

TRAFFIC OPERATIONS PARTNERS FORUM
TELECONFERENCE MINUTES
1pm-3pm (CST), Wednesday, February 22, 2006

Attendees

FACILITATORS

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MSTOP SPEAKERS

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GUESTS

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MEETING SUMMARY

This was the first in a series of teleconferences leading up to an April 24 Workshop in which the 7-state Upper Midwest Region will explore opportunities for and benefits of coordinated interstate highway operations and traffic management across the region.

These minutes are paraphrased and, while effort was made to preserve accuracy, should not be considered as an absolute record. Comments or corrections can be sent to svanhecke@wisc.edu.

The teleconference took place on February 22, 2006 from 1:00 pm – 3:05 pm and was hosted by the Upper Midwest Freight Corridor Study, the Midwest Regional University Transportation Center, Wisconsin Traffic Operations & Safety Laboratory, and the Gary-Chicago-Milwaukee ITS Priority Corridor.

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MEETING TRANSCRIPT

FIRST AGENDA ITEM - Introduction

Teresa Adams (Midwest Regional University Transportation Center)

“This meeting is an introduction into a series of dialogues on how upper Midwest transportation partners can increase communication and work cooperatively. In particular, when looking at issues in freight throughout the Midwest region it becomes apparent we have to work together. It is also important for the region to consider the use of technology to address regional issues surrounding freight movement due to the importance of the corridor in moving freight across the country.”

Teresa suggested that the stakeholders at the meeting needed to start a dialogue. Traffic operations in the region should coordinate their efforts and possibly build a partnership through establishing a Multistate Transportation Operations Program (MSTOP).

Teresa then outlined the meeting structure. First there was a brief overview from states, what is going on, technology use, then speakers. We want to learn how we can work together across the region – want to maybe end with a plan, and address potential problems. The last task will be to plan a teleconference in March, then hold a face to face meeting around the end of April.

John Corbin (Wisconsin Department of Transportation)

“This is an informal exchange – we want to start dialogue to enable us to provide better services, this effort is targeted on interstate highways across the seven upper Midwest states. If you look at our region from national perspective and consider other national regional transportation systems, you see us as a gap. We seem to be in a position to have a lot to add with the linkage of technology. We want to learn what is going on across the region and find opportunities for advancement.”

SECOND AGENDA ITEM – Reports from States

Todd Szymkowski then asked the states to voice any questions (there were none) then gave each state five minutes to share activities that lend themselves to a multi-state context (e.g., weather information, travel information, existing interstate data sharing, etc).

Wisconsin began the dialogue:

John Corbin

- We have taken steps in the area of freeway management technology in Milwaukee and Madison
- CVISN – actively deployed
- State wide computer aided dispatch system
- Emphasis on work zone management and safety
- Semi-permanent safe zone
- Completed planning for 511 implementation and waiting to move forward with deployment

Kelly Langer (WisDOT)

- We are trying to integrate different regions into one freeway management system
- Deployed new freeway management software

- Working on TransPortal for data archiving in coordination with the TOPS Laboratory

Phil Decabooter (WISDOT)

- Working with Northwest Passage and the Gary/Chicago/Milwaukee Corridor
- Our next focus is on freight industry
- Webpage, parking

Minnesota

Mark Nelson (MnDOT)

- Nine Transportation Operations and Communications Centers (TOCCs) throughout state – statewide ITS operations
- State patrol radio dispatchers serve as point people for traveler information
- We have 511 – upload info into Condition Acquisition Reporting System (CARS) database- have signs throughout the state

Pierre Carpenter (MnDOT)

Freight section is working on statewide freight plan – moving out into districts – Last year we created a highway safety plan and then a heavy vehicle safety plan. We are now looking at applying ITS technology on a statewide basis.

Iowa

Tim Crouch (IOWA DOT)

- Don't have a whole lot at this point
- Far along in 511 system with info on weather/travel info
- Transportation operations center in De Moines because of construction
- Not aware of any perspectives on CVO

Illinois – Not Present

Indiana

Mark Newland (INDOT)

- InDoOT undergoing major reorganization
- Have statewide system
- 2 centers can operate state wide systems
- Our commissioner got the ball rolling on freight
- We have been able to create a freight mobility position which has been a significant benefit
- We have been working on several statewide strategic deployment plans
- We want to focus on rural application as well
- A study was done on 511, but the program is in limbo
- We will probably go with CARS system
- We need to figure out how will pay for it.
- Also, able to develop a single system division on arterial signal systems – we are trying to focus on heavily urbanized arterial systems.
- We want to move forward on:
 - PrePass state
 - Installation of weigh-in-motion technology
 - CVISN state
 - Now officers can access and check conditions anytime

- State police will be able to do additional checks when financed
- Weather- not been able to merge weather information and traffic operations too well because they are run by different divisions

Ohio

Marian Thompson (ODOT)

- Not a lot of involvement with CVO
- Existing TMC FMS location in Cincinnati (ARTEMIS)
- FMS in Columbus
- Designing a couple more systems in Cleveland Area
- Will have 6 separate FMS systems in urban areas
- Have no FMS in rural
- Trying to get single software package statewide (ARTEMIS software in Cincinnati) that will allow 24 hour operation
- Have weather information handled out of roadway maintenance operations
- Great work has been done for work zones – permitting of work zones

Michigan

Mia Silver (MDOT)

- Freeway operations focus also
- Consideration for commercial traffic is an integral part when we collect information
- Don't have extensive RWIS
- Impacting heavy commercial routes
- We also have two main carriers that receive advisory information sent directly to their drivers
- We have a unique opportunity with our borders. Ambassador Bridge allows us to give information and get reconstruct info out
- Crossing has a lot of commercial traffic. – Coordination with Ontario and MDOT to provide information on boarder traffic – information link
- Efforts on commercial traffic through planning initiatives – modeling – consideration for what type of traffic is moving where
- In regards to 511- it is being addressed statewide. A study was done. The next step is to set up a statewide program. It is not set up yet
- We are looking at traffic management software statewide
- Active center in Grand Rapids – operates through local police department – the center is moving to MDOT this spring and will have a new focus.

Dave (??) from MDOT

- Good things going on with emergency routes
- There is a lot of commercial traffic from Indiana to Chicago – working with Gary, Chicago, and Milwaukee to increase involvement
- In southwest region we want to put variable message signs to get information to the public
- We are involved with local police and rural - can partner with them to find out high crash locations

THIRD PORTION OF AGENDA – MSTOP Reports

This portion was designed to hear about MSTOP work across the country

Valerie Briggs from AASHTO to talk about recent progress

- Overview of progress– We has two initiatives – TranSystems was the contractor on first initiative and it is done
- The second initiative has not been started yet.
- A number of state DOTs were participants in forming ad hoc MSTOPs.
- People recognized and decided we needed to research what MSTOPs were about and why they are forming and if they could be supported nationally.
- We completed case studies on MSTOPs
 - look at commonalities
 - completed 1.5 yr ago
- A set of detailed case studies was done on all profiled MSTOPs
- From the executive summary:
- 3 categories of MSTOPs
 - 1--formed around metropolitan areas that cross state borders
 - 2-- corridor oriented
 - 3-- Focused service partnerships—for example, roadway information systems or 511 – to coordinate programs across state boundaries – grew into addressing other problems
- MSTOPs have 5 purposes: weather ,emergencies, homeland security, goods movement, and travel information

I am impressed at what MSTOPs are doing and increasingly growing in importance

They all started as grassroots initiatives.

We asked for additional funding for supplemental research on guidelines of multi-state programs.

The effort will: (1) – bring to together a conference with people working on MSTOPs.

(2)- Develop a guide book for MSTOPs with best practices, organizational structure and how to sustain MSTOPs.

We want to use AASHTO committees (SSOM) to guide the 17 month effort– AASHTO SSOM will meet in Milwaukee in 2007.

Gary, Chicago, Milwaukee Corridor

Dan Shamo

- Started at the same time as I-95 corridor was started
- WI, IN, IL involved
- 16 counties associated
- Many agencies associated
- Business model similar to I-95
- Administrative services provided under contract – 1/3 each state funding
- States provide all resources

Gateway Communication System has between the state's #1 success

- Centered in IL
- WI and IN feed information to and from the system

- Gateway's main source is website

Also a success – Corridor Action Teams (CAT)

- It is used to provide ITS support/coordination across projects
- Coordinate media releases, update websites, portable changeable message signs

Security initiatives with Argonne National Laboratory - Helped promote technology in Indiana on air quality and in weigh station develop

The 3 states have a 511 planning effort coordinated together

In another level of cooperation we are working on regional performance measures

As Phil and Mark indicated – change in focus to freight movement

- This is a big deal for us
- We have a lot going on with this
- We promote the CVISN effort

Our biggest success story is more along the lines of a working relationship between 16 county agencies. This facilitates problem solving. Problems tend to be more institutional than technical – and the relationships formed have resolved many of these – so the relationship is the biggest success of corridor.

Northwest Passage

Mark Nelson

Began in 2001 – the program began because we realized that state development of rural ITS strategies were being developed without looking at neighboring states – We realized we needed to start looking at these intercity facilities as corridors to get the most benefit from them. States involved - Washington, Minnesota, Idaho, North and South Dakota, Wisconsin

Problems listed to be addressed:

- Lack of consistent travel info
- Weather information, especially for rural areas
- Lack of communication systems for rural areas
- Inconsistent reliability of CVO information and underutilized capacity in rural areas
- Lack of coordination and management at the borders
- Need for better information exchange
- Participation in rural areas

We are now in phase 2 of the pooled fund study

Concept of coalition – multi state would be difficult – contributing money - pooled fund is the only way to pool money effectively

Benefits to corridor approach to planning

- Travelers use 511 coordinated between North Dakota and Minnesota
- Plan for border to border coordination of dynamic message signs – started dialogue

Phase 2 – taking step back for a more comprehensive approach

- Comprehensive planning approach

- Strategic deployment plan throughout entire corridor
- Montana yet to join
- Charter will call for 1 state, 1 vote – There will be a set minimum annual level of participation and a governance approach to management

Learned: difficult, no good federal program for this type of idea – had to figure out pooled fund was best – difficult to get all states approval – but just getting people together and talking about technology and infrastructure is very important – regardless of specific projects that come out.

I-95 Corridor Coalition

Marygrace Parker

Early work grew out of the need for multi-state focus because it is easy to travel on I-95 through states quickly. Looking at multi-state applications.

- Point technology transfer though states
- Variable message signs are very important – ability to come up with a common protocol
- Compatibility across states
- Bring people together to talk about multi-state issues
- Coordination needed does not stop at border
- Highway operations group was the 1st group formed to really help
- Started as 12 states
- Teams got together and worked on issues between management and operations
- Grew from traffic oriented to be more multimodal
- Looking at CVISN
- Business model – annual fund through Congress – allows us to have a steady stream – staff – funding to promote model to be member driven – meet semi annually – set focus of program- biggest focus in last couple years is moving from just looking at multi state to looking at reality of transportation systems-planning on how are you going to grade different transportation facilities.

Phil Decabooter – What percentage of the population is in your corridor?

Answer- don't know but pretty dense

Todd Szymkowski - What do you use for sharing of data across corridor?

Answer-We contract with TRANSCOM to be our operations center – they oversee the information exchange network; provide maintenance support, exchange info, coordinating information.

High Plains Coalition

Dotty Shoup

Began in June 2001.

Includes I-74, I-80, I-76, I-25, I-15

When started we were interested in it because it would give alternative routing for CVO.

Also, we have a multi-state state coalition of maintenance people to talk about new technology – how they will use facilities during winter months

We have to be able to do coordinate resources from state to state

Concerned about protecting integrity of data. We have advanced traveler information systems but each state has a different information. The states are not going to get new systems because they have already made significant investment. So, we started looking at a XML solution for the exchange of data. Goal is to have one map of region.

Governing board, DOT directors are the governing body and serve as the Executive Committee Working group comes together to prioritize issues

ITS directors are Steering Committee, also control money

Our Executive Committee meets and committed pooled funding of \$1.2 million

We want to take an all hazards approach to be able to cover a variety if major incidents such as weather, hazmat, homeland security, etc...

We provide each state with a device to share information – data is extracted for information we need – pushes info to XML server with GPS reference, will color code on map

Nebraska has 511. We have Meridian Environmental as contractor and so does Kansas

Wyoming does not have 511- but they do have an 800#

- One difficulty- with different state systems, how do we get the information we need
- Benefits: cost benefit for what we look for with I-80 in winter
- Work closely with CVO – they know they can use our information
- In High Plains area we have few alternative routes. We have to get information out so it can be used in time
- We figure if we can close one end of the corridor the cost of that event only to motor vehicles will be about 5 million vehicles per head
- Most of other interstates in area have the same interstate
- CVO is very excited – so far just verbal support

I-10 Freight Corridor

Mike Akridge

Began in 1999.

Started in California.

Initial push was to create corridor with truck only lanes across the corridor.

Florida said that they have no reason for truck only lanes.

We went back to find common ground.

We looked at how it would affect the economy of each state.

We took a new look at the overall corridor system.

We assessed needs.

Purpose – projected freight movement – develop plan for improved traffic flows.

Hired a consultant.

Phase 1 – examined current and future flows

- Looked at possibility of widening I-10
- Looking at not only commercial vehicles, but also their impact with local traffic
- Looked at all modes of transportation

- Did not see much of an increase in traffic flow when moving truck to rail or waterway
- Only 2-3% decrease in total volume

Concluded – multimodal

- Finished phase one
- Website www.i10freightstudy.org
- Phase 2 will soon kick off
- Did a peer exchange recently
- Shared insight into corridors
- Created a concept of operations
- Much like I-95—have a steering and advising committee
- Phase 2 is deployment
- Phase 1 was funded through a pooled fund
- Phase 2 will use left over money from phase 1
- Will still have a steering committee And ?
- Phase 2 will also include intelligent vehicle initiative, weather, travel info, traffic operations,

The group decided we would split the corridor because needs are so different but we will have overarching groups to look at groups as a whole

We will look at architecture as a whole

Texas to California and Texas to Florida split for projects

Investigating a Gulf Coast Cooperative network

Pretty aggressive – moving into long-term commitment to corridor – it will still be a pooled fund study – we need to make the states understand these projects are important to each other and they all need to provide financial backing

We will probably never have staff like I-95, but we are going to have to come out of the freight study title as we get into phase 2 and get more corridor wide

Upper Midwest Corridor Coalition

Teresa Adams

Started in 2003.

We are not an MSTOP – but our work is very similar.

We are very broad as well.

About 30% of freight goes through the corridor.

We are looking at all modes of transportation.

Predicted growth in freight over next 20 yrs is expected to be 50%.

Funded through a pooled fund study.

Researchers from UW and UIC and U-Toledo – we studied freight transportation within our corridor – also barge traffic on major rivers – demand and capacity – pulled information from a planning perspective – made available on web.

Business model has been facilitating discussion and meetings to give states importance of freight and getting them to talk to each other about policy issues.

Motivation –

Driven by challenges and freight movement importance.

2nd congestion is likely to make movement difficult within the region.

Recently began Phase 2 – move from study to coalition
Our objective is to develop a regional agenda for dealing with freight.

Program Highlights:

Last fall we pulled states into a discussion to get high-level agenda/program initiatives
Planning to migrate from strategic issues to tactical actions
Vision – cooperation across borders and recognition that freight issues do not stop at the boarder
Developing and using regional freight performance measures
Want to be able to speak with a regional voice at federal level

We have identified several things dealing with response to highway travel issues and the need to identify our hwy freight system and to get it identified as corridor - particularly concerning with safety and environmental issues.

We talked about truck only lanes and provided a forum for states to come together and consider their possibility including other regional approaches to tolls and deployment of technology.

FOURTH AGENDA ITEM – OPEN DISCUSSION

Todd began the discussion, asking if anyone had any questions or saw any immediate opportunities

Phil Decabooter Seems to me that the direction is to focus on commercial operations or are we going to broaden spectrum? – do we want a narrow scope or to take a broad view with the formation of a coalition

John Corbin - There seem to be two ends of spectrum on MSTOPs – time and money spent before anything is developed, but now some MSTOPs have shown early things happening

Mark Nelson

First we need to start talking to each other (internally within MnDOT) – we need to talk about where our interests are in common – depends on where overlap is – our office currently does not have a lot to do with freight now

Scott McCormick – as I listen to coalition activities – I think we need to find a way to tie together different capabilities of universities involved
Common messaging for all users is important, these coalitions and MSTOPs already know who to talk to, who to engage

It is important to realize that information collected has value to freight and VII

John Corbin - from a Michigan DOT perspective where do you see the most business opportunities for further investing in multi-state cooperation
or the same question to Ohio?

Mia Silver - Detroit perspective – single occurring incidents – something happens with a nuclear reactor – need to coordinate with Indiana – interagency coordination needed to partner with states so we know where to send traffic if they cant get through our corridors

John Corbin - It might be worth thinking about where critical points are, where choke points are

10-12 key points where a major incident or weather event might impact the extended region. This might help focus discussion

Mike Akridge - We have had discussion on where we want to go with Phase 2 – we are going to focus on freight but know we can't forget others issues. Freight could run by itself, but when you mix in other issues you get real problems. So, we need to focus on all

Freight serves a purpose of making what we do more relative to econ, but can't pull freight out

Mark Nelson – how did it happen that GCM has moved toward freight – it was our commissioner (INDOT) who has been having a lot of discussions. This has given us focus at the executive level on the direction we need to be going

John Corbin - We would like a representative from each state in steering group for continued dialogue

FIFTH AGENDA ITEM – NEXT STEPS

Next teleconference – Wednesday, Mar. 22, 1-3 CST

[same dialing instructions, Dial 888.677.9189 ext.1204]

April 24 Regional Traffic Operations Partners Workshop in Columbus, OH

[see <http://www.uppermidwestfreight.org/> for details]

John Corbin – Thanks to all who attended.

Meeting concluded at 3:05 pm.