

The National Transportation Operations Coalition (NTOC)

21ST CENTURY OPERATIONS USING 21ST CENTURY TECHNOLOGIES

Today, following the success of the National Dialogue on Transportation Operations, transportation professionals are embracing the need to improve the performance of the Nation's transportation system through a stronger commitment to management and operations. Now more than ever, the operations community is accepting the call to move from a dialogue on the issues of system mobility, reliability, and security, to promoting and supporting actions necessary to meet the challenges these issues present.

The National Transportation Operations Coalition (NTOC) serves as an important foundation for institutionalizing management and operations into the transportation industry. This alliance of national associations, practitioners, and private sector groups represents the collective interests of stakeholders at State, local, and regional levels who have a wide range of experience in operations, planning, and public safety.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE NTOC

In 1999, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) initiated the National Dialogue on Transportation Operations in an attempt to encourage discussions on operations issues and advocate for a stronger focus on operating the Nation's transportation system.

The Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) estimated that in 2001, the 75 largest metropolitan areas experienced 3.5 billion vehicle-hours of delay, resulting in 5.7 billion gallons in wasted fuel and \$69.5 billion in lost productivity. Congestion has clearly become a topic of social and political interest that continues to have a significant impact on the economic productivity of the United States. As a result of growing concerns in mobility and system reliability, the transportation operations community identified the need to devote greater attention to strategies that would help our existing infrastructure perform as intended. The National Dialogue represented a formal "call to arms" for increasing consciousness and encouraging the transportation community to adopt strategies that promote building, maintaining, and operating a transportation system that is safe, reliable, and secure.



Some of the major initiatives of the National Dialogue on Transportation Operations have included a series of white papers developed to serve as a foundation for future debate on the need for a stronger commitment to operations; an electronic dialogue initiated to facilitate ongoing discussions on the meaning and role of transportation operations; and, in October 2001, a National Summit on Operations held to obtain a broad consensus on the key challenges and next steps needed to advance transportation operations.

Summary of Summit Recommendations

1. Increase focus on transportation operations
2. Define transportation operations in a meaningful way
3. Develop performance-based decisionmaking; focus on safety, security and reliability; and develop an information infrastructure
4. Support planning for operations
5. Support homeland security
6. Accelerate cultural changes through policies and practices
7. Enhance interagency coordination
8. Continue operations programs and policies

The activities leading up to and following the National Summit laid the foundation for moving the transportation operations community from dialogue to action. As a result, institutional changes are taking place at the Federal, State, and local levels, fostering a new environment focused on improving mobility and reliability through better operation of the transportation system. This shift in thinking has led to the evolution of the National Dialogue and the creation of the NTOC.

THE NTOC AGENDA

Remaining closely aligned to the original vision of the National Dialogue, the members of the NTOC agreed that the goals identified through the Dialogue were still worthy of pursuit.

NTOC Goals Statement

We will know we are successful when:

- Customer surveys indicate consistently increasing satisfaction with the performance of the transportation system
- The focus of decisionmakers and transportation agencies includes continuous performance-based delivery of services in addition to implementation of individual projects
- Performance measures are in place that are understandable, measurable, and used effectively in making decisions to improve system performance
- Managing and operating the transportation system are integral parts of a funding and staffing continuum that also includes planning, design, construction, and maintenance

In support of these goals, the Coalition identified some near-term action items that offer tangible progress in institutionalizing management and operations within transportation agencies. These actions fall into three broad categories:

Managing for Performance

- Developing easy to use performance measure materials
- Creating information and tools to support planning for operations
- Encouraging consideration of operations into the planning process

Advancing the State of the Practice

- Developing a toolbox of best practices
- Developing performance benchmarks for changeable message signs
- Developing performance benchmarks for traffic signal systems

Communicating the Message

- Developing a comprehensive/coordinated outreach program
- Summarizing operations benefits data
- Developing products aimed at decisionmakers
- Creating a shared management and operations Web site

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

The NTOC currently consists of a number of subcommittees and action teams who are actively working on activities to promote management and operations strategies and benefits to stakeholders. Current subcommittees and action team focus areas include:

- Performance Measurement & Reporting
- Traffic Signal Systems & VMS Benchmarking
- Linking Planning & Operations
- Operations Funding
- Freight Operations
- Communications & Outreach

To learn more about the NTOC and its current activities visit http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/nat_dialogue.htm
The NTOC meets biannually and subcommittees and action teams meet regularly throughout the year. The NTOC is open to new members interested in transportation management and operations. Participation is on a volunteer basis.