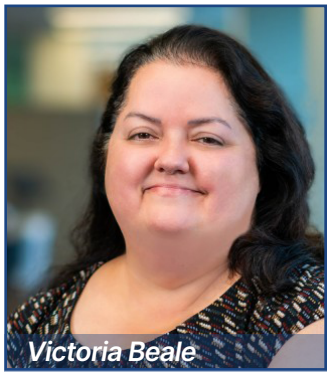
HOME SAFELY PODCAST

Q&A with Victoria Beale

Director of the Ohio Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) and the Assistant Administrator for the Ohio DOT


Victoria Beale

Q: What are some of the biggest challenges Ohio faces with its decentralized roadway system?

A: One of our biggest challenges is resources. In Ohio, 84% of the center line miles are owned by more than 2,300 local public agencies, including counties, cities, villages, and townships. These jurisdictions vary significantly in size and resources, so we have to make sure the resources and assistance we provide are the right size for the agencies we are working with. Even something as basic as snow removal requires coordination among townships, counties, villages, and cities. When you add roadway safety improvements, there is even more complexity.

Q: How does Ohio use a systemic approach to improve safety on rural roads?

A: We look at safety in several ways. We use a hot-spot approach to address locations where crashes are happening repeatedly, but we also look at systemic opportunities. If a crash happens at a certain type of curve, for example, we can look throughout the roadway network for other locations with similar characteristics and make improvements before crashes occur. We have a systemic signage program that helps make roads more visible and provides drivers with information about upcoming curves, crossroads, and other features they may not be familiar with.

Q: How does Ohio's township sign grant program help local agencies overcome barriers to implementing safety improvements?

A: We designed the program to help townships implement low-cost safety countermeasures without having to navigate all the challenges associated with handling federal funds. Townships use crash maps to identify locations where crashes are occurring and work with their county engineers to select signs from the available packages. Our LTAP center then works through the federal process, purchasing the signs, posts, and hardware, and pays for the materials on behalf of the township. This means the township does not have to pay for the materials upfront and wait for reimbursement, which can be a major financial barrier for small jurisdictions.

Q: How has the Safe System approach influenced roadway safety in Ohio?

A: The Safe System approach was a natural fit for Ohio because it brought together many of the safety pieces that were already in place. To me, the approach means understanding that people and life are not perfect and that crashes are going to happen, so we need to make sure people are as safe as possible when they do. We look at every aspect of a person's journey, including the roadway, the vehicle, the speed, the type of road user, and post-crash care. This approach helps everyone who works in transportation understand their role in keeping people safe.

Q: What is the most important message you want people to take away about roadway safety?

A: I want people to slow down and remember that getting where you're going is not a race. Being a couple of minutes late is acceptable if it means preventing someone from being killed. We must be responsible not only for ourselves and our loved ones, but also for the people around us on the road. Nothing hurts worse than having an empty seat at your dinner table because someone never made it home. I want people to take the time to be responsible and make sure everyone gets home safely.

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