

**Areas of concern that counties would like the road safety program to address ...**

Total Responses: 115	
Pedestrian fatalities	21%
Crashes at medians	13%
Age of roadway and deterioration	73%
Safety improvements on two lane rural roadways	86%
Funding alternatives including earmarked funds directed at safety improvements	82%
Adequate rights of way on rural roads	65%
Increased traffic on rural roadways revealing safety issues	65%
Obstacles in the clear zones (ie trees, adequate shoulders, need for guard rails)	66%
Coordination with other local, state and federal agencies	58%
Intersection crashes	62%



# Rural Road Safety Needs Assessment Summary Report

## Fact Sheet

In January 2009, NACO conducted a needs assessment of counties with a relatively high number of vehicle fatalities per population with the purpose of gaining an understanding of traffic crashes and fatalities that take place on rural and isolated roads across the country. These counties were identified with federal data from 2005 through 2007. In addition, the results of the assessment will be used as reference information for a rural road safety forum that NACO is sponsoring in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration and the National Association of County Engineers (NACE).

The forum is scheduled for April 23, 2009 in Peoria, Illinois at the NACE 2009 Annual Conference. The forum will provide training in developing solutions to improve rural road safety. It is designed for elected county officials and county transportation professionals from counties with relatively high number of traffic fatalities per population.

The needs assessment revealed many important developments related to rural road safety. For instance, 42% of counties surveyed maintained a database that tracks the number and types of crashes on their roads and slightly under half of the respondents have conducted a road safety audit<sup>1</sup>.



25 Massachusetts Avenue, NW | Suite 500 | Washington, DC 20001 | 202.393.6226 | fax 202.393.2630 | [www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org)

[www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org)



Does your county have a county-wide road safety program in place?

Total Responses: 115	
Yes	33%
No	59%
Don't Know	8%

Furthermore, just 33% of those surveyed had county-wide safety programs in place.

Many of the respondents included descriptions of their safety programs. They included counties implementing some of the following approaches:

- Using crash data to help identify problem traffic areas in their county then those areas would be prioritized for guardrail upgrades, pavement markings, shoulder drop-off repairs, and intersection improvements.
- Conducting all country road inspections twice annually to identify key sig-



nage and road repairs as well as regular inspections of traffic signals.

- Having employees drive routes on a weekly basis to identify road work orders and safety related issues.
- Establishing a Traffic Safety Committees consisting of staff professionals from their public works, sheriff & police and risk management departments.

A somewhat surprising development from the assessment indicated that only 11% of the respondents believe that their county had a relatively high number of crash fatalities compared to other counties. We didn't specify what a high number of crash fatalities would be so the response may have been more of a gut reaction. This may reveal the fact that many of the counties surveyed did not believe they had a relatively high number of traffic fatalities though federal data may indicate otherwise. Respondents were also asked to identify key safety concerns and the top three included:

- Age of roadway and deterioration.
- Safety improvement for two lane rural roadways.

Has your county conducted a road safety audit?

Total Responses: 39	
Yes	62%
No	28%
Don't Know	10%

- Funding alternatives including earmarked funds directed at safety improvements.

Through this project NACo will work with counties, interested in participating in the forum, to reduce the number of fatalities on rural roads through infrastructure enhancements that improve rural road safety.

NACo will also develop a peer-exchange program through which the participants in the forum will work with transportation professionals from counties with excellent safety records to help them implement techniques and concepts to improve road safety.

For more information on the NACo Rural Road Safety Project and/or the Safety Forum, please contact James Davenport at [jdavenport@naco.org](mailto:jdavenport@naco.org) or (202) 661-8807.

1 <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/rsa> "A Road Safety Audit (RSA) or Assessment is the formal safety performance examination of an existing or future road or intersection by an independent, multidisciplinary team. It qualitatively estimates and reports on potential road safety issues and identifies opportunities for improvements in safety for all road users. The aim of an RSA is to answer the following questions:

- What elements of the road may present a safety concern: to what extent, to which road users, and under what circumstances?
- What opportunities exist to eliminate or mitigate identified safety concerns?



Does your county maintain a database to track the number and types of crashes on rural roads?

Total Responses: 115	
Yes Number and Type of crashes	42%
Yes Number of crashes	9%
Yes Type of crashes	2%
No	40%
Don't Know	8%