

INTRODUCTION



Figure i-1
Planned Special Event

PLANNED SPECIAL EVENTS

Planned special events include sporting events, concerts, festivals, and conventions occurring at permanent multi-use venues (e.g., arenas, stadiums, racetracks, fairgrounds, amphitheaters, convention centers, etc.). They also include less frequent public events such as parades, fireworks displays, bicycle races, sporting games, motorcycle rallies, seasonal festivals, and milestone celebrations at temporary venues.

The term *planned* special event is used to describe these activities because of their known locations, scheduled times of occurrence, and associated operating characteristics. Emergencies, such as a severe weather

event or other major catastrophe, represent special events that can induce extreme traffic demand under an evacuation condition. However, these events occur at random and with little or no advance warning, thus contrasting characteristics of planned special events.

A planned special event creates an increase in travel demand and may require road closures to stage the event. Planned special events generate trips, thus impacting overall transportation system operations. This includes freeway operations, arterial and other street operations, transit operations, and pedestrian flow. Unlike roadway construction activities or traffic incidents that constrain travel within a single corridor, planned special events affect travel in all corridors serving the event venue.

BACKGROUND

Planned special events pose a unique and diverse set of challenges to stakeholders charged with maintaining transportation system safety, mobility, and reliability. These challenges include:

- Managing intense travel demand
- Mitigating potential capacity constraints
- Influencing the utility associated with various travel choices
- Accommodating heavy pedestrian flow

Managing travel for planned special events encompasses both a local and regional level. The local level involves managing travel for one planned special event. The regional perspective concerns proactively improving travel management for all planned special events occurring in a region where, in most major U.S. metropolitan areas, hundreds of planned special events occur annually.

Table i-1 compares current state-of-the-practice activities to state-of-the-art activities in managing travel for planned special events.

Table i-1
Practice of Managing Travel for Planned Special Events

STATE-OF-THE-PRACTICE	STATE-OF-THE-ART
<i>Institutional</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage traffic and parking for planned special events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage travel for planned special events by adopting an inter-modal approach and utilizing travel demand management strategies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on traffic management team needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form multidisciplinary stakeholder groups and solicit public input.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure verbal coordination between stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a joint operations policy or mutual-aid agreement between stakeholders.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on single planned special events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a committee on planned special events to monitor and plan travel management activities for all special events that occur within a region.
<i>Organizational</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct periodic ad-hoc event planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow an established event operations planning process. • Develop standard street use event routes and traffic flow routes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on event-specific planning and operations only. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate event evaluation results into future planning activities to facilitate continuous improvement of transportation system performance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain periodic participation and contribution from community interest and event support stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish stakeholder groups specific to advance planning and day-of-event activities to strengthen stakeholder coordination and commitment.
<i>Technical</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize fixed freeway and arterial management infrastructure to monitor and manage traffic during a planned special event.⁽¹⁾ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize mobile devices:⁽¹⁾ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Portable traffic management systems (closed-circuit television, detectors, changeable message signs) ○ Portable traffic signals ○ Portable traffic management centers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct point traffic and parking management using field personnel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deploy automated systems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parking management systems ○ Dynamic trailblazer signs ○ Lane control signs ○ Blank-out signs

The *state-of-the-practice* involves an *operations-based approach* that incorporates existing policies, procedures, and infrastructure applied under daily traffic management, incident management, and multi-modal management activities. In this approach, stakeholder planning activities parallel those for unplanned events, such as traffic incidents and emergencies, where various *what-if* scenarios shape response and management strategies. Stakeholders characteristically diverge from an interagency concept of operations and, instead, focus on the rapid mobilization and execution of planned agency-specific tasks.

However, incident management or emergency response experiences provide the opportunity to build on existing stakeholder relationships, although it must be recognized that stakeholder roles and priorities change considerably under planned special events. This technical reference will facilitate building a successful special event transportation management plan starting from a cornerstone of daily traffic, incident, and multi-modal management activities.

The *state-of-the-art* in managing travel for planned special events emphasizes a *program approach* specific to planned special events. This approach revolves around distinct, chronological phases relative to advance planning, management, and evaluation activities. Individual phases include interconnected strategies to assist stakeholders in identifying needs and resulting operations and service strategies tailored to the characteristics of a specific planned special event:

- Operations strategies include proactive control and management tactics, coupled with innovative technology applications, that effect changes in traffic and transit

operations to improve safety and reduce delay in addition to reducing field personnel requirements.

- Service strategies include policies and initiatives aimed at communicating advisory information and travel options to event patrons and non-attendee road users to reduce peak traffic demand levels on corridors serving an event venue, thus improving system travel mobility and reliability.

Collectively, these strategies meet the challenge of managing travel for planned special events on a *local level* or for a single planned special event. Stakeholders must predict travel demand and efficiently utilize the excess capacity of the roadway system, parking facilities, and transit. They must also reach out to all road users, communicate travel information, and offer attractive incentives to influence traveler behavior and decision-making.

Integration of phases, from post-event evaluation to advance planning for future planned special events, creates a seamless process allowing for continuous improvement of transportation system performance from one planned special event to the next. This iterative process, where stakeholders apply successes and lessons learned from a particular special event to future events, meets the challenge of managing travel for planned special events on a *regional level* or for all planned special events in a region.

The advance planning and management of travel for planned special events requires the consistent involvement and coordination of stakeholders within and across every event management phase. Stakeholders may have the opportunity to partner with new stakeholders across travel modes, disciplines, and jurisdictions. As a result, the state-of-the-art

includes forming multidisciplinary stakeholder groups assigned to carryout the objectives of a particular phase of managing travel for planned special events. This framework facilitates easy buy-in by agencies not involved in day-to-day transportation system operations and achieves better stakeholder consensus on group objectives.

PURPOSE

Given the dynamic characteristics of planned special events, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Transportation Management Center Pooled-Fund Study (TMC PFS) recognized the need to identify operations planning and program issues, derive operational strategies and plans, and examine successful interagency cooperation and communication techniques specific to planned special events. In turn, the TMC PFS commissioned development of a technical reference document that provides direction, guidance, and recommended practices related to the proactive management of planned special events. It builds on the state-of-the-practice in managing travel for planned special events and strives to complement and advance the present capabilities of TMCs in addition to that of traffic management programs in metropolitan, urban, and rural areas.

This technical reference bridges the gap between the state-of-the-practice and state-of-the-art in managing travel for planned special events by providing both: (1) a framework for establishing a stakeholder coordinated and integrated planned special event management practice and (2) innovative techniques for enhancing the efficiency and applicability of current agency event-specific plans. This handbook presents and recommends various processes, operations strategies, service strategies, and technology applications that satisfy the special customer

requirements and stakeholder performance requirements driving planned special event travel management. It profiles numerous successful practices, highlighting proven policies, regulations, strategies, and resources used in the advance planning, management, and monitoring of travel for planned special events.

This handbook was written to assist responsible agencies in managing the ever-increasing number of planned special events impacting transportation system operations in rural, urban, and metropolitan areas. It communicates to a wide audience, assisting readers that possess the following backgrounds: (1) novice planned special event practitioner, (2) experienced planned special event practitioner, (3) local, single-jurisdiction event planning and management, (4) regional, multi-jurisdiction event planning and management. This technical reference facilitates easy extraction of guidelines, processes, operations strategies, service strategies, and associated tactics to meet the needs of transportation system operators. In turn, operators will gain an understanding of the keys to successful planned special event transportation management, as summarized in Table i-2.

Table i-2
Keys to Successful Management
of Planned Special Events

KEY EFFORTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve early, constant input and participation of involved agencies. • Predict event-generated travel impacts on both a local and regional level. • Develop an integrated transportation management plan that can accommodate a range of traffic demands and other contingencies. • Ensure successful traffic management plan implementation. • Deploy a well-organized traffic management team equipped with the ability to communicate seamlessly between agencies.

Table i-2 (cont'd.)
Keys to Successful Management
of Planned Special Events

KEY EFFORTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct continuous traffic monitoring on the day-of-event and maintain protocol for modifying the traffic management plan to accommodate real-time traffic conditions.• Transfer event management successes into daily applications, and translate lessons learned into future event planning and operations needs.

REFERENCES

1. Jacobson, L., *Highway Traffic Operations and Freeway Management State-of-the-Practice White Paper*, Report No. FHWA-OP-03-076, Federal Highway Administration, Washington, D.C., March 2003, 43 pp.

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