

Gathering Key Data

Purpose

The purpose of gathering key data is to develop enough shared understanding of a serious crash to learn from it and identify practical actions.

A Crash Analysis Studio is not a comprehensive engineering study. It does not require every question to be answered or every piece of data to be available before the Studio can begin. This reflects a different approach to technical practice.

A traditional investigation may begin by asking: *What data should we collect?*

A Crash Analysis Studio begins by asking: *What do we need to learn?*

Cities already possess much of the information needed to begin learning from a crash. Other useful information can often be gathered through a site visit, observations, measurements, photographs, and conversations within a matter of days.

The goal is to bring that information together while the crash is still fresh, develop a shared understanding of what happened and what contributed to it, and identify actions that could make the street safer.

Gather what you have. Observe what you can. Learn enough to act.

Guiding Principles

1. Perfect Information Is Not Required (permission to begin)

A Crash Analysis Studio works with the best information available at the time of the Studio.

Some information may be incomplete. A crash report may still be under review. Detailed traffic counts may not exist. Video may be unavailable. Questions may remain unanswered.

That should not prevent the community from beginning to learn.

The Studio should acknowledge what is known, what is unknown, and where uncertainty exists. Additional information can be incorporated later if it becomes available.

The goal is not certainty, but enough understanding to identify reasonable actions.

2. Gather What You Have (start with what is readily available)

Start with information that already exists or can reasonably be gathered within a few days.

Cities often possess more useful information than they realize: crash reports, photographs, street plans, measurements, previous studies, maintenance records, speed data, local knowledge, and observations from staff and residents.

Not every Studio will have the same information available. That is expected.

Begin with what you have rather than creating a new list of studies that must be completed before the Studio can occur.

3. Document What You Don't Know (be transparent about uncertainty)

Not every question will have an answer at the time of the Crash Analysis Studio. That is expected.

Clearly identify what is known, what is unknown, and where information remains uncertain. An unanswered question does not need to become a barrier to moving forward.

Instead, ask whether resolving that uncertainty would change the understanding of the crash or the actions being considered.

Some unanswered questions may require follow-up. Others may ultimately prove unnecessary. Documenting these uncertainties allows the Studio to proceed without ignoring them.

Uncertainty should be acknowledged, not used as a reason to delay learning.

4. Observe Before You Analyze (experience the place before interpreting the numbers)

The Crash Analysis Studio is an observational exercise before it is an analytical exercise.

Visit the location. Walk the street. Experience the crossing. Look at sight lines. Watch how people drive, walk, bike, turn, park, and navigate the place. When possible, visit under conditions similar to those when the crash occurred.

Begin with what you can see and experience. Ask questions about what the street is communicating to the people using it.

Then use available data to test, strengthen, or challenge those observations.

5. Data Should Inform the Studio, Not Delay It (additional analysis needs purpose)

Additional data is valuable when it helps the Studio understand what happened, identify a contributing factor, or evaluate a potential response. It becomes less valuable when obtaining it postpones the opportunity to learn and act.

Before requesting another study, count, model, or analysis, ask: *What decision would this information change?*

If the answer is unclear or if the information will not materially change the immediate discussion, do not delay the Studio waiting for it.

A Crash Analysis Studio can identify additional questions and longer-term analysis as part of its recommendations. Learning does not need to wait for those questions to be resolved.

The Standard: Enough to Learn

The objective is not to gather everything that could be known about a crash. It is to gather enough information to answer three questions:

1. What happened?
2. What contributed to it happening?
3. What can we do now?

If the people participating in the Studio can meaningfully engage with those three questions, they have enough information to begin.