Intelligent Speed Adaptation (ISA) is one of a number of Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) with potential to enhance driver performance and safety. Improved knowledge is needed about the way drivers use ADAS, how acceptable the systems are to them, and system impact.

The Field Operational Test, or FOT, is a sophisticated evaluation method that can be used to address these and other critical questions. It is a quasi-experimental evaluation method that uses instrumented vehicles and associated technologies to assess an ADAS function, or combination of functions, under normal operating conditions in road and traffic environments typically encountered by the host vehicle(s). The European Commission (EC) recognises the importance of the FOT as an evaluation method and has recently funded a series of FOT-related research programs (eg FESTA, euroFOT, teleFOT and FOTNET).

Between 2000 and 2005, the Victorian Transport Accident Commission and Ford Australia supported the Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) in undertaking the so-called “TAC SafeCar” project — Australia’s first FOT of ADAS technologies. Intelligent Speed Adaptation (ISA) was one of three technologies evaluated in that study, and the TAC SafeCar project yielded the first data in Australia on the effectiveness of ISA.

This paper describes the findings, lessons learned and implications deriving from the TAC SafeCar study. In doing so, the “dos” and “don’ts” of running a large-scale ISA FOT are addressed, drawing on the author’s experience in running the TAC SafeCar study and his recent and current involvement in the EC-funded FESTA and euroFOT projects.