Traveler Information Systems to Support Transportation Operations (Invited Presentation)

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ABSTRACT

This project is a pooled fund consortium of 15 states and provinces working together to advance the deployment of innovative technology, validate and improve ITS standards, and promote the use of travel information systems to support transportation operations. The result of the Pooled Fund is the Condition Acquisition Reporting System (CARS) and related modules that currently serve as the backbone of traveler information systems for many states. This collaboration represents a best practice because new states joining the consortium benefit from the years of experience and the monetary investments of member states. Similarly, new states bring an outside perspective and insight to assist existing member states in solving problems. As an example, Rhode Island was able to roll out a statewide condition reporting system, a statewide 511 phone system and a statewide travel information web site for less than $300,000 deployment costs, and meet their rapid rollout schedule.

This traveler information system was developed because State Departments of Transportation needed a cost effective solution supported by emerging ITS standards to enable manual and automated event reporting that could serve as a central repository of all travel-related events statewide. This central system serves as the data content for travel information systems such as 511, DMS signs, and Internet dissemination. The nature of this issue and the ability to share costs through common development led to the natural concept of a Pooled Fund.

The CARS consortium benefits member agencies and the traveling public as follows:

- State DOTs benefit from the experience gained working with other state agencies to collectively solve problems and learn from others experiences.
- Travelers benefit from the delivery of real-time traveler information through 511, web, highway advisory radio, DMS etc. For contiguous states such as Minnesota and Iowa, travelers experience universal information across state borders.
- The information provides real time traveler information on road surface conditions, road work, and incidents that will allow drivers to make better travel decisions.
- The collaboration reduces barriers to deployment and helps maintain advanced technology within a rapidly changing cross-cutting operational environment. Decisions reached by the group literally bring the experiences of thousands of operators currently using the system to help understand (from a real-world perspective) how to improve the systems.

Additional information is available from each state or at the website www.carsprogram.org.

Key words: ITS standards—transportation operations—traveler information system