Identifying and Recommending Data Collection Processes to Support OHSP Program Analysis

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Introduction

The Michigan State Police, Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP) collects performance metrics and other information about the programs it sponsors across Michigan. These programs include, but are not limited to, community outreach programs, driver education initiatives, impaired-driving enforcement, and occupant protection campaigns. The OHSP uses these data for program evaluation purposes, reporting key takeaways in its annual report. However, these data are not currently available to the public, nor are they in common and interchangeable formats suitable for analysis and reuse by external researchers (e.g., CSV files with accompanying documentation in codebooks). Making this data available for research and analysis could support and extend the benefits that the state receives from these programs.

The OHSP receives considerable funding from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). For instance, in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2025, Michigan was awarded $11,034,246.43 in Section 402 grants to “support state highway safety programs aimed at reducing traffic crashes, fatalities, injuries, and property damage” (USDOT, 2023; NHTSA, 2024).

To address a lack of OHSP data availability and harmonization and create a greater understanding of highway and traffic safety in Michigan, researchers from the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) and the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute (UMTRI) received a federal grant project award to identify and recommend improved data collection processes that support OHSP program analysis (2025-TR-09-00). The goals of this project were threefold:

1. Document data that the OHSP collects,
2. Determine which data are useful for statewide program evaluation, and
3. Recommend process improvements to maximize the reuse of OHSP-sponsored data.

This report details the results of 2025-TR-09-00 and summarizes our progress in accomplishing these objectives. First, we disseminated a survey to measure the data collected by the OHSP. Second, we evaluated survey findings to demonstrate that much of the work sponsored by the OHSP generates data that can be used for research and program evaluation. Third, we recommend process improvements to increase the reuse of already-collected data sponsored by the OHSP. Changing how data is collected, processed, and stored

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provides a way for the OHSP to evaluate its programs more effectively and improve highway safety, while simultaneously maximizing taxpayers' return on investment through federal highway safety funds.

Methods and Summary of Activities

This section summarizes the processes and tasks completed by our project team.

Documenting Data That the OHSP Collects

To carry out the first phase of our project, we engaged with OHSP staff and grant recipients to identify and catalog data that could be used to evaluate existing highway safety programming and support research. Originally, we planned to conduct semi-structured interviews with the OHSP staff. However, after preliminary discussions, including meetings with the OHSP, we concluded that a better way to identify data was to review and survey grant recipients from FFY 2024 (October 1, 2023, to September 1, 2024). The OHSP staff reported that there was no well-documented internal catalog of data resources to evaluate, and attempting to document all available data represented a challenge. Thus, we limited the scope of our effort to focus on data from one year to draw broader inferences about data created by (and describing) the OHSP-sponsored projects. Identifying and documenting all of the data that the OHSP sponsors was impractical.

To survey FFY 2024 grant recipients, we developed an online survey using Qualtrics. We identified grant recipients using the 2024 OHSP Annual Report and sent our survey (via email) to 48 people and organizations. To augment our survey, we asked the OHSP staff to expand our sampling frame by providing the contact information for high-profile grant recipients from prior fiscal years. See *Appendix A* for our survey. This instrument asked grant recipients for information about their grant numbers, the title of their grant, the year in which their grant was awarded, whether awardees believed it generated data that can improve highway safety, how data are formatted, when it was collected, and if they were willing to participate in an interview.

Determining Data Useful for Statewide Program Evaluation

The second phase of our project meant evaluating a manifest[2] of data collected using OHSP funding, based on our survey findings and other documentation from the OHSP, to determine what might be useful for statewide program evaluation. We also assessed these data to determine other research questions that can be answered using already-collected data. To evaluate these data, we manually analyzed our data manifest to determine noteworthy trends, themes, and topics. Complementing this effort, we held meetings with a Program Coordinator with the OHSP to learn about priorities established by office leadership. Next, taking this information into account, we estimated the value of the OHSP data in our manifest. Specifically, we conducted a proof-of-concept analysis to determine if past projects generated data that could be used to evaluate and conduct new research, and then we synthesized our findings. This process did not assign value to the datasets, but it provided a systematic way to evaluate our perception of their analytical potential.

Recommended Process Improvements

The third, and final, phase of our project was identifying and recommending process improvements to maximize the value of OHSP-sponsored data. To begin the process, the project team completed a literature

[2] *Our manifest described a list of identified data resources.*

review to identify best practices in the academic literature. In addition to the literature review, we brainstormed solutions to problems, particularly those related to the OHSP and individual grant recipients' inability to provide detailed information about the data that they collected. We also met with contacts from the Michigan State Library, ICPSR, and Michigan State Center for Data Analytics (MCDA) to identify long-term repository solutions for OHSP-sponsored data. Throughout the third phase of our project, we took notes and synthesized them, eventually settling on a list of potential grant-specific organizational process improvements for the OHSP to consider. Many of these recommendations are based on recent changes in federal policy (e.g., Nelson, 2022).

Findings and Potential Uses of Data

Below, we describe the data we identified in our survey and provide project proofs of concept that demonstrate the value of preserving OHSP-sponsored data.

Available Data

Despite sending individuals numerous reminders, our online survey received just 19 complete responses. Seven (n=7) respondents said that their project creates data. Another six (n=6) indicated they "Do Not Know." Three (n=3) said their grant did not produce data. Most (n=29) grant recipients did not respond, so our interpretation of results is straightforward—data describing and generated by OHSP grant projects is typically less of a priority for grant recipients than the projects themselves. Furthermore, few grant recipients understood whether their project generated data that could be used for program evaluation or other research projects, representing a missed opportunity to capitalize on data generated using the OHSP's funding.

When respondents reported that their project created data, it was rarely well-documented. Five of 19 respondents said their data included documentation like a codebook, survey instrument, or other information to make it more usable. The format of data sources also varied dramatically. Common formats included Excel, PDF, Stata, SmartSheet, Word, and specialized platforms such as the Michigan Grants System (MGX). Because data were not always well-documented or stored in interoperable formats, there was no clear path forward to harmonize and combine datasets in a single location for this project. The topic, or focus, of the datasets we identified related to *Community Traffic Safety Programs*, *Impaired Driving*, *Police and Traffic Services*, *Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety*, *Traffic Records*, *Repeat Offender Provision*, and *Occupant Protection*. Datasets were typically stored on-site by individual grant recipients without planning for long-term use or reuse.

Potential Usefulness for Program Evaluation and Projects

Although our analysis was limited by the number of survey responses we received, it still provided enough information to argue that it is worthwhile for the OHSP to leverage data for future uses and to justify changing how grant recipients manage the data they collect. Below, we describe potential benefits in three categories. We also discuss sponsored survey data and paid media engagement metrics.

Traffic Safety Program Data Linkages

High-value projects in traffic safety research involve data that are difficult to observe and collect. Such projects are related to important safety outcomes (e.g., crash frequencies, fatal outcomes, vulnerable road users).

Interventions (e.g., target areas for enforcement) are often difficult to test, but linking existing datasets enables researchers to evaluate outcomes and interventions without the need to collect new data.

Nearly half of the datasets we identified were trying to link, or could link, different datasets and provide a more comprehensive picture of transportation safety in Michigan. For example, jurisdictions tried to identify crash hotspots, as well as determine relationships between enforcement and crashes in their locales, while communities conducted "walk audits," assessing local built environments. These projects necessarily included location data that could act as a linking component to other projects, programs, or datasets to inform transportation efforts and related outcomes. Projects that already incorporate geographic location to determine project outcomes can be easily reused by combining them with other datasets, as long as the location is also known in those, such as Census data or educational campaigns. Some example projects that could offer location data for future linkage, as identified in our survey, are listed in *Table 1*.

Table 1. Projects Containing Linkage Information.

Project Title	**Relevant Text from Description**
Public Education of Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Laws and Enforcement Training, Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety through Education and Conspicuous Lighting, Pedestrian and Bicyclist Adjudication Education Project	"Traffic citation data collected from our adjudication grant will be paired against crashes in the areas of enforcement and a review of infrastructure in the same area."
Detroit Safe Routes Ambassador Program	"DHD Safe Routes Ambassadors will conduct 'Walk Audits.' This will give us street-level data on sidewalk walkability; missing traffic signs; traffic lights and crosswalks near designated schools."
Grand Traverse County Overtime Traffic Enforcement	"We use internal data to track our activity and are able to provide it to OHSP and the public upon request."
Ottawa County Overtime Traffic Enforcement	"The data obtained are statistics of county-wide patrol efforts."
St. Clair County Overtime Traffic Enforcement	"Traffic stop data that includes location, time of day, reason for stop, outcome of stop, arrest information, and demographic information about the driver of the vehicle involved in the traffic stop."
2025 OHSP Highway Safety Grant	"Data collected to identify high-speed and traffic crash roads/areas."
MSP Seventh District Multi-Agency Overtime Traffic Enforcement	"Last year, we saw an overall reduction in fatal and personal injury crashes. We are hopeful that this can be attributed to the additional high visibility and enforcement efforts conducted on OHSP over time."

Note that several of these projects involved traffic enforcement, which may make it difficult to share any associated data with the public. However, from a safety perspective, transparency in law enforcement and its

relationship with safety outcomes is paramount to understanding how to effectively and efficiently allocate law enforcement efforts across Michigan. We believe that efforts to unify and make these data available across jurisdictions would have a positive impact, as they would enable the documentation of the outcomes of traffic enforcement.

Longitudinal Data

Because we asked survey questions about one project year and limited our sample to a subset of grant recipients, only four projects reported creating multiple years of data. When projects collect longitudinal data, researchers can conduct analyses that span across years, evaluate changes in outcomes over time, and identify the "lag time" or the delayed result of intervention efforts. In the future, the OHSP might prioritize collating data from projects that received funding in multiple years. *Table 2* lists projects we identified with data from more than one year.

Table 2. Projects with Data for Multiple Years.

Project Title	**Grant Year(s)**
Ford Driving Skills for Life (DSFL) Impaired Driving Station	2011 to present
Public Education of Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Laws and Enforcement Training, Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety through Education and Conspicuous Lighting, Pedestrian and Bicyclist Adjudication Education Project	2022, 2023, 2024, 2025
Detroit Safe Routes Ambassador Program	2022, 2023, 2024
Seat Belt and Handheld Device Use Direct Observation Survey	2008 to present, excluding 2020

Community-forward Programming

Projects involving community interaction often require extra effort and can reveal insights in ways other programs cannot (e.g., survey of attitudes, observed behaviors). If made public or offered to other researchers, data from these projects may shed light on other intervention efforts in similar and comparable areas. Researchers can identify results not initially found in past projects (through secondary analysis) and/or combine the data with their new work, if similar methods/questionnaires are used. Six (n=6) projects responded to our survey that have public engagement components (see *Table 3*).

Table 3. Community Programming.

Project Title	**Relevant Text from Description**
Guiding Speed Safety Camera Decision Making in Michigan - Identifying Stakeholder and Public Perceptions	"Data will include Michigan legislative, law enforcement, and everyday driver perspectives of automated speed safety cameras (SSC) in the state. The driver data will include information about the person (demographics, driving history) so we can assess relationships between

Project Title	**Relevant Text from Description**
	their characteristics and SSC perspectives. The results of this project will provide formative knowledge for SSC-related decision-making for traffic agencies and organizations."
Ford Driving Skills for Life (DSFL) Impaired Driving Station	"The data generated is from a pre/post questionnaire on knowledge of legal alcohol BAC, cannabis impairment, repercussions of driving impaired to driving privileges."
4-H Youth Education Safety Belt Program	"The data we will collect using the Likert scale will help us assess whether youth participating in the program have experienced an increase in their knowledge about seat belt safety."
Utilizing the Michigan Trauma System and Registry to Inform, Direct and Drive the Safe System Approach and Support Zero Fatalities	"Data from the Michigan Trauma Registry will inform the public about post-crash care and outcomes and related injury prevention initiatives."
Seat Belt and Handheld Device Direct Observation Survey	"This study will perform a roadside direct observation survey of seat belt use by front seat occupants, along with cell phone use by drivers, at 200 NHTSA-approved survey sites throughout Michigan, following the 'Click It or Ticket' (CIOT) enforcement campaign. This data will be utilized to compute the seat belt use rate and driver hand-held device use rate and estimated variances, which will be provided to the OHSP and NHTSA."
Understanding Michigan Teen Drivers Through Their Lens: A Pull Strategy for Innovative Initiatives	"The purpose of this project is to gather and analyze the data to identify the critical crash factors from teen (aged 15 to 19) drivers' perceptions and perspectives. The data will be statistically analyzed to better understand how teenagers view traffic safety. The outcome of this project could be used to help the (OHSP) generate new innovative initiatives and strategies to reduce crashes among teen drivers. A secondary intent is to provide recommendations that will help modify existing initiatives to serve teen drivers better."
Community Car Seat Distribution	"Car seat distribution will be focused on the top 15 counties with unrestrained fatal and suspected serious injury crashes of children aged seven and under. Additional counties will be added or considered based on need, resources, or specific programming (e.g., diverse populations and rural). By offering free car seats to eligible low-income families or caregivers, the OHSP is

Project Title	Relevant Text from Description
	reaching high-risk populations and providing this service to families and caregivers statewide.”

Survey and Paid Media Data

Something absent from our manifest was survey responses from grant recipients who asked Michigan residents about their attitudes or informed them about traffic safety-related issues. For example, we manually included the project “Seat Belt and Handheld Device Direct Observation Survey” (2025-OP-01-00), which collected survey data that is easily shared with others. “Impaired-Driving Awareness Paid Media” (2025-PM-06-OH) shared campaign ads about impaired driving and included a survey to evaluate these messages. While not all information collected as part of statewide surveys or evaluating paid media campaigns is useful for program evaluation, they generate easy-to-collect statistics that the OHSP might wish to preserve to identify trends over time or use as a point of comparison for a future sponsored program. Survey and paid media data came from non-research projects.

Discussion and Recommendations

Based on our review of the literature, discussions with the OHSP, and our evaluation of the data manifest, we recommend that the OHSP make the following changes:

1. Require grant recipients to create data management plans;
2. Selectively require grant recipients to archive project data in repositories like the State of Michigan Data Portal;
3. Curate or process high-profile datasets;
4. Designate funds and set a liaison for data collection and curation work; and
5. Determine a plan or strategy for managing access to datasets that contain sensitive information.

Below, we discuss these four recommendations.

Require Grant Recipients to Create a Data Management Plan

In 2013, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) issued a memo to federal executive departments and agencies. This memo required major scientific funders to create “public access plans” to facilitate access to federally funded scientific research. One major component of these plans was the requirement for grant recipients to develop data management plans. Data management plans (DMPs) describe “how data will be collected, processed, analyzed, described, preserved, and shared during the course of a research project” (NLM, n.d., para. 1). Increasingly, other funders require grant applications to include DMPs to ensure researchers treat data as a valuable resource. Academic researchers are increasingly studying the influence of DMPs (e.g., Michener, 2015; Mannheimer, 2018) on science.

The OHSP should require grant recipients to create DMPs to ensure they properly manage data resulting from their work. Because recipients will likely need support or guidance, we recommend pointing them to ICPSR’s sample plan (https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/web/pages/datamanagement/dmp/) as a framework. Additionally,

creating DMPs can provide a mechanism for the OHSP to document data resulting from sponsored projects, which is currently impractical, as evidenced by our survey results. Standard DMPs are several pages long. Nevertheless, the OHSP could fill this gap by adding a direct and simple question to MGX that requires no more than 300 words, thereby not burdening applicants.[3] The objective is to establish a clear process for identifying new datasets during the grant application and closeout processes and leverage them for program evaluation or new research projects. Alternatively, the OHSP could proactively seek out programs of value and work with them to ensure their data is managed properly. This might include collaborating with the Michigan State Police to integrate incident-level data collected using funds from the OHSP or cultivating partnerships with localities and municipalities across the state.

Selectively Mandate Data Archiving

Using information from DMPs, we recommend that the OHSP require grant recipients to archive their data in the trusted repositories listed below. In 2022, the White House issued another OSTP memo that moved beyond requiring federally funded research to create DMPs. This memo required recipients to store data in archives for use by other researchers, and the OHSP should follow suit when appropriate. Not every sponsored project can or should archive data for reuse, but on grant closeout, Program Coordinators should evaluate if the data produced by grants are worth preserving. Conversely, the OHSP might encourage grant applicants to write in funding support for data archiving.

We identified three locations where grant recipients can store their data:

1. MCDA maintains a state data portal (www.data.michigan.gov). In cases where the OHSP wishes to archive data in a public repository maintained by the State of Michigan, this portal serves as a low-cost, accessible resource.
2. ICPSR is one of the world's largest digital archives of social science data (www.icpsr.umich.edu). Whenever data are frequently used, require curation, or additional data-related support is desired (e.g., providing restricted access to data), ICPSR can act as a for-fee resource.
3. The OHSP might provide direct access to data via its website.

By regularly storing data online, the OHSP can conduct audits of data available to researchers, encourage reuse, and develop strategies for evaluating program outcomes.

Considerations for archiving data in the state data portal include the fact that only state employees can contribute datasets, not grantees. Additionally, sensitive data would be accessible only to agency staff. Finally, the quality of associated metadata will depend on what the OHSP provides, which may limit overall data discoverability. By this, we mean whether data are findable through public search engines. ICPSR can address each of these issues, but doing so would require incurring costs for services. For more information about the strengths and weaknesses of different data-archiving approaches, contact the authors of this report.

Curate High-profile Datasets

Datasets produced using OHSP funding may vary in utility to the broader research community. When data are needed or used frequently, are complex, or are both, it may be of interest to enhance these datasets' usability

[3] See *Appendix B* for a prototype of the prompt and an exemplar response.

with data curation, which refers to “all the processes needed for principled and controlled data creation, maintenance, and management, together with the capacity to add value to data” (Miller, 2014). ICPSR partners with multiple governmental and research agencies to archive and curate their data. ICPSR employs over 30 trained staff dedicated to data curation, and the OHSP should support the curation of high-profile datasets whenever possible. In lieu of data curation, the OHSP could support its grantees in curating their data according to best practices in data sharing (e.g., ICPSR’s *Guide to Social Science Data Preparation and Archiving*).

Designate Funds and a Liaison

We recognize that there may be a gap between providing guidance about how the OHSP can ensure that datasets are saved and curated in a repository and the practical implementation of these tasks. As such, we recommend that the OHSP allocate funding to support this work and appoint a “data liaison” to ensure that tasks are carried out.

Determine a Plan for Managing Sensitive Data

Not all data can be made public. In cases involving datasets with personally identifiable information (PII) or information that could identify an individual, it is crucial to ensure the safety and privacy of participants. The OHSP should consider how to securely store data in a manner consistent with applicable laws and regulations (e.g., HIPAA, FERPA). The OHSP should review established policies about privacy and confidentiality (e.g., American Statistical Association, 2017) and establish a plan for storing and managing access to sensitive and restricted data. This plan should include procedures for offering access, some of which may be established by collaborating with the state data portal, ICPSR, or another third-party organization. Many state agencies manage access to sensitive data through the execution of data use agreements (DUA), which are contracts that outline the terms and conditions for accessing and using specific data. Working with third parties potentially allows the OHSP to offload such work. The authors of this report are available for consultation on these issues.

Conclusion

The purpose of this grant (2025-TR-09-00) was to evaluate the use of data generated by the OHSP and grant recipients for program evaluation. We also identified challenges in that these data are not available or identifiable, and grant recipients may not have the expertise to develop their program data for future use by others. Finally, we conclude by making organizational and policy recommendations. If enacted, these recommendations will help the OHSP document datasets resulting from sponsored work and maximize data reuse. The OHSP and the State of Michigan devote considerable resources (especially in the form of block grants) to making roads safer, and this project provided practical guidance on how to document data resulting from sponsored projects more effectively.

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Appendix A.

- Provide the grant number (e.g., “2025-XX-##-##”) associated with your OHSP-sponsored project.
- What is the name or title of your OHSP-funded grant? (e.g., “Motorcycle Safety Telephone Survey”)?
- In which State Fiscal Year was the grant awarded? (e.g., 2022)?
- Did or will this project generate data that you think can be used to improve road safety?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. I’m Not Sure
- In one or two sentences, please tell us about the data. (e.g., “Data resulted from a statewide online survey of motorcycle owners about their highway safety attitudes”). We know that many of your projects just recently started. We are looking for good-faith estimates or general ideas about the data resulting from the project. It's okay to be imperfect.
- In what format are or will be the data saved? (e.g., Excel)?
- When were the data collected? (e.g., September 2022)?
- Is documentation available that describes the data? (e.g., codebooks, survey instruments)?
    a. Yes
    b. No
- Are you willing to participate in a follow-up interview?
- What is your email address?
- If you are unavailable for an interview, please provide the name and email address of someone else who can participate.

Appendix B.

- Will this project generate data that OHSP can use to make Michigan roads safer?

    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. I'm Not Sure

    If "Yes" or "I'm Not Sure", complete the following question.

- If so, please describe these data, including how you plan to collect and store them, where, in what file format, if there are any privacy and security considerations associated with the data, and how you anticipate sharing them with OHSP on grant closeout.

    a. This project will collect survey responses from individuals exposed to advertising from a statewide media campaign targeting motorcyclists in Michigan. The goal of the campaign is to increase recognition of the dangers of impaired driving crashes. We will distribute a representative, statewide survey of men aged 50-70, asking them whether they had heard about the campaign and the effect of messages encouraging motorcycle riders not to ride if they have consumed alcohol or drugs. Data will be collected using the Qualtrics survey platform. We anticipate receiving 1,095 valid survey responses. To allow future data linkages, survey responses will be connected to Census geographies at the county level.

    When the project ends, we will export survey data in CSV file format and create a codebook that describes the data and individual survey responses. We will remove all directly identifying information from the data and transfer it to OHSP for safekeeping upon project closeout. The survey codebook will include information about how the data were collected, where, the sampling frame, and information about survey variables and questions. To provide additional data security, the data will be stored using Qualtrics, then later exported to a computer, securely kept in a locked office.