

# How US road safety plans may reduce road trauma

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Curtin University researchers have applied a new comprehensive framework to assess road safety management plans in the United States of America, which may help to reduce the number of road incidents

across the country.

The research, published in *PLOS ONE*, developed a new methodology to assess the effectiveness of Strategic Highway Safety Plans in the United States, which are prepared by individual States to guide road [safety](#) management and reduce road trauma.

Lead author Adjunct Research Fellow Dr. Brett Hughes, from the School of Occupational Therapy, Social Work and Speech Pathology at Curtin University, said road safety in the United States was strongly influenced by Federal legislation and direction, but generally did not address future challenges in the transport industry.

"To qualify for Federal road funds, U.S. states are required to develop, implement, evaluate and update a Strategic Highway Safety Plan that identifies and analyzes road safety problems and opportunities on all public roads," Dr. Hughes said.

"These plans generally only focus on three main parts including drivers, vehicles and roads, but there are many additional factors that affect road safety outcomes that are generally ignored.

"In this study, we developed a new rating system to assess 48 individual Strategic Highway Safety Plans across the United States, focusing on how they address and aim to improve road safety, as well as the anticipated changing, difficult and unpredictable nature of future transport."

Dr. Hughes said that road safety management in the United States had good national oversight, but unfortunately did not address future challenges.

"We recommend that it is important for U.S. road safety plans to take

into account all influences and factors that will change in the future and affect road safety outcomes. It is also important to develop and apply techniques to manage future influences to ensure Strategic Highway Safety Plans are resilient to future situations that may arise," Dr. Hughes said.

"Our study suggests that [road](#) safety plans in the U.S. could be developed more thoroughly to respond to the increasingly difficult challenge to improve [road safety](#) and potential changes in transport, economic and social and business circumstances."

The research was co-authored by researchers from the School of Occupational Therapy, Social Work and Speech Pathology at Curtin University, Linköping University and the Swedish Road and Transport Research Institute in Sweden.

**More information:** Brett P. Hughes et al. The relevance of U.S. Strategic Highway Safety Plans in a future context, *PLOS ONE* (2019). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0223646](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0223646)

Provided by Curtin University

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