

Traffic Operations System (TOS) Oversight Committee

DRAFT Minutes of the Meeting

August 3, 2005 at 10:30 AM
SCCRTC Conference Room
1523 Pacific Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Attendees:	Christina Manriquez	CHP – Santa Cruz
	Kim Bonfilio	CHP – Santa Cruz
	Avery Brown	CHP Golden Gate TMC
	Linda Olmstead	CHP Monterrey Dispatch Center
	James Richardson	Caltrans 4 TMC
	Pranav Shah	Caltrans 4 Traffic Operations
	Jacques Van Zeverter	Caltrans 5 Traffic Management
	Tom Barnett	Caltrans 5 Maintenance
	Russell Ellingworth	Caltrans 5 Maintenance
	Deb Larson	Caltrans 5 Traffic Safety
	Jack McPhillips	Santa Cruz Police Department
	John Olejnik	Caltrans 5 Development Review
	Luis Mendez	SCCRTC
	Grace Blakeslee	SCCRTC

- 1. Introductions:** Introductions were made
- 2. Information Items:** Reviewed information items

Luis Mendez informed the group that the San Francisco Bay Area 511 system may still be accessed from Santa Cruz County by dialing a San Francisco Bay Area area code and the number 817-1717.

Jacques Van Zeverter reported that Highway 152 will be closed for 40 days for improvements. Changeable message signs (CMS) are already operating to inform motorists of the upcoming closure. There was a public information campaign to notify area residents, businesses, schools, agencies, etc.

- 3. Review Operations and Status of the TOS**
 - a. System Activations Report:** Jim Richardson from the Coastal Traffic Management Center (TMC) presented data for System Activations. He noted that the northbound Highway 1 CMS continues to cause traffic delays when activated. (CMSs are used for a safety campaign called “Operation Holiday Wishlist”. Captain Manriquez explained that this is a statewide campaign involving the CHP, Caltrans and the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC). The campaign consists of nine enforcement periods throughout the year, each with its own message. The next enforcement period takes place over the 2005 Labor Day weekend and will focus on commercial vehicles.

Luis Mendez commented that he was unsure whether the Mission and Chestnut Streets Highway Advisory Radio (HAR) was working. He noticed that the sign was on recently, but there was no radio message being broadcast. Luis Mendez suggested that this group work together to communicate to the TMC whether the intended HAR messages are active. Jim Richardson reported that he will be checking some of the HAR equipment after the meeting including the equipment at Mission and Chestnut Streets.

Jim Richardson reported that the software upgrades which will allow the operators to see and use the information from the Santa Cruz County area monitoring stations at the Caltrans District 4 TMC are still held up due to funding. The TMC is using the same SOX and CCTV software as before and upgrades may be coming this year. Luis Mendez suggested that when the software upgrades are complete, a TOS meeting could be held there. The group concurred.

Jim Richardson reported that the TMC is short 4 staff people and that he is working on job reclassification issues in order to better allocate and utilize the staffing resources available to the TMC. Jacques Van Zeverter suggested that Dispatchers be reclassified to Operators to create more staffing opportunities. Jim Richardson said that he would inform SCCRTC staff if there was anything that they could do to provide support for the re-classification.

- b. Major Incident Review:** The committee reviewed the incidents listed in the agenda. They discussed the long delay associated with retrieving the big rig from the *12/28/04 Tractor Trailer Rollover – SR17S near Glenwood Cut-off*. They discussed whether the delay could have been avoided by using different big rig removal tactics including a crane. Captain Manriquez noted that although the big rig retrieval was slow, there were not accidents during the retrieval period and that she will investigate the possibility of using a crane for similar future incidents. Luis Mendez asked why a wider range of CMSs was not activated for this incident. Jim Richardson responded that a wider range is used when a road is completely shut down in both directions. In this case the road was not completely shut down and it is difficult to tell if a backup warrants a detour or if the CMS ought to just notify motorists of delays. The TMC has faced challenges as to what message to post for some incidents based on the lack of real time traffic information available, including exact delay times and collision locations. Linda Olmstead clarified that CHP is usually the agency that communicates with TMC through the dispatch center to notify them of collisions and associated delays.

Tom Barnett reported that removing the utility line off the road after the *Driver Knocked Down Utility Pole – SR 17N near Glenwood Cutoff on 2/11/05* was more efficient than in similar past situations. When a utility pole is knocked down, the utility company must de-energize the line before Caltrans can work towards cleaning up the knockdown and getting traffic moving again. He explained that Caltrans recently met with the utility companies to discuss the issues related to knocked down utility poles and their removal. The meeting seemed to resolve some of the pertinent issues. Luis Mendez asked whether follow-up meetings with the utility companies were scheduled to ensure a continued good

working relationship. Follow up meetings are scheduled. There are still issues getting the phone companies to respond quickly and that is not expected to improve.

In response to the review of the *5/5/05 Pile-up on Highway 17*, Linda Omlstead commented that she would like to see more public information regarding the fact that collisions are not caused by rain or road conditions but rather by motorists failing to adjust to driving conditions. Luis Mendez suggested that the Community Safety Traffic Coalition may be a good group with whom to discuss driver safety public information campaigns.

The committee discussed the confusion regarding traffic management associated with the *5/19/05 Officer Struck by Big Rig on Highway 1*. The members agreed that the confusion was a result of poor communication between two different jurisdictions. This incident was unique in that a Santa Cruz CHP Officer was involved in an incident on the Santa Clara County side of Highway 17. Both CHP and Caltrans expressed frustration about the poor communication. Linda Olmstead explained that two different CHP Communication Centers were talking to two different CHP units at the scene which lead to some confusion and delay in managing traffic. The Monterey CHP Communication Center had to wait several minutes to get through to the Golden Gate CHP Communication Center. Lt. Avery Brown of Golden Gate CHP suggested that Linda Olmstead call a supervisor to get the message through to Golden Gate CHP more quickly and provided Linda Olmstead with a hot line number. The committee agreed that better inter-jurisdictional coordination was needed and that this ought to be a discussion item at the October Safe on 17 meeting.

- c. **Dynamic Curve Warning Sign:** Deb Larson reported that the sign is fully operational and that there are no updates. She would report more on this under item number 4.
- d. **Monitoring Stations on Highway 17:** Pranav Shah reported that the traffic monitoring stations are collecting traffic volume data and that Caltrans employees may go to the PEMS website to access the data collected. The traffic monitoring stations are currently not collection speed data and Caltrans is trying to determine whether the problem is a field or data transfer problem. He clarified that only some TMS locations are set up to provide speed data, but not all. PATH at UC Berkeley manages the PEMS website and Pranav Shah will send an email note with instructions to access the website.

Jim Richardson reported that on Interstate 280 in the San Francisco Bay Area Caltrans is installing solar powered radar speed sensors. Caltrans plans to post the speed data at the website www.traffic.com. Caltrans is exploring the option of the TMC utilizing the same speed data for traffic management to be used for incident management.

- 4. **Future Improvements to Santa Cruz County TOS System:** Deb Larson gave a status report on Caltrans District 5 Highway 17 Safety Projects. She presented preliminary data on collision data at the Dynamic Curve Warning location. The preliminary data reflects a 50% reduction in collisions at the Woodwardia Curve since the Dynamic Curve Warning sign was installed. Tom Barnett suggested that Caltrans might want to consider programming the sign

to post a maximum speed. This would prevent motorist from testing how high a speed they can get the sign to display. Jacques Van Zeverter noted that collision data trends associated with Dynamic Curve Warning Signs tends to show significant reductions in the collision rate in the short term and less overall reduction in collisions in the long term.

Jack McPhillips informed the group that the City of Santa Cruz is researching dynamic speed signs and plans to install a sign on Bay Street.

Deb Larson explained that the Laurel Curve Safety Improvements project would widen the shoulder and upgrade guardrails at the project location. The proposed project now includes ITS components and is scheduled to go to construction in Spring 2006. The proposed Glenwood Curves Safety Improvement Project would include drainage improvements to address wet weather conditions. The Glenwood Curves Safety Improvements Project was scheduled to be advertised March 2007.

The proposed Santa's Village Road New Guardrail project would construct a 4 foot outside shoulder southbound with concrete guardrail. The proposed SCR17 Guardrail Upgrades I and II would upgrade guardrail to current standards at 27 locations on Highway 17. The Project Initiation Documents for the later three projects are expected to be complete for the 2006 SHOPP consideration.

The committee discussed the need and possibilities for additional CMS's on Highway 17. They also discussed the current placement of CCTV on CMS's and which camera's are currently tied to the TMC. Luis inquired about the availability of CMS signs for incident management purposes. Jacques Van Zeverter said that he would look into this use. Luis Mendez discussed the potential for using call boxes to transmit data real time traffic data and asked for input from the committee on the possibilities to use this potential resource such as transmitting traffic monitoring station data to the TMC.

5. **Freeway Service Patrol:** Grace Blakeslee provided information on the transition of both daily operational and administrative duties related to the Santa Cruz County FSP Program from MTC and Golden Gate CHP to SCCRTC and Santa Cruz CHP. She thanked Captain Manriquez and Officer DaSilva for the cooperation during the transition. As part of this transition, FSP tow truck contactors will attend TOS Oversight Committee meetings. This will provide an opportunity to discuss FSP issues and opportunities for better coordination and related safety improvements along these corridors. A new contract for FSP Services was initiated on Beat 24 starting July 1, 2005.
6. **Communications with Local Law Enforcement:** Luis Mendez introduced Lt. Avery Brown from the Golden Gate CHP at the TMC. Lt. Brown oversees the Bay Area FSP Program and the CHP at the TMC. He noted that the TMC does not have real time Santa Cruz County FSP information. He discussed the current TMC coordination and data sharing efforts between Caltrans and the CHP and encouraged working with Captain Manriquez and the Santa Cruz area CHP. Linda Olmstead gave an update about the new Salinas CHP Communication Center and said that the average call ring time at the new center was 7 seconds. This is 3 seconds below the 10 second national standard.

7. Additional Items

Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project Traffic Management Plan: Luis Mendez provided a status report on the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project Traffic Management Plan. He asked whether changeable message signs will be included in the project for traffic management. He emphasized the importance of the CMS, HAR and correct communication with the TMC when this project is under construction. He asked if the changeable message signs included in the construction could be used to provide Transportation Demand Management and Rideshare Information. Jacques Van Zeverter reported that Caltrans is preparing the RFP for bids for this project. Caltrans is planning to include a road users cost as part of the proposal as an incentive for the contractor to complete the project on time. He stated that Caltrans does not usually use CMS signs for Rideshare information although directing people to 511 has been done in the Bay Area. The HAR may be a more appropriate avenue to provide this information.

Potential Bus Drivers Strike: Luis Mendez informed the group that due to current contract negotiations there is a potential for the bus drivers in the Santa Cruz County area to go on strike. He asked whether the CMS's and HAR may be used to provide information to motorists in case of strike and inform them of alternatives. Jim Richardson said that messages have been developed for potential BART strikes and perhaps something could be developed for the Santa Cruz County area. He asked that any press information regarding the potential strike be forwarded to him.

City of Santa Cruz OTS Grant: Sergeant Jack McPhillips reported that the City of Santa Cruz received a grant from the Office of Traffic Safety to install "rat-lights" at arterial intersections to improve red light enforcement. A "rat-light" is a simple device which lets police know when a traffic signal at an intersection has turned red in any direction and it will make prosecution of stop light violators easier.

8. **Set Next Meeting Date and Agenda Items:** The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:00pm. The next meeting will be a joint TOS Oversight Committee and Safe on 17 Task Force meeting. The meeting will be held on October 12, 2005. The location is to be determined.

Respectfully submitted,

Grace Blakeslee, Staff