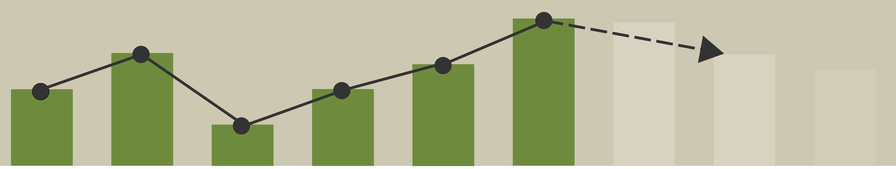
DOT State Stats: Drupal and local data

Abstract

Finding State transportation data is hard. The Federal government makes some national figures public, but regional data often falls through the cracks. States have different priorities which means that on-line accessibility is often overlooked. This holds back research.

State Stats uses the Drupal content management system to document resources and reports. An exercise in data mining, it harnesses the Internet to provide access to statistical publications by State DOTs. This poster provides an overview of the material available and makes some suggestions for practitioners who want to offer an inexpensive solution to researchers.



1

The Problem

Overview: Several factors make it hard to find regional transportation data. The Bureau of Transportation Statistics acts as a federal data manager. But, ultimately they can't and don't provide everything. State DOT's have a lot of local authority. This offers the flexibility to address local concerns, but it creates two problems for search and discovery...

1. Scattered approaches mean you don't know where to look.
2. Different definitions make it hard to tell what figures really mean.

Quick Fix: To provide a solution, a group of librarians conducted a literature search. From there they built a website with Drupal (www.drupal.org) to share the results. Drupal is an open-source web tool that lets users build websites quickly and efficiently. To provide extra analysis, a listing of data tracked by State was created, put in an Excel file, and posted.

2

So What?

3

Ask Me What They Are...

There are a couple of things that State Stats can be used for. They include **benchmarks**, **research**, and **public reporting**.

Possible Uses

Online at: members.mtkn.org

Lessons Learned

Conclusion: When it comes to statistics one size doesn't fit all. While some lessons from building DOT State Stats may not be useful, a few key things can be agreed upon by everyone. Practitioners are encouraged to take advantage of these lessons.

It's cheap to post online; Coordination helps.

Format standards like TransXML are useful. This is especially if you want to automate the use of data later on.

Smaller scope? Less users but more flexibility. Going it alone gives more control.

4

For more information e-mail me at: anthony.million@modot.mo.gov

A.J. Million, Librarian. Missouri Dept. of Transportation.