Book review

Practical Road Safety Auditing, 3rd edn

M. Belcher, S. Proctor and P. Cook. ICE Publishing, London, UK, 2015, ISBN 978-0727760166, £65.00, 208 pp.

Practical Road Safety Auditing is a book consisting of 208 pages and ten chapters, which lives up to its title admirably by providing the reader with an understanding of the background of, and approaches to, road safety auditing as applied in the real world. After an introductory chapter, there are two chapters that describe audit procedures and processes. Chapter 4 discusses the important issue of road safety auditor competence. The heart of the book, taking up pages 45–99, is a summary presented in Chapter 5, of what are termed ‘control data’. These are summaries of outcomes from the analysis of road collision data and research studies that provide a benchmark against which an auditor might be able to judge specific issues within a scheme being audited. This is admirably complemented by Chapter 6, which presents summaries of the main issues that the authors have reported in 622 audits carried out in 2013.

The book moves beyond an exposition of the everyday practical needs of a UK-based road safety auditor at this point and addresses the wider legal issues in Chapter 7, before then providing an extensive resume of auditing procedures in countries in the European Union, Australasia, Asia, the Americas (North and South) and the Middle East. Before finishing with a discussion in Chapter 10 on current issues in road safety auditing, Chapter 9 sets road safety auditing in the context of other audits, including the comprehensive ‘quality audit’, which may include a road safety audit and others such as cycle and mobility audits.

The book draws on the deep well of experience of the auditors and firmly makes the point to the reader that the auditor should assess

scheme designs from the point of view of the road user. In addition to sharing their knowledge, the authors touch on a variety of subjects that have been matters of considerable discussion, including, for example, the extent to which regression to mean has been properly addressed in monitoring. Many issues are noted in bullet points in Chapter 5 as requiring ‘further research’. It would probably be good for the reader to benefit from the experienced views of the authors on some of these issues, but this would require a synthesis of the material presented in Chapters 5 and 6. While the material presented in Chapter 5 is very clear, it is ordered under sub-titles relating to the publication from which it was derived. It may be the case, however, that a prospective reader might benefit more were the material to be ordered according to subject matter sub-headings. One example might be a sub-heading relating to microprocessor optimised vehicle actuation, rather than information on this subject being under five separate publication headings, albeit on consecutive pages.

It is pleasing to see some discussion of a risk-based approach to safety auditing; after all, the basis of most risk assessments is an aggregation of the probability of an incident occurring and the severity of the outcome were an incident to occur. It is disappointing that this subject is introduced only in the final chapter, and then only treated to a limited extent. It is, however, very good to see how Gloucestershire County Council adopts such an approach within the context of current road safety auditing procedures.

Overall, the book lives up to its title and provides the reader with a good grounding in procedures and a summary of very valuable road safety data and experience.

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