



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

IMPROVED
CONSTRUCTION
new strategies to enhance the quality
AND
MAINTENANCE
performance of highway operations
OPERATIONS

Optimizing Highway Performance:

Partnering for Work Zone Safety in South Carolina

MOTORISTS ARE TIRED OF WORK ZONE DELAYS

The Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) passed earlier this year, coupled with the South Carolina Department of Transportation's (DOT) bonding programs that provide \$3.7 billion for highway repairs and maintenance, has given South Carolina a record amount of funding for highway construction and maintenance. That's good news—but it presents somewhat of a problem. Funds will be spent on repairs and improvements to existing roads and highways, and that means that motorists will encounter more work zones; more signs, stripes, and barrels; and more potentially frustrating work zone delays. And motorists—our customers—have told us that they are fed up with work zone delays.

In late 1995, the National Quality Initiative Steering Committee conducted a survey to assess the public's satisfaction with the Nation's highway system and to identify priorities for improvement. The survey found that motorists were most dissatisfied with delays caused by highway construction projects.

S.C. DOT IS WORKING TO IMPROVE TRAFFIC FLOW AND SAFETY AND REDUCE CONSTRUCTION TIME

In South Carolina, the DOT and the Federal Highway Administration are committed to finding ways to reduce delays caused by highway maintenance and construction operations. And by minimizing those delays, the S.C. Division and DOT can both take a big step toward achieving FHWA's goal of a 20 percent reduction in user delays nationwide and improve safety for both highway workers and motorists.

Realizing that achieving continuous quality improvement takes teamwork, the S.C. Division proposed a partnering workshop to develop initiatives to improve traffic flow and safety and reduce actual construction time on the State's highways. The emphasis was on the concept of "getting in, staying in, getting the job done right, and getting off the road." The 1-day workshop, held in September 1998, drew 28 representatives from S.C. DOT, 29 from contractors and industry, and 5 from FHWA. The workshop was jointly hosted by FHWA, S.C. DOT, and the Carolina Associated General Contractors of America (CAGC). The purpose of the workshop was to identify contracting issues, specifications, and other barriers to reducing construction time, improving safety, and minimizing traveler inconvenience

and disruption in work zones. Once the barriers were identified, the workshop participants then worked on finding ways of overcoming those barriers.

The workshop focused on four themes: traffic control, contractor productivity, work zone safety, and public awareness. Workshop participants formed teams that concentrated on developing “initiatives for continuous improvement” in the four areas. After each team had presented its ideas to the entire group, the group then identified the top “initiatives for action” under each theme:



This workshop is all part of a bigger initiative on “meeting the customers’ needs.” Similar workshops have been held in:

Wisconsin (Oct. 1997)
Contact: Gary Whited,
Wisconsin DOT (608-266-
3707), or Dale Decker,
NAPA (301-731-4748)

California (Feb. 1998)
Contact: Neil Hawks, TRB,
202-334-1430

Illinois (June 1998)
Contact: John Rohlf, Illinois
Division, 217-492-4618
Eric Harm, Illinois DOT,
217-782-7200

Traffic Control

- Pre-bid meetings for maintenance of traffic plans
- Provide median crossovers for construction traffic circulation
- Encourage contractors to develop and submit alternate staging plans
- No lane closure length limit
- Use law enforcement

Contractor Productivity/Efficiency

- Move utilities sooner
- Innovative contracting (e.g., A+B bidding, I/D clauses, lane rental)
- Partnering meeting to discuss maintenance of traffic
- Provide flexible contract time for notice to proceed and completion dates
- Additional message boards for public notification

Work Zone Safety

- Use more message boards for public notification/alternate routing
- Use law enforcement in work zones
- Work zone training certification for contractors
- Remove signs when no work is in progress
- Provide detour routes

Public Awareness

- Develop pamphlets and brochures that describe work zone activity
- Use television, radio, newspaper, signboards, and daily faxes to get the word out
- Increase use of variable message signs
- Educate the public about work zones
- Use highway advisory radio

The South Carolina DOT is already implementing many of these initiatives. A follow-up meeting of the workshop partners will be held in January 1999. For more information on S.C. activities, contact John Sullivan, S.C. Division, telephone: 803-765-5282 or Danny Shealy, South Carolina DOT, telephone: 803-737-1308.

Other workshops are planned in Washington State (January 1999; contact Bill Carr, WSDOT, 360-705-7802) and Missouri (contact Bruce Green, Missouri DOT, 573-751-9248; or Karla Snyder-Petty, Missouri Division, 573-636-7104).

For more information on this program, contact your local FHWA division office or Jim Sorenson, FHWA Headquarters, 400 Seventh St., SW, Room 3211, Washington, DC 20590; tel: 202-366-1333; fax: 202-366-9981; email: james.sorenson@fhwa.dot.gov.