

# TRANSPORTATION SAFETY CAREER PATHWAY SPOTLIGHT



Timothy E. Barnett

**Organization:**  
Alabama Department  
of Transportation

**Job Title:**  
State Safety Operations Engineer

**Training/Education:**  
University of Alabama-Huntsville

**Degree/Certification:**

- B.S. and M.S. in Civil Engineering
- Professional Engineer (P.E.) license
- Certified Professional Traffic Operations Engineer

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## Why a career in transportation and transportation safety?

From an early age, Tim cultivated an interest in traffic engineering due to his involvement in a minor intersection crash at the age of twelve. Later that month, he was assigned a social studies project for school and chose "Improving Safety at an Intersection" as the topic. Tim developed an alternative design and operation for the intersection where the crash occurred, and his design led to several meetings with city and ALDOT officials. Subsequently, the city's Transportation Director offered him a job when he turned 16. At that age, Tim took the city Transportation Director up on his employment offer and began a career with the City of Huntsville, Alabama while attending college. He ultimately became their Traffic Engineer.

## Career pathway:

After twenty years with Huntsville, Tim joined the Alabama Department of Transportation as a Right-of-Way Engineer and later took a position as a Highway Design Engineer. About seven years ago, the ALDOT Chief Engineer asked him to lead the newly formed Office of Safety Operations, where he works to advance roadway safety on all roadways throughout Alabama, through planning, design, construction, maintenance, and operations of the roadway system.

## Interesting professional accomplishments:

Tim's career focuses on traffic operations and safety at the federal, state, and local levels. Since his career started at the local level, he understands the importance of providing assistance, training, and opportunities for local roadway safety workers. With the numerous demands on local agencies, roadway safety is often not given the same priority as other critical issues. To help advance safety at the local level, Tim began an annual Rural Road Safety Conference and Workshop. Approximately 125 participants learn and discuss topics as varied as low-cost safety measures, rural roundabout design, and safety management legal aspects. with assistance from the Alabama LTAP at Auburn University. Nationally, Tim is making numerous contributions to road safety workforce development.

## How do professional activities make a positive impact on society?

In most states, the majority of severe crashes occur on rural roads. These crashes have common typologies where simple safety countermeasures applications can effectively and efficiently reduce crash occurrence and severity. Generally, persons with local level road safety responsibility are deeply committed to community safety, and it is only a lack of knowledge that prevents safety countermeasure implementation. As Benjamin Franklin once said, "An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest." To that end, Tim has always placed a high priority on knowledge advancement and transfer amongst colleagues and friends.