

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL PROCEDURES

This chapter presents a brief overview of: (1) some considerations involved in determining which State unit should be responsible for developing, coordinating, and evaluating highway-related data for the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) information needs; (2) the FHWA's series of reporting forms and general procedures, including due dates for their submission by the States; and (3) the procedures that the States should follow in developing and reviewing the reports before sending them to the FHWA.

Responsibility for highway statistics.—The objective of this Guide is to develop a consistent, coordinated and comprehensive national overview on specific aspects of State and local transportation. For the various FHWA report forms, data are collected from several State agencies and departments, and from many local units of government. A central location within the State DOT can effectively insure the consistency, accuracy, and comprehensiveness of the information by coordinating the State's data reporting efforts. The planning division of the State highway agency often assumes the role of clearinghouse for highway statistics on a Statewide basis to serve its own data needs and those of the Governor, the State legislature, and other State agencies. The FHWA suggests that the unit responsible for coordinating highway-related data within the State should also be responsible for coordinating the reporting of such data to the FHWA.

FHWA State Planning and Research (SPR) Program funds are available to all States to defray the cost of obtaining and reporting statistical information to FHWA. The FHWA strongly encourages States to include the data collection and reporting activities of *A Guide to Reporting Highway Statistics* in their annual SPR programs (Title 23 U.S. Code, section 420.105 (a)).

FHWA reporting forms.—The FHWA has designed a series of reporting forms to account for certain quantitative and financial aspects in two major areas relating to highway transportation, i.e., highway use - the ownership and operation of motor-vehicles on the nation's highways; and highway funding - the receipts and expenditures for highways by public agencies. The forms are listed below by category.

To identify motor-fuel consumption and motor-vehicle use including the receipts and distributions from State highway-user taxation:

- FHWA-551M Monthly Motor Fuel Consumption
- FHWA-556 State Motor-Fuel Tax Receipts and Initial Distribution by Collection Agencies
- FHWA-561 State Motor-Vehicle Registrations, Registration Fees, and Miscellaneous Receipts
- FHWA-562 State Driver Licenses and Fees
- FHWA-566 State Motor-Vehicle Registration Fees and Other Receipts: Initial Distribution by Collecting Agencies
- FHWA-571 Receipts from State Taxation of Motor Vehicles Operated for Hire and Other Motor Carriers

To identify the highway funding activities of State and local governments:

- FHWA-531 State Highway Income
- FHWA-532 State Highway Expenditures
- FHWA-534 State Highway Capital Outlay and Maintenance Expenditures
- FHWA-536 Local Highway Finance (Required biennially for odd-numbered data years, optional for even-numbered data years)
- FHWA-539 Toll Facility Receipts and Disbursements (Optional form)
- FHWA-541 State Transportation Obligations Issued During Year and Allotment of Proceeds
- FHWA-542 Status of State Transportation Debt
- FHWA-543 State Transportation Sinking Fund and Debt Service Transactions (Optional form)

FHWA report timing.—States may report on either a calendar or State fiscal year basis. That choice determines the due date for most of the FHWA forms. The FHWA report forms fall into the following two groups:

The following forms are due on January 1, if prepared on a State fiscal year basis, or April 1, if prepared on a calendar year basis:

FHWA-531
FHWA-532
FHWA-539
FHWA-541
FHWA-542
FHWA-543
FHWA-556
FHWA-561
FHWA-562
FHWA-566
FHWA-571

The remaining reports are due as follows:

FHWA-534 February 15 if prepared on a fiscal year basis, May 15 if prepared on a calendar year basis.

FHWA-536 Required biennially for odd-numbered data years, and due on October 1 of the following even-numbered year. (For example, data for calendar or fiscal years ending in 1995 would be due October 1, 1996.) Reporting for even-numbered data years is optional.

FHWA-551M Due 90 days after the close of the month for which fuel volume data are being reported. (For example, the June report is due September 1.)

All forms reporting on State highway funding activities must be prepared on the same basis and for the same reporting year. If forms FHWA-531 and FHWA-532 are developed on a fiscal year basis, then form FHWA-534 for State highway capital outlay and maintenance expenditures and the FHWA-540 series forms for State transportation debt must be prepared on the same fiscal year basis.

Forms identifying motor-fuel consumption and motor-vehicle use and the related receipts and distributions of State highway-user taxation, FHWA-556, FHWA-561, FHWA-562, FHWA-566, and FHWA-571 do not need

to be prepared on the same reporting year as the report forms for the highway funding activities of State governments. States should evaluate each of these forms individually, to determine if it will be easier to prepare them on a calendar or fiscal year basis.

States choosing to report driver license information, form FHWA-562, on a fiscal year basis should note the additional special instructions in Chapter 4.

The due dates have been set as late as possible to permit the States the maximum time for preparation of the FHWA reports while allowing FHWA a reasonable amount of time for review and subsequent compilation of State information into summaries for *Highway Statistics*. The staggered due dates for calendar and fiscal year reporting allow FHWA to process and analyze State data more efficiently. For the majority of States with fiscal years ending June 30, fiscal year reporting allows an extra three months for report preparation over States that choose calendar year reporting. The due dates are considered to be reasonable targets that all States can meet by using modern information systems and efficient management practices.

The State and FHWA Division office should work out a schedule that provides for timely reporting. This will ensure their receipt in FHWA's Washington Headquarters on or about the due dates, and will afford adequate time for report review in the FHWA Division offices.

State review of reports.—In reviewing the reports prior to releasing them to FHWA, the State highway planning division or State coordinating office should compare the entries with the basic report cross checks listed in Appendix A. A comparison should also be made with equivalent entries on the preceding year's reports. Particular attention should be given to any reviews and evaluations of prior reporting by the FHWA's Washington Headquarters or field offices.

The FHWA's Washington Headquarters on occasion finds it necessary to request supplemental statements or comments from the State to obtain a better understanding of the data, of the relationship of one report to another, or to maintain uniformity in the statistics. By comparing the requests of the prior year with the material assembled for the current year, the State highway planning division or coordinating office will be able to judge whether the current reports are sufficiently detailed and, thus, minimize the possibility of a repetition of requests for additional information and the attendant delays.

The State's review should also take into account changes out of the ordinary in either the magnitude of amounts or the appearance or disappearance of entries in the current reports compared with prior years. Legislative enactments, court decisions freezing or releasing funds, and policy and program changes can all cause substantial changes in the data reported. Whether addition or deletion of entries, or increases or decreases in amounts, significant changes should be explained in footnotes to the reports or in transmittal letters.

The test of what constitutes a significant change is a matter of judgment that the State is in the best position to make. The mere fact that highway revenues or expenditures have increased or decreased is not noteworthy. However, when changes are the result of extraordinary circumstances, they should be noted.

Reporting to FHWA.—As a general procedure, each report should be forwarded to the FHWA Division office when completed. The FHWA Division office should review all forms submitted and forward the original to the Washington Headquarters, attention, Office of Highway Policy Information, HPPI.

The State and FHWA Division office should not delay sending in a number of reports when one report is incomplete. When a report is expected to be delayed beyond the due date, the State should notify FHWA of the delay, giving the probable completion date. In extreme circumstances, estimates may have to suffice when the classification or segregation of certain items is expected to be significantly delayed or is unattainable.

As an option, but only with the concurrence of the FHWA Division office, highway statistical reports may be transmitted directly to the Washington Headquarters by the State. When this option is followed, the State should provide copies to the FHWA Division office.

Microcomputer templates in Lotus 1-2-3 are available for reporting data for all forms included in this Guide. States are encouraged to use the microcomputer templates for these forms when reporting to FHWA. See Appendix B for information about these templates and options for electronic transmission of data to FHWA.

In lieu of using the various report forms included in this Guide, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Territories—American Samoa, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands—may provide the information shown in Appendix C. Although the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico may elect to use this option, it is still responsible for

developing and providing the monthly report form FHWA-551M.

Metrication.—States have the option of reporting information on form FHWA-551M in either metric or English units of measurement. Motor-fuel use may be reported in either gallons or liters. The units of measurement used must be indicated on forms FHWA-551M in the space provided.

FHWA Adjustments - All of the State-reported data are analyzed by FHWA for consistency and for adherence to reporting guidelines. In a number of cases, data may be adjusted or modeled to improve consistency and uniformity across the States. The analysis and adjustment is accomplished in close consultation with the State supplying the data. In cases where Federal funds distribution relies on State-reported data, FHWA may, as a final resort, adjust State data where insufficient justification for year-to-year change exists.