

WSDOT STATUS REPORT

The following are the significant freeway operations developments in Washington State during the past six months, listed by WSDOT region.

NORTHWEST REGION (INCLUDES SEATTLE)

- A service patrol pilot program is in operation on I-5 in both Seattle (NW Region) and Tacoma (Olympic Region). Two methods of providing the service are being tested. The Washington Towing Association is under contract to have their member companies provide the patrols in the Tacoma area and Washington State Patrol cadets are providing the patrols in the Seattle area. WSDOT tow trucks clear disabled vehicles on the I-90 and SR 520 floating bridges and private companies (radio stations and car dealers) sponsor service patrols on several area highways. The Washington State Transportation Center (TRAC) is conducting an evaluation of all of these service patrol alternatives. The pilot program will end at the end of the current biennium on June 30, 2001 unless extended by the legislature.
- Seven second CCTV video clips will be distributed over the Internet this spring using audio-visual interleave technology. The technology allows viewers to see short full motion video clips that provide an indication of vehicle speeds. It allows this to be done without a reduction in the number of cameras available on the Internet due to bandwidth constraints.
- The Region is considering the development of a Bellingham area TMC to provide freeway management capabilities and traveler information for I-5 through Bellingham. (Bellingham is a city of almost 70,000 people located about 90 miles north of Seattle in Whatcom County.) The Center would also coordinate USA/Canada border crossing information and winter operations on SR 542 which leads to the Mt. Baker ski area.

OLYMPIC REGION (INCLUDES TACOMA)

- Tacoma area Traffic Management System currently consists of the following:
 - 13 TV cameras (9 on I-5 and 4 on SR 16)
 - 10 Video Detectors on I-5
 - 4 VMS (2 on I-5 and 2 on SR 16)
 - 3 HARs on I-5
- The contractor providing the CCTVs on I-5 through Tacoma has replaced cameras as many as five times at some locations but picture quality continues to deteriorate soon after the installation of new cameras. Once the Light Lanes project (see below) installs fiber optic cable on I-5 through Tacoma, the existing system will be replaced with new cameras connected to the fiber.
- TV Tacoma (channel 12), the City of Tacoma's public access TV station, is now broadcasting live video from six WSDOT CCTV cameras during the morning and afternoon peak periods.
- A congestion notification system for truckers heading to the Port of Tacoma is being installed. The system consists of detectors on the southbound off-ramp from I-5 to the Port of Tacoma road. A static sign with flashing lights will be installed in advance of the off-ramp. When congestion on the ramp is detected, the Tacoma TMC operators will receive an alarm and, after confirming that the ramp is congested with existing CCTV cameras, they will activate the flashing lights on the sign which says

“Congestion on Port of Tacoma Road when flashing.” This will allow truckers on I-5 to use one of two other routes to access the Port.

EASTERN REGION (INCLUDES SPOKANE)

- The Spokane area Traffic Management System currently consists of the following:
 - 8 TV cameras on I-90
 - 5 VMS (4 on I-90, 1 on US 2)
 - 4 detector stations (1 radar and 3 video detectors) on I-90
 - 2 HAR.
- The Region currently has around \$5.5 million of funded projects to expand the system and provide central control of I-90 and major arterials.
- The architecture plans for the 5 agency TMC in Spokane are complete. The group is currently reviewing software proposals.

SOUTH CENTRAL REGION (INCLUDES YAKIMA)

- The Region has completed the layout for the TMC that will be located in the Washington State Patrol facility at Union Gap, in the Yakima area. The center will be a joint effort of WSDOT’s South Central and North Central Regions. Its primary function will be to provide full time radio dispatch coverage for the two regions and to serve to coordinate winter maintenance operations and traveler information for the mountain pass areas. Work is proceeding on detailed design of the facility and procurement of equipment.
- A contract to replace two VMS on I-82 in the Yakima area is being prepared.

SOUTHWEST REGION (INCLUDES VANCOUVER, WA)

- The Vancouver, WA area TMC opened in December 2000. The system currently consists of 3 TV cameras on I-5 and a HAR on I-5, just north of the Oregon border. Two VMS at the junction of I-5 and I-205 are being replaced and a new VMS is being installed on I-5. A fiber link to the ODOT TMC in the Portland area is being installed.

STATEWIDE

rWEATHER

- The rWeather web site is now available at www.wsdot.wa.gov/rweather It provides:
 - weather observations from almost 400 weather sites around the state
 - detailed forecast information from the National Weather Service,
 - graphical display of statewide road surface temperatures
 - detailed road surface and weather profiles for SR-2 and I-90 (the two major winter-time routes across the Cascade Mountains.) The SR-2 and I-90 pages allow users to get a 24 forecast of road surface temperatures.
 - wind and temperature observations from weather stations mounted on 7 ferry boats crossing Puget Sound
- The fourth issue of an FHWA funded RWIS newsletter is available at www.wsdot.wa.gov/eesc/atb/atb/volumefour/frames.html

LIGHT LANES

- WSDOT and UCN signed an agreement a year ago to exchange access to freeway right of way for fiber optic communications capability. The project is called Washington Light Lanes. The original agreement called for the network to cover all of I-5, I-90 and I-82. WSDOT would receive 48 fibers and the network would have an OC-12 capacity. The Olympia Service Center and all WSDOT regional offices, except the North Central Region office in Wenatchee, would be connected to the network and 350 access points for traffic devices would be provided. A fund of about \$3 million would be provided for WSDOT to use for connections. The agreement would last for at least 25 years.

Due to market conditions, the financing structure of Light Lanes has changed from the original plan. Thus the agreement has been modified to reflect the different financing methodology. The proposed system is initially not expected to cover all sections of I-5 and I-90. Negotiating these changes have consumed significantly more time than either the WSDOT or UCN teams had anticipated or desired. Negotiations are continuing with some key decisions being made in January.

REGIONAL PROJECTS

NORTHWEST FREEWAY OPERATIONS GROUP

- The eighth meeting of the Pacific Northwest Freeway Operations Group was held in December at the WSDOT Olympic Region office in Tacoma. Representatives of four WSDOT regions, ODOT and British Columbia, (Vancouver), Canada attended the meeting. (WSDOT's Southwest Region couldn't attend but provided a written status report for the meeting.) The group exchanged information on the status of freeway operations projects, which was used to prepare this report.

For further information on these projects, please contact:

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