still remain with us, out of convenience or necessity. LTAP has become proficient in some of these techniques and found them to be real time-savers! Here are a few tips and tricks we'd like to share with you to make your online training and meetings go more smoothly:



General Tips

- Be aware of and use the security features of your online meeting platform (Zoom, Teams, etc.). You will need to decide in advance if your meeting invite will allow for general entry or require you to let people in with individual entry passwords or a waiting room. Password entry or a waiting room is recommended to prevent intrusions, but will require that you let participants in again if they get disconnected during the meeting.
- Joining a meeting by cell phone is handy, but driving while talking is illegal, and not a good idea. You can monitor the conversation hands-free while in the vehicle (keep that thing muted!), but pull over to the side of the road to show your face or participate. Cognitive distractions are as deadly as fumbling around with your phone, so stay safe!

Audio

- Don't rely on your built-in computer microphone. Invest in a headset with a microphone that you can control, and one that will help filter out ambient noise, barking dogs, babies crying, jets flying over, etc. The headset will make it easier for you and everyone else to hear as well. Encourage all participants to use headsets.
- Don't rely on voice-activated microphones either, whether on your computer or on a phone. Audio from these can be choppy and very distracting.
- Be aware that, unlike your video screen, your computer only has one audio source and will attempt to mix or overrule your meeting with any other sounds (e.g., such as update notifications, email alerts, music, etc.).
- If calling in as a group, make sure every participant in the room can hear and be heard. Not all conference rooms are set up adequately for group calls. Even though we're happy to be back together, sometimes it's better to split up the group and just log in individually.
- Speak up! Even though you have your microphone close by, clear and concise diction is important. Try not to speak too rapidly. Assume your fellow participants are in another parish, not right next to you, because they probably are!

Video

- Be aware of lighting. Backlighting such as from windows or lamps can overrule the subject. Keep your face illuminated. Many cameras have onboard light rings that can be adjusted for brightness and will reduce shadow effects. Many also come with onboard microphones, but avoid using them. (See first bullet in the Audio section above.)
- Be aware of your background. Try to pick a background with a blank wall or curtain to minimize distractions. No one wants to see your unmade bed or the cat's litter box on a video call!
- Wear solid colors. You may love that striped shirt or paisley sweater, but it can wreak havoc with your video compression software and make you look like an alien.
- Be reasonable with virtual backgrounds. They can also play tricks with your video and make you look out of this world—and not in a good way!
- Keep the camera level with your eyes. Mount it to your laptop or monitor in a way that gives you a natural posture. Looking down or up at your fellow participants can be distracting. I don't know how many ceiling fans I've seen during the pandemic!

cont. on pg. 6

Leadership Spotlight: Erich Ponti, Executive Director of LAPA

By Rudynah Entera Capone

In this edition, LTAP puts a spotlight on Erich Ponti, the executive director of the Louisiana Asphalt Pavement Association (LAPA), a position he has held since 2015. He is also the president of the Louisiana Coalition to Fix Our Roads (LCFOR) and an associate member representative of the Louisiana Parish Engineers and Supervisors Association (LPESA).

Erich started Accent Construction Services, Inc., a commercial and residential construction firm that successfully operated for over 21 years. He then took his business experience to the state legislature that led to him being elected as a representative from District 69 in East Baton Rouge Parish for two terms, serving from 2008–2015. He was chairman of the Labor and Industrial Relations Committee and chairman of the Committee on Commerce.

LTAP connected with Erich, and he discussed the ability to communicate, build relationships, and being visionary as the main ingredients of effective leadership.

What is your definition of leadership?

Leadership is motivating an individual or a group of individuals to work toward achieving a common goal.

Tell us some highlights of your professional career and how those roles helped you develop your leadership skills.

Over the years, I have enjoyed a very diverse career path—from being a senior instrument designer to being a residential/commercial contractor and developer to becoming a state legislator and currently an executive director. The highlight that really comes to mind is the time I spent serving the citizens of Louisiana in our legislature. Being a member of the House—a committee chairman at that—has provided me some incredible life lessons and insight to being an effective leader: you must have patience and understanding of others. One must value the gift of truly understanding and of the importance in listening to understand.

If you were to pick three competencies that a leader should have in order to successfully lead a team, what would they be?

This is a difficult question to answer because there are many traits that come to mind when I think of a leader. But here we go! First, you must have the ability to communicate.

Everyone communicates differently; therefore, a leader must learn how team members communicate with them. Many often prefer verbal while others perform better in written form. Learning each style is extremely important along with the act of listening. Team members must feel they are being heard. Second, one must build relationships. People need to connect with each other, share trust, and have relationships. It is imperative to recognize the value of people, get to know them for who they are, understand their attributes, and build a connection. Lastly, a leader must be a visionary. Sometimes, a leader has to think outside of and/or put themselves outside of the norm. In order to really inspire others to achieve results, you must be determined, creative, and passionate in order to serve and motivate others. Developing your team members is important to achieving success as a team.

What is your leadership style?

I would relate my style to that of a coach. I believe in being supportive while offering direction and guidance in order for team members to learn and grow. Being a self-aware person, I do recognize and realize that there are certain times when a more direct style of leadership is required. A leader must have to the ability to utilize a variety of leadership styles, at the right time, to encourage and motivate the team to obtain their goals.

In any of your past and present leadership roles, what has been the most challenging task you've had to overcome?

Early in my career, I would say my “young” age was a challenging issue for older team members. I had to earn their trust and respect. Additionally, I felt it was important to show strength and humility while demonstrating willingness to learn and the ability to make decisions.

Who is your model leader?

I would say President Ronald Reagan. He never sought to divide. He was courageous and brave. He championed timeless principles. He united and inspired.



LTAP Encourages Local Agencies to Attend Workshops Designed to Help Louisiana Reduce Rural Roadway Departures

LTAP, in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), will be holding a series of Reducing Rural Roadway Departures workshops starting on May 10, 2022, in Baton Rouge. **See page 7 for other dates and locations.**

The workshop will discuss how local agencies can help reduce rural roadway departure crashes in Louisiana based on these four pillars: (1) all public roads, (2) proven countermeasures, (3) a systemic approach, and (4) safety action plans.

“Roadway departures are the number one category of fatal and serious injury crashes in Louisiana,” says LTAP Director Steve Strength, who serves as co-chair of the SHSP’s Infrastructure and Operations Emphasis Area. “Our local agencies can address these crashes with some very basic, cost effective actions,” he adds.

Reducing rural roadway departures is not only among the innovations under FHWA’s Every Day Counts (EDC) initiative, it is also a road safety priority for Louisiana’s key highway safety agencies and partner stakeholders involved in the implementation of the state’s Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP). The plan’s overall goal is to reach Destination Zero Deaths (DZD), and it is instrumental for multiple disciplines to join forces in order to reach this goal. This means active collaboration between engineers, planners, educators, health practitioners, law enforcement officers, elected officials, non-profit leaders, and safety advocates—all happening at the state, parish, and city levels.

LTAP works closely with the SHSP regional safety coalitions across the state as well as with the DOTD District offices, and MPO partners to ensure local stakeholder involvement among municipalities and parishes. Local road agencies are encouraged to consider developing a Local Road Safety Plan to be used as a tool for reducing roadway fatalities, injuries, and crashes.

More information about the workshop will be posted www.louisianaltap.org/training.html

For more information on FoRRRwd, visit www.fhwa.dot.gov/innovation/everydaycounts/edc_5/roadway_departures.cfm



Online Meetings

Cont. from page 4

- Video from a cell phone or tablet is distracting to all participants. Keep the camera off to listen and when you have to turn it on to speak, hold it still!
- A professional appearance is important. Zoom calls by the pool were fun while the pandemic lasted, but really!?

And remember, nobody’s perfect! Be kind when reminding folks that they are on mute! Any great ideas or lessons learned from your online experiences? Share them with us! **NEXT TIME—Tips for moderators and presenters**

LTAP Classes

Roads Scholar #6: Heavy Equipment Safety and Maintenance for Local Agencies

March 29 to April 28, 2022

This course is designed to provide safety and maintenance best practices for those who work on and around heavy construction equipment.

March 29–New Orleans
March 30–Hammond
April 6–Benton
April 7–West Monroe
April 12–Baton Rouge
April 26–Lake Charles
April 27–Lafayette
April 28–Alexandria



Reducing Rural Roadway Departures Workshops

May 10 to June 23, 2022

In partnership with FHWA Louisiana Division and Louisiana's Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) regional coalitions, LTAP will hold a series of Reducing Rural Roadway Departures workshops designed to provide local agencies and highway safety stakeholders guidance on how to reduce the potential for serious injury and fatal roadway departure crashes on all public roads.

May 10–Baton Rouge (Capital Region)
May 12–New Orleans (NOLA Region)
May 17–Lafayette (Acadian Region)
May 18–Lake Charles (Southwest Region)
May 25–Alexandria (Central Region)
May 26–Thibodaux (South Central Region)
June 7–Madisonville (North Shore Region)
June 22–West Monroe (Northeast Region)
June 23–Bossier City (Northwest Region)

To register for any of our LTAP classes, log in to the LTRC registration system

<https://registration.ltrc.lsu.edu/login>

Conferences and PDH Opportunities

April 20-21, 2022: LPESA Spring Conference West-Cal Arena and Events Center, Sulphur

If you are a local parish or city engineer, this conference is for you! Network and keep abreast with best practices in engineering at the Louisiana Parish Engineers and Supervisors Association's (LPESA) Spring Conference in Sulphur. Topics include: (1) Bipartisan Infrastructure Law; (2) Panel on How Locals Address Roadway Fatalities; (3) Associate Member Super Showcase on Pavement Preservation Solutions; (4) Connect LA Broadband Initiative; (5) USACE Regulatory Permitting and Application; (6) Updates from NACE and PJAL and more. Register via www.louisianaltap.org/lpesa-conferences.html.



April 25-27, 2022: NACE 2022 National Association of County Engineers (NACE) Annual Conference, Buffalo, New York

Save the date for this annual gathering of county engineers, road supervisors, public works directors, highway commissioners, and road superintendents from all over the US. Read more on www.countyengineers.org.





LOUISIANA LOCAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

4099 Gourrier Avenue
Baton Rouge, LA 70808

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Pre-Sort Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 55
Baton Rouge, LA

www.louisianaltap.org

Need Technical Help? Contact LTAP

(225) 767-9717
(225) 767-9156 (fax)
www.louisianaltap.org

Steven C. Strength, PE, PTOE
Director

Chris Melson, MSE, PE
LTAP Program Manager

Courtney Dupre, MA
LTAP Business Manager

Leonard P. Marretta, MURP
LRSP and LPA Program Manager

Rudynah "Dynah" Capone, MPA
LTAP Innovation and
Technology Transfer Manager

Mia Bosco, MA
LTAP Training Program Coordinator

Publication Statement

Technology Exchange is published quarterly by the Louisiana Transportation Research Center. It is the newsletter of the Louisiana Local Technical Assistance Program. Any findings, conclusions, or recommendations presented in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of LSU, DOTD, or FHWA.

LTRC Publications Staff

Jenny Speights, Public Information Director
Jenny Gilbert, Editor
Emily Wolfe, Multi-Media Specialist
Chris Melton, Photographer

The purpose of the Local Technical Assistance Program is to provide technical materials, information, and training to help local government agencies in Louisiana maintain and improve their roads and bridges in a cost-effective manner. To accomplish this purpose, we publish a quarterly newsletter; conduct seminars, workshops, and mini-workshops covering various aspects of road and transportation issues; provide a lending library service of audio/visual programs; provide technical assistance through phone and mail-in requests relating to transportation technology; and undertake special projects of interest to municipalities in Louisiana.