

Statewide Strategies for Improving Transportation Operations & Management

**MAG Cholla Room
11:00 AM – 1:30 PM, July 12, 2007**

Meeting Notes

Dennis Smith (MAG) welcomed everyone to the gathering and started the discussion with self introductions. He provided a brief introduction on the origin of the BQAZ project and how it relates to this discussion on System Management and Operations.

Sarath Joshua (MAG) introduced the main topic of the discussion, System Management and Operations, starting with definitions and goals. He also shared information from a recent MAG analysis of traffic delays on I-17 due to crashes that occurred in 2005. The information he presented indicated that on some I-17 segments closer to Phoenix, traffic delays due to crashes had resulted in queues as long as 36 miles. Under Lessons Learned from Other States, he highlighted the work done in Pennsylvania and Maryland, in the areas of Incident Management and Traveler Information.

Alan Hansen (Federal Highway Administration) addressed Planning and Operations and referred to the SAFETEA-LU requirement for a Congestion Management Process that provides for effective management and operations. His presentation highlighted the links between MPO/COG goals and efficient management & operations. He went on to describe how Management and Operations relates to the Congestion Management Process, and how they could be integrated in the planning process. He also stated that FHWA is preparing a guidebook that is expected to be finalized in August.

Eric Ice (Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration) spoke about the various safety programs that are administered by his agency. The primary mission of FMSCA is to reduce crashes, injuries and fatalities due to truck and bus crashes.

Commander Dennis Young and Lieutenant Mike Lockhart (DPS) presented the role played by DPS in addressing highway emergencies, collisions, incident management and clearance and enforcement. They indicated that the Freeway Service Patrol had provided assistance to 135,000 motorists last year. They highlighted the fact that truck related crashes have seen a 36 percent increase from 2004 to 2005. These crashes are difficult to clear and result in long traffic delays. They stressed the fact that DPS is understaffed and need to be built up to required levels.

Scott Nodes (ADOT) described the M&O functions performed and coordinated at the ADOT Traffic Operations Center. He described the recent advances such as access to DPS dispatch information and how real-time incident information is fed into the 5-1-1 phone system for access by the general public. He also described how this information is also provided to the public via radio and television.

Maysa Hanna(ADOT) described the role of ALERT teams that are often called to clear and manage crash sites.

Matt Burdick (ADOT) spoke about ADOT communications plan and media relations. He described how ADOT is organized and staffed to handle the interaction with media. He also outlined their plans for enhanced communications and New Media Strategies using websites, on-line resources, Podcasts and WAV files.

Lonnie Hendrix (ADOT) described the crucial role played by ADOT maintenance staff in keeping the road system in good condition and also responding to crashes. He mentioned that with ADOT establishing planned new Maintenance Yards in Camp Verde, Tonopah off I-10, East Valley off US 60, and in Tucson, the response times to crashes would reduce. He indicated that while traffic volumes have grown in recent time by as much as 60 percent, the FTEs available for maintenance have been reduced by 10 percent. He also pointed out that while the ITS equipment inventory kept increasing there was no commensurate increase in the agency's FTEs tasked with maintaining this equipment.

These presentations were followed by a brief brainstorming session to identify potential improvements in the area of System Management and Operations.

Wish List of Potential Improvements

The following topics/issues were identified as relevant to System Management and Operations, and areas that need to be addressed:

FHWA:

Expand Freeway Service Patrols statewide

Use Highway Advisory Radio (HAR) to keep motorists better informed. Many other states continue to use them.

Develop integrated corridor management systems such as the I-10 corridor to alleviate freeway congestion

Increased HOV enforcement utilizing revenue generated by the HOV fines to fund additional DPS staff

Good HPMS data via non-intrusive traffic sensors. Current HPMS traffic data might be undercounting traffic hence reduced federal funds coming to the state

Improve FMS sign credibility by eliminating errors in posted messages

Display travel times on existing signs and also provide that info via radio and TV

FMCSA: Utilize the PRISM Program of FMCSA to enhance safety performance of large trucks.

DPS:

Increase DPS staffing to levels recommended by the Police Resource Allocation Model

Improved statewide communications interoperability between DPS and ADOT

Passage of primary seat belt law – would result in less severe crashes and reduced crash related delays

Restrict trucks to right most lanes on freeways and speed limit of 55 MPH (concern expressed by ADOT regarding the speed differential that would be created by such a restriction)

Launch a FSP service in Tucson area.

ADOT:

ALERT Teams for Tucson, Flagstaff and other ADOT Districts

Freeway Service Patrol in the Tucson region

Additional maintenance FTEs to support winter road maintenance

Additional funds/FTEs for maintenance of ITS field equipment

Expand the 511 system

MAG:

Post travel times on Dynamic Message Signs that are already installed on urban freeways. Travel time estimation for rural freeways needs to be explored and a methodology developed.

Increase HOV enforcement using revenues from fines

PAG:

Initiate programs at MPOs & COGs through which local traffic signal timing could be optimized on a regular basis.