



# Technology Exchange

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## Preparing for Cold Weather the Louisiana Way

*By Haley Beason Ortiz*

It is that time of year again, when the air feels muggy yet somehow cool and the familiar smell of gumbo starts to drift from kitchens across the state. Louisiana winter is on its way, bringing those unpredictable days when it can be 75 degrees in the afternoon and near freezing by nightfall. The humidity may still cling to the air, but the need for a morning jacket is a sure sign of the season. However, last winter, Louisiana experienced something far beyond our usual mild chill. Record-breaking cold temperatures and a rare snowfall blanketed much of the state, with some areas seeing as much as ten inches of snow and nearly everyone enduring several days of below-freezing weather. We are used to a little frost now and then, but last year reminded us that weather surprises can still happen in the Bayou State.

For many, it was a once-in-a-lifetime event that was beautiful, fun, and memorable. However, it also revealed how unprepared many of our homes, water systems, roads, and even pets are for extended cold weather. While this type of event does not happen often, it can have a significant impact on our communities. Taking small steps now can make a big difference later, both at work and at home.

### Pre-Storm Activities for Public Works Agencies

Public works teams across the state worked quickly and effectively during last year's freeze. One agency shared that it proved helpful to check stockpiles of salt and brine; gather motor graders, wheel loaders, and backhoes from all divisions; and request quotes from construction contractors to ensure that additional equipment was available if needed. Activating the Emergency Response Contract early also helped secure necessary support before the storm arrived.

These actions and experiences highlight several best practices for public works departments to consider in future cold weather events. Having four-wheel-drive trucks available can greatly improve mobility in icy conditions. Keeping a stock of paper maps is also beneficial in case GPS signals are lost. Water system issues are another common

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# Inside Traffic Records Forum: How Louisiana Is Revolutionizing Crash Reporting By Integrating GIS, LEAP, and Data Agents

By Rudynah Entera Capone, MPA

At the 2025 Traffic Records Forum hosted by the Association of Transportation Safety

Information Professionals (ATSIP) in July 2025, highway safety professionals, data analysts, law enforcement officials, and safety engineers from across the country gathered in Boston to explore cutting-edge strategies for improving roadway safety.

The Louisiana delegation, represented by the Center for Analytics and Research in Transportation Safety (CARTS) staff and the Traffic Records Coordinating Council (TRCC) members, showed how the state is setting a new standard in traffic safety analysis by upgrading its crash-reporting infrastructure with Geographic Information Systems (GIS), leveraging the Law Enforcement Analysis Portal (LEAP), and deploying intelligent data agents.

These advancements are not only modernizing how crash data is captured and analyzed, they are also revolutionary means of empowering parishes and municipalities with sharper, faster insights to drive localized safety improvements.

## Integrating GIS Roadway Data in Crash Reporting

Louisiana is transforming crash reporting by integrating GIS roadway data, allowing officers to precisely locate incidents using real-time maps of the transportation network. This improves accuracy, speeds up reporting, and links crash details to physical features like intersections and signage for more actionable insights.

## LEAP: Louisiana's Data-Driven Crash Analysis Powerhouse

The Law Enforcement Analysis Portal (LEAP) is a centralized dashboard that helps agencies visualize crash trends, assess contributing factors, and prioritize safety interventions. LEAP uses spatial and temporal data to spot recurring problem areas. Law enforcement can filter

crashes by severity, location, time, and more. Agencies can evaluate the impact of patrol strategies and safety campaigns.

## Introducing Data Agents: Smarter, Automated Insights

Smarter, Automated Insights Data agents act as intelligent software assistants that gather, process, and flag relevant crash data across systems. Think of them as behind-the-scenes analysts working 24/7. The automation of analysis reduces the manual workload for departments with limited staff. With real-time alerts, agencies are notified about emerging crash hotspots or anomalies. The data are ready for integration, designed to sync with CAD/RMS systems and GIS platforms.



## What Does This Mean for Parishes and Municipalities?

For parishes and municipalities, these upgrades lead to smarter resource allocation, more targeted safety planning, improved transparency, and stronger applications for safety grants. Ultimately, Louisiana's data-driven approach means safer roads, better-informed communities, and more responsive local governments. By integrating GIS, deploying LEAP, and activating data agents, Louisiana is not just investing in tech—it is investing in lives saved and communities protected. These tools are not just smart; they are strategic, scalable, and deeply localized, ultimately helping Louisiana reach Destination Zero Deaths.

**If you were a safety committee leader or a regional coalition coordinator armed with LEAP crash data, GIS mapping tools, and data agents, here is an example campaign you could potentially launch in your community:**

**Campaign Name:** Safe Streets, Strong Communities

**Goal:** Reduce crash rates by 20% in identified hotspots within one year using precision-based interventions.

**Data-Driven Strategy:** Identify hotspots by using LEAP and GIS to pinpoint high-crash zones—especially near schools, busy intersections, and nightlife districts.

**Agent Alerts:** Enable data agents to send weekly reports to local law enforcement about new risk areas or sudden spikes in crash data.

**Public Engagement:** Use “Map It, Fix It” Community Days to invite residents to view heat maps of local crash data and vote on priority areas for safety upgrades.

**Crash Fact Fridays:** Post weekly social media posts featuring local stats, prevention tips, and shout-outs to areas showing improvement.

**Enforcement & Engineering:**

- Increase visibility of law enforcement patrols in targeted zones.
- Partner with DOTD to install reflective signage, rumble strips, and adaptive signals based on GIS-linked crash trends.

**Funding:** Use improved crash data quality to strengthen applications for federal safety grants like the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP).

**Potential Outcomes:**

- Empowered citizens with transparency.
- Increased cross-agency collaboration.
- Accomplished measurable safety wins that make the community feel seen and safer.

## LOCAL ROAD SAFETY

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## Best Complete Streets Policies 2025

In the Best Complete Streets Policies Report 2025, Smart Growth America reviewed and scored 43 Complete Streets policies passed in 2023 and 2024. Complete Streets policies can be adopted in places of all sizes and can be tailored to meet the transportation and mobility goals of each community. As the top policies and case studies in this report demonstrate, it is possible to take action, whether you are a leading state, a county, a small city under 10,000 residents, or a large urban metropolis.

The policies and trends in this report suggest that some places are on the path to safer transportation for all users, providing numerous benefits such as giving people more options about how to get around and more opportunities for physical activity. However, without Complete Streets policies that meet the scoring criteria, communities across the country will experience unsafe road conditions, risking injury or death for drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, and other road users.

**The top-scoring Complete Streets policies adopted in 2023 and 2024 are:**

- 1. San Antonio, TX (96/100)**
- 2. Nashville, TN (89/100)**
- 3. Clyde, OH (85/100)**
- 4. Bluffton, OH (81/100)**
- 5. Boca Raton, FL (80/100)**
- 6. East Baton Rouge Parish, LA (78/100)**
- 7. Appleton, WI (74/100)**
- 8. Rockford Metropolitan Planning Organization, IL (72/100)**
- 9. Asbury Park, NJ (70/100)**
- 10. Red Bank, NJ (69/100)**

## Leadership Spotlight: Jay Watson *By Haley Beason Ortiz*



In this edition of Leadership Spotlight, LTAP is honored to feature Jay Watson, Director of Public Works for St. Tammany Parish. Born and raised in Slidell, Jay has dedicated his career to serving the community he has always called home. After earning his B.S. in Civil Engineering

from Louisiana State University and becoming a registered Professional Engineer in Louisiana, he began his career at a consulting firm in Baton Rouge.

In 2011, Jay joined St. Tammany Parish Government, where he has held multiple roles across the organization. Since 2021, he has served as the Director of Public Works, overseeing a team of approximately 230 employees responsible for maintaining roads, bridges, and drainage in unincorporated St. Tammany Parish. His leadership reflects a strong commitment to teamwork, understanding, and doing the job right the first time.

### ***What is your definition of leadership?***

To me, being a good leader means that you lead by example and provide team members with the tools and guidance needed to get the job done.

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

I think one of the most challenging tasks in a leadership role is communication. People have different points of view, and understanding someone else's perspective can be challenging. A simple quote that I recently read at my child's school states to "first understand, then be understood."

### ***Who do you see as your model leader?***

I don't know that I have a model leader, but one quote from legendary coach John Wooden that I often find relevant is "If you don't have time to do it right, when will you have the time to do it over?"

### ***What advice would you give to young professionals entering public service or engineering?***

Don't be afraid to ask questions or make mistakes. Nobody is expected to know everything, and by isolating yourself from your team, you will only make the problem more difficult. And remember that you can't make everyone happy. Do the right thing, and stand by your decisions.

### LEADERSHIP

## Priorities with Purpose: Time Management for Transportation Professionals

By Genevieve Amick



If you have ever ended a workday wondering where all your time went, you are not alone. Between juggling priorities, responding to emergencies, and trying to keep projects moving, time can feel like the one thing we never have enough of. Once your time is spent, it cannot be regained, making it our most precious resource. That's why LTAP is inviting everyone to attend the Essential Skills – Time Management, a class designed to help transportation professionals at every level, from field crews to office staff, take back control of their schedules and their sanity. Two classes will be offered in July 2026.

With this instructor, the three-and-a-half-hour session is not about cramming more into your day. It is about learning to focus on what truly matters in all aspects of your life. LTAP will walk participants through practical strategies to help organize workloads, make

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## ROADS SCHOLAR

# Local agencies engage strongly in LTAP's Road Safety 365 class

Louisiana LTAP's latest Roads Scholar #11 class, "Road Safety 365," received positive reviews across the state. After four sessions held in Mandeville, Minden, Lafayette, and Baton Rouge, the course received an impressive average rating of 4.79 out of 5—a clear sign that the message of safer roads is resonating with local agencies.

In total, 96 participants took part in the training, with 84 representing local public agencies such as parish governments, municipalities, and public works departments. The strong turnout highlights the ongoing demand for practical, field-focused learning that helps local road crews make their communities safer.

The Road Safety Workshop, led by Instructor Nick Verret, Jr., helps local practitioners understand how everyday construction, maintenance, and design decisions can affect roadway safety. Verret's approachable teaching style and wealth of real-world experience were frequently mentioned in evaluations, with participants praising how he connected complex safety concepts to familiar, day-to-day roadwork challenges.

"Our road safety training is hitting the mark," said LTAP Director Rudynah Capone. "It's inspiring to see so much enthusiasm for hands-on learning that helps local crews work smarter and safer every day."

The training encourages participants to think differently about the roads they build, maintain, and drive on. Throughout the course, attendees explored the importance of roadway safety, separate myths from reality, and learn how to "read the road" to spot potential hazards before they become serious problems. They also discussed practical, low-cost solutions,

better signage, drainage improvements, and safer work zone setups that can make a real difference in preventing crashes.

Each session blends discussion, relatable examples, and actionable takeaways. Participants leave with tools to plan and fund safety improvements and promote a stronger safety culture within their agencies. The ultimate goal is to help each attendee identify at least one improvement they can bring back and implement in their community.

When asked about future training topics, participants were unanimous in wanting more of LTAP's hands-on, practical sessions. Traffic Control and Work Zone Safety topped the list of requests, followed closely by MUTCD and Signage Standards. Many also expressed interest in Heavy Equipment Operation and Safety, along with Pavement and Drainage Maintenance. A few participants from larger or more urbanized areas emphasized the need for Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety and Accessibility training as well.

Participants also noted how engaging and practical the instruction was, crediting Verret for bringing safety concepts to life through examples that applied directly to their work. Many said the class helped them see safety from a new perspective and gave them practical steps they could take back to their crews.

Based on the feedback, LTAP plans to expand its lineup of Work Zone Safety, MUTCD, and equipment operation courses in the coming year. The center remains committed to providing practical, high-value training that supports local agencies in their shared goal of achieving Destination Zero Deaths on Louisiana's roads.

better decisions, and reduce daily stress. This class will explore the Eisenhower Matrix, a simple but powerful tool that helps distinguish between what's urgent and what's genuinely important. It will also teach participants how to set SMARTER goals and build habits that support long-term success rather than getting stuck in the short-term busyness cycle.

What makes this class different is its hands-on approach. The exercises help learners see where one's time actually goes. It is a chance to pause, reflect, and make intentional choices about spending the day, both at work and at home. During the class, participants are also expected to take a brief assessment, helping them walk away with strategies that fit their tendencies.

Whether managing a maintenance crew, coordinating permits, or handling public requests, these skills will help professionals prioritize effectively and feel more in control of their time. After the first few classes, an article highlighting the key takeaways and what resonated most with participants across Louisiana's transportation workforce will be shared. The hope is that participants not only walk away with useful strategies, but that they will also inspire others in agencies across the state to think differently about how they spend their time.

Because when we make time for what truly matters—safety, service, and one another—everything else tends to fall into place.

#### ***Preparing for cold weather (continued from page 1)***

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challenge during freezes, and advance planning can help reduce the impact of line breaks or frozen pipes. Finally, it is important to be aware that raised pavement markings may need replacement after snow and ice removal efforts.

#### **Helping Families Prepare at Home**

While public works agencies take care of our roads and infrastructure, every household can take simple steps to prepare for unexpected winter weather.

One of the easiest ways to prepare is by sealing air leaks around doors and windows. Using weather-stripping or caulking can prevent cold drafts and help save on heating costs. It is also important to insulate exposed pipes in unheated areas, such as attics and crawl spaces. This prevents heat loss and reduces the risk of pipes bursting during extreme cold. Keeping gutters clean throughout the year is another helpful habit. Clear gutters prevent ice dams from forming, which can cause water to back up and leak into your home. Families should also prepare much like they would for a hurricane by keeping essential items on hand. This includes flashlights and extra batteries, nonperishable food, bottled water, a first aid kit, and a hand-crank or battery-powered radio in case of power outages.

Warmth is another key part of staying safe and comfortable during cold weather. Keep extra blankets, warm socks, gloves, and hats readily available for each family member. Dressing in layers and having these items within easy reach can make a big difference if the power goes out. Being prepared may take only a few minutes of planning, but it can provide hours of comfort and peace of mind when temperatures drop unexpectedly.

Even though extreme cold is uncommon in Louisiana, its impact can linger long after the ice melts. Each winter gives us the chance to learn, prepare, and improve. With a little foresight and community spirit, we can be ready for whatever weather comes our way.



## UPCOMING TRAINING AND EVENTS

### Local Public Agency Core and CE&I Training | To Be Announced

This essential program helps local agencies navigate state and federal transportation funding requirements. Subscribe to our LPA email subscription list to be notified about upcoming classes. [Visit <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/sl/mmsfY1f/LPA>](https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/sl/mmsfY1f/LPA). Construction, Engineering & Inspection training is available online through recorded modules. [Visit <https://www.louisianaltap.org/lpa-training.html>](https://www.louisianaltap.org/lpa-training.html).



**OUR VISION**  
**Transformation for Louisiana**

Sparked by Governor Jeff Landry's executive order, the T4LA initiative—**Transforming Transportation with Transparency and Teamwork**—is currently underway at the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development. LADOTD has been tasked with transforming the organization from within. And that's exactly what we are working to do through T4LA. We are reshaping how we serve the people of our state by enhancing our operations both internally and externally. LADOTD will advance and strengthen transportation for our state with greater transparency and accountability, driving economic development and growth across Louisiana.

**T4LA**

identified based on the revised program and project delivery processes.

**Important Note!** Local Public Agencies (LPAs) and their personnel are granted a temporary waiver on the LPA Qualifications Core Training certification until the required training becomes available again.

### Roads Scholar 6 | January 21–February 25

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

### OSHA 10-Hour Construction (with emphasis on Roadway Construction) | March 18–19, 2026

This is a free two-day course offered by Louisiana LTAP in partnership with the American Road and Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA). Each module provides actionable insights and proven strategies to protect workers, enhance site operations, and minimize incidents. Upon successful completion, participants will receive the OSHA 10-hour Construction Card.

### Roads Scholar 13 | April–May 2026

This course provides essential training for local agency personnel responsible for inspecting and maintaining off-system bridges in Louisiana. Participants will learn about standard bridge inspection requirements, as well as inspection elements unique to Louisiana's program.



### Save the Date

### Louisiana Parish Engineers and Supervisors Association (LPESA) Conference May 13–14 | Mandeville, LA

Engineers and road supervisors can earn 8+ PDHs while learning best practices in engineering maintenance and public works. Don't miss this opportunity for professional development and networking.



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