

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)

- An updated version of the Region's FLOW System Operator's Handbook has been posted on the WSDOT web site. It can be accessed at:

www.wsdot.wa.gov/regions/northwest/traffic/tsmc/publications/2002handbook_safecopy.pdf

- The Region is investigating new freeway management software to replace the current, 1990s-vintage, custom software that runs on a VAX mainframe-type computer. Since the current problems appear to be related more to obsolete hardware rather than software, the Region is considering converting the existing software to run on a Windows computer.
- The Northwest Region, and several others, have been experiencing problems with VMS where access to the sign for maintenance is provided by a catwalk. Current catwalks do not meet current Dept. of Labor and Industries regulations. This requires extensive freeway lane closures for maintenance work dramatically increasing the cost. As a result, several Regions have VMS requiring repair that are no longer in operation. Work is underway to redesign these catwalks and to develop specifications for walk-in signs.

OLYMPIC REGION (INCLUDES TACOMA)

- The Region is planning to follow the Northwest Region's lead and hire a Public Information Officer to work in the TMC to handle media alerts and HAR messages.

Lesson Learned: Having a Public Information Officer or Media Relations Specialist in the TMC has been beneficial. Media alerts with accurate information about what is occurring on the roadway and what the agency is doing can be sent to the media before inaccurate or negative information is broadcast to the public.

EASTERN REGION (INCLUDES SPOKANE)

- A project is starting next July to add 12 CCTVs and a VMS to the system. The devices will be connected by fiber to the TMC.
- The five agencies (Spokane County, the City of Spokane, Spokane Transit, the Spokane Regional Transportation Council and WSDOT) who operate the Spokane TMC are planning to use CARS to report incidents and road closures on county and city roads. (The Condition Acquisition and Reporting System (CARS) was

developed by Castle Rock Consultants through a pooled fund study led by Iowa DOT. WSDOT uses CARS to collect and report on incidents, road conditions and construction closures, statewide.)

- The HAR on Sherman Pass on SR-20 is operational.

SOUTH CENTRAL REGION (INCLUDES YAKIMA)

- The Region TMC in Union Gap, WA, near Yakima, is operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and is located in the room adjacent to the Washington State Patrol's radio dispatch center. It has taken over responsibility for the Mountain Pass report that provides information on ten roadways that traverse mountain passes or mountainous areas. The information is available via web site or telephone.

SOUTHWEST REGION (INCLUDES VANCOUVER, WA)

- WSDOT has decided to use the Navigator Software that is currently being used by the Oregon DOT freeway management system in Portland, which is just across the Columbia River from Vancouver. Initially WSDOT will be set up as a client of the ODOT system. Once the Region has their software in operation, they will be a redundant server capable of controlling either Vancouver or Portland's system. In addition to providing back-up coverage for operations this arrangement will provide seamless traveler information to the public, many of whom make daily commutes from the Vancouver area to Portland.
- The Region is specifying an NTCIP driver for new VMS so that ODOT's software will be able to communicate with WSDOT VMS.

STATEWIDE

- Washington's statewide ITS Architecture is complete. ITS architectures have been completed for the four county (Kitsap, Pierce, King, and Snohomish) area covered by the Puget Sound Regional Council, which includes Seattle and Tacoma. In addition, architectures are also complete for Clark County (includes Vancouver, WA), Thurston County (includes Olympia), Spokane County and the WSDOT North Central and South Central Regions which cover the predominately rural, middle of Washington State and the cities of Wenatchee and Yakima. An update the statewide ITS Strategic Plan is underway.
- 511 service was started in Washington State on September 16, 2002. Developed in partnership with Avaya, Interactive Northwest, and Nuance, the first phase of the voice-driven telephone system is available in several communities across the state and for customers of Cingular Wireless. The regulated (wired) telephone companies are in the process of reprogramming their equipment to provide access to 511 across the state. The system provides voice-driven access to real-time traffic reports, along with continually updated roadway incident and construction information, express lane status, mountain pass road conditions and weather information. It connects callers directly to the state's ferry system and provides toll-free numbers for passenger rail

and airlines. Usability tests to gather feedback to improve the system will be conducted in January. A marketing plan has been prepared and will be implemented as soon as the equipment changes have been made to provide access for most areas of the state.

REGIONAL PROJECTS

- The 12th meeting of the Pacific Northwest Freeway Operations Group was held in December at the Washington State DOT, Northwest Region offices in Shoreline, WA. Representatives from three WSDOT regions attended the meeting and representatives from two other regions and ODOT participated by teleconference.

For further information on these projects, please contact:

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