

News Release  
August 15, 2016

## **Auburn University Ph.D. Student Wins First Highway Safety Data Research Paper Competition** *Inaugural Contest Encourages Students to Use HSIS Data, Prioritize Safety*

ANAHEIM, Calif. – Mahdi Pour-Rouholamin, Ph.D., is the first place winner of the inaugural Highway Safety Information System (HSIS) Research Paper Competition for his paper “Analyzing the Severity of Motorcycle Crashes in North Carolina using HSIS Data.” He accepted his award today at the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) 2016 Annual Meeting and Exhibit in Anaheim, Calif.

The HSIS Research Paper Competition encourages university students to use HSIS data with the intent of introducing potential future highway safety professionals to quality safety data, the application of appropriate research methods to derive recommendations and the practice of using data to make decisions. The competition is jointly administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and ITE.

“Congratulations to Dr. Pour-Rouholamin for an excellent research paper about motorcycle safety,” said Federal Highway Administrator Gregory Nadeau. “It is imperative for FHWA to support the next generation of America’s highway safety professionals and to encourage using safety data – and HSIS data specifically – in scholarly research.”

Pour-Rouholamin is a recent graduate of Auburn University in Auburn, Ala., where he earned his Ph.D. from the Department of Civil Engineering. For the winning paper, he analyzed HSIS motorcycle crash data from 2009 to 2013 to identify opportunities to help reduce the severity of injuries associated with single-vehicle, single-rider motorcycle crashes in North Carolina. These opportunities included safety awareness campaigns, educational efforts and efforts by law enforcement. Pour-Rouholamin’s co-author on the paper was Mohammad Jalayer, also a Ph.D. student in the Department of Civil Engineering at Auburn University.

“My passion for safety began more than 20 years ago when one of my uncles was disabled in a car crash and another one died. These accidents had one positive outcome in that they inspired me to help save peoples’ lives. Specifically, I have devoted my energies to doing extensive safety research and promoting safety,” said Pour-Rouholamin. “I would like to thank FHWA for providing this excellent opportunity for me to challenge myself!”

As the first place recipient, Pour-Rouholamin will have his research paper published in the *ITE Journal* and on the HSIS website. He also received a commemorative plaque and travel to the ITE conference to accept the honor.

The competition’s second place recipient was Ali Ghasemzadeh, a Ph.D. student in civil engineering at the University of Wyoming, for the paper “Work Zone Weather-Related Crash Characteristics and Injury Severity in North Carolina Using HSIS Dataset.”

M. Majbah Uddin, a graduate student in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, University of South Carolina, was the third place recipient for the paper “Factors Influencing Injury Severity of Crashes Involving Hazardous Materials.” Both accepted their awards at the ITE conference, as well.

“This is the first year of the HSIS Research Paper Competition,” said Administrator Nadeau, “and we were excited about the quality of all the student submissions we received. We look forward to continuing the competition and seeing this data utilized robustly for valuable research.”

“This competition is an invaluable opportunity for both the individual student and the future of the profession as HSIS is a powerful, free resource that can be utilized by anyone working to improve highway safety across the U.S.,” said Michael Trentacoste, Associate Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration Office of Research, Development and Technology. “It inspires students to apply the academic study of highway safety data to real-world safety concerns, leading to solutions that will help save lives.”

Details on the 2017 HSIS Research Paper Competition are expected to be released next month.

#### **About HSIS**

HSIS is a safety database that contains crash, roadway inventory and traffic volume data for a select group of agencies. The participating states of California, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio and Washington and the city of Charlotte were selected based on the quality of their data, the range of data available and their ability to merge the data from various files. The HSIS database also contains historic data from Michigan and Utah. The HSIS is used by FHWA staff, contractors, university researchers and others to study current highway safety issues, direct research efforts and evaluate the effectiveness of crash countermeasures. For more information, visit [www.hsisinfo.org](http://www.hsisinfo.org).

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