MINUTES
MAG REGIONAL CONCEPT OF TRANSPORTATION OPERATIONS
STAKEHOLDER GROUP MEETING No. 6

February 5, 2003
10:30 AM - 12:00 PM
Maricopa Association of Governments
302 N First Avenue, Suite 300
Phoenix, Arizona

ATTENDANCE

Bruce Dressel, City of Scottsdale
Jim Decker, City of Tempe
Xiao Qin, MAG
Mary Kihl, ASU
Bob Maki, City of Surprise
Mike Nevarez, RPTA
Faisal Saleem, MCDOT
Yogesh Mantri, MCDOT
Tim Wolfe, ADOT
Barbara Hauser, MCDOT
Stuart Boggs, RPTA
Bob Steele, City of Phoenix
Scott Nodes, City of Peoria
Mike Mah, City of Chandler
Bruce Ward, Town of Gilbert
Sarath Joshua, MAG
Tami deRuiter, City of Phoenix
Bob Steele, City of Phoenix
Jan Siedler, City of Mesa
Jimmie Dixon, City of Glendale
Chuck Hydeman, City of Goodyear
Alan Hansen, FHWA
Meifu Wang, FHWA
Ronald Hergert, Phoenix Police

PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS PRESENT

Pierre Pretorius, Kimley-Horn & Associates, Inc.
Brent Crowther, Kimley-Horn & Associates, Inc.

MINUTES

2. Introduction and Welcome, Project Schedule, and Previous Meeting Minutes

Pierre Pretorius informed the group that the project is on schedule. He then asked for comments on the notes of the January meeting. None were received. The minutes were approved. Notes are available on the project website (mag.maricopa.gov).

3. Distribution of Tech Memo No. 2 (Final): Best Practices in Transportation Systems Operations

Tech Memo No. 2 (Final) was distributed. Comments were incorporated into the final document.

4. Distribution of Tech Memo No. 3 (Final): Goals and Performance Measures

Tech Memo No. 3 (Final) was distributed. Pierre Pretorius summarized comments that were received, and how they were addressed in the final memo.

5. Overview and Distribution of Tech Memo No. 4 (Draft): Policies and Practices Needed to Achieve Operational Goals

An overview of the contents of Tech Memo No. 4 (Draft) was presented. A detailed discussion followed later in the meeting. Pierre Pretorius summarized the comments on the memo that were received, and how they were addressed.

6. Presentation of Tech Memo No. 5/6 (Outline): Necessary Institutional Arrangements and Resources Required for Implementation

Tech Memo No. 5 and Tech Memo No. 6 will be combined due to the interdependence of content within each memo. An outline of the combined Tech Memo No. 5/6: Necessary Institutional Arrangements and Resources Required for Implementation was distributed. Members of the RCTO Stakeholders Group were asked to provide feedback on the proposed outline.

7. Discussion of Tech Memo No. 4: Recommended Policies and Practices

Pierre Pretorius began the discussion by presenting an overview of the Concept of Operations formulation process. The process recognizes that the Concept of Operations development may require several iterations. Specific comments from the stakeholders group included:

- Stuart Boggs said that the feedback loop should cycle back to operational needs.
- Meifu Wang suggested that the operational goals should not necessarily change Stuart Boggs replied that as technology changes the range of potential improvements to the transportation system increases. Sarath Joshua noted that the Concept of Operations is being developed for a time horizon of three to five years. This is insufficient time for dramatic changes in technology and travel mode to occur. He suggested that perhaps a second phase of the RCTO would examine a longer time frame.

Yogesh Mantri asked if the project scope includes recommendations as to how the Concept of Operations will be implemented. He emphasized the importance of determining how the identified policies and practices will be implemented. What will be the role of the ITS Committee, or other existing institutional frameworks, for example. It is important to specify who is responsible for the implementation of specific policies and practices. Pierre Pretorius said that the identification of institutional arrangements, and resources required for implementation is the subject of Tech Memo No. 5/6.

Sarath Joshua agreed with Yogesh Mantri. He said that it is very important to consider, during the policy and practice development stage, how we will actually implement the policies and practices. Equally important is ensuring that each city or agency has a common understanding of the policy or practice. Consideration should be given as to how changes will be made to the policy or practice, and how the changes will be communicated to the agencies. The policy development process should be open and flexible. We may want to consider establishing a website on which the policies or practices could be posted, so that they are accessible.

The following goals and practices were discussed in detail:

8. Freeway Mobility

The group agreed that system-wide, responsive ramp metering is could benefit freeway mobility. Tim Wolfe expressed concerns that limited resources may not be able to maintain the system.

Because of the impact of incidents on freeway mobility, incident clearance practices were discussed. Barbara Hauser noted that DPS currently does a good job of quickly clearing incidents. The group agreed that there are certain practices that each agency can do, including transportation and towing, to improve incident clearance times.

The question was asked if current incident clearance time data exists. The group did not arrive at a conclusion.

Stuart Boggs suggested that an additional policy or practice should relate to the breakdown of transit vehicles on the freeways. Practices should be developed for the transferring of passengers from one bus to another. This may include several jurisdictions including ADOT, DPS, and Valley Metro.

Faisal Saleem asked if the performance measure data would be automatically collected. Pierre Pretorius responded that ideally, much of it would be automated, but we recognize that it is impossible for all collection efforts to be automated.

Tim Wolfe suggested that the wording for incident clearance times be changed from a policy to a practice.

9. Arterial Mobility

The goals and practices of implementing signal coordination on 100% of the smart corridors was discussed. Jim Decker suggested that it is becoming a practice to intentionally not coordinate signals on some roadways. This is because they are important pedestrian or bicycle corridors. The group suggested that the goal and practice should be modified to pertain to only "major arterials." The group agreed that the goal and policy should not require coordination on all arterials, but those where it is appropriate, such as smart corridors. Perhaps the definition and criteria of a smart corridor should be reconsidered.

Furthermore, the group suggested that the wording should be changed from "coordinated" to "optimized." The group is expressed concerns that setting a goal of updating signal coordination every two years is unrealistic. Cities simply do not have the resources to do that.

The group suggested that the wording should be changed from "updating" or "coordinating" to "evaluating", or "assessing" the signalized intersections every two years. The group feels that using the word "retiming" is setting the group up for failure.

Alternatively, practices of simple communication between cities prior to changing signal timing should be introduced. Cities should communicate with neighboring cities before making timing changes. The group emphasized that automated databases will never replace regular communication.

Concerns were expressed that agencies do not desire to regularly adjust signal timing. Bruce Dressel said that the City of Scottsdale's experience is that once video and CCTV cameras were deployed on major arterials, the City TMC consistently modified signal timing plans until they felt that a solid timing plan had been developed.

The practice of establishing a region wide signal-timing inventory was discussed. Several group members expressed reservation about the need for such a system. They questioned the value of any data that would be in the database. Before undertaking such a project, the objectives of the database should be clearly established. Several group members expressed concerns over format, and the fact that several different types of signal systems are used in the MAG region.

The group emphasized that the development of a database will not replace face to face communication. The group suggested that the goal be modified to emphasize the "coordination of signal timing changes". Practices should be developed that encourage interagency collaboration. Practices should be developed that encourage people to talk with one another. Prior to making a signal timing change, they should make a telephone call to the neighboring city.

The group concurred that the development of a region wide database is not a priority.

The practice of grouping signals into coordinating groups was discussed. The suggestion that signals of ½ mile spacing or less be grouped into a control section should be modified. The minimum distance should be 1 mile.

The stakeholders group noted that the control group does not have to be a literal group, operated by the same signal system. The control group can be a virtual grouping of intersections.

10. Freeway Incident Management

Policies to improve incident clearance times were discussed. Tami deRuiter suggested that the definition of incident clearance times should be clarified.

The group noted that it is difficult for them, as transportation professionals, to increase clearance times. The support and buy-in of DPS, police, and fire departments is critical.

Barbara Hauser said that incident management personnel would like to clear incidents more quickly, but that the State Attorney General and County Attorney consistently request more thorough investigations. She believes that additional policies do not need to be developed; rather, additional guidelines should be developed. The clarification was made that a policy does not necessarily need to stipulate specific practices, but that the policy can simply state that incident clearance is a high priority of the department. This will result in increased awareness of incident clearance practices, leading to improvement of specific practices.

The suggestion was made that the wording be changed from "decrease incident clearance times" to "optimize clearance times."

Mike Nevarez stated that emphasis should be placed on the prevention of incidents and the mitigation of the effects of incidents. For example, VMS signs should be used to warn and divert traffic from the incident. Mitigation and prevention should not be neglected.

The recommendation for a policy on incident on-scene communications was discussed. The group suggested that policies are in place, but that practices need to be modified. Thus, the document wording should be changed to practice or action item. Chuck Hydeman noted that the most common method of communication between agencies is by cell-phone or Nextel. Ronald Hergert stated that implementation of better on-scene communication between police and fire is dependent upon implementation of the 800 MHz system. Tami deRuiter stated that current practice is for police dispatch to telephone fire dispatch when communication is necessary.

The group determined that an additional meeting with DPS is needed. Their input and feedback must be included in the policy and practice.

Practices concerning the placement of vehicles at emergency scenes were discussed. The group concurred that awareness should be raised, but that this group cannot dictate to fire personnel how or where they place their emergency vehicles. The group agreed that practices should be recommended, but that the input of fire personnel is critical.

Tim Wolfe asked if work zones should be included in the freeway incident management category. Pierre responded that yes, they probably should. The group recognized that with respect to planned work zones, the agencies in the Phoenix area do a very good job of coordinating and managing traffic.

Barbara Hauser noted that Section 6I of the MUTCD will require incidents that are expected to last longer than 4 hours to be treated as temporary work zones.

During the discussion, the need for multi-agency incident management training was identified. Alan Hansen noted that the Federal Highway Administration has developed a self-assessment questionnaire for incident management. Tim Wolfe said that ADOT is planning to host an incident management training workshop, and will hire a facilitator to do the regional incident management self-assessment.

Faisal Saleem suggested that a policy of including incident information to travel information services be implemented.

11. Freeway-Arterial Interface

Polices concerning coordinated freeway-arterial operations were discussed. The group suggested that rather than a policy of endorsement for coordinated freeway-arterial operations, that research should be conducted to determine the effectiveness of coordinated operations. Some members of the group questioned explanation as to what practices comprise coordinated freeway operations. Jim Decker replied that left turn splits can be adjusted based on queue lengths on the ramp, and ramp metering changes can be made accordingly.

12. Arterial Incident Management

Practices concerning the altering of arterial signal-timing plans during incidents were discussed. Chuck Hydeman stated that timing plan changes cannot be made unless you have a control center. Mike Mah suggested that even with a control center, one may not want to implement signal-timing changes during incidents. Bruce Dressel said that Scottsdale does implement incident timing plan strategies and they have proven to be effective. A lengthy discussion ensued, and the group decided to defer the conversation until the March workshop.

Practices of Transit Operators providing information to the Transit Control Center were discussed. Transit Operators manuals would need to be updated to include the practice Stuart Boggs stated that the flow of communication should also go from the local TMC to the TCC, and then to the transit operator.

Extraction of filtered incident data from CAD systems to local TMCs was discussed. Bruce Dressel explained that Scottsdale receives CAD information from Rural Metro, and receives police reports over the scanner. Technically, this is very simple to accomplish. The challenge will be to overcome institutional issues. Tami deRuiter said that the Phoenix police CAD system is not even connected with any other internal systems, such as the telephone system or other software programs. Thus, dispatchers may have three or four keypads that are used to control the various systems on the computer. Thus, it will be difficult to receive permission to connect it to any external systems, such as the TOC or TMC. The question was raised as to how valuable the CAD information will even be. Currently, the updating of CAD information after the police officer has been dispatched is not a common practice. Practices would need to be developed for police officers to provide updated information from the field to dispatch.

Practices concerning emergency vehicle signal preemption were discussed. Chuck Hydeman reported that his perception is that fire departments are primarily responsible for preemption devices. The group did not agree. Bruce Dressel stated that Scottsdale implements and operates the system for Rural Metro. Other agencies reported likewise. Chuck Hydeman also stated that most fire departments do not want coding of their vehicles. Jim Decker responded that the East Valley Signal Group has been working toward implementing coding on all preemption devices. The discussion ended with agreement that standards and guidelines concerning preemption and coding are warranted.

A practice of hosting a monthly arterial incident management meeting with traffic, fire, and police was discussed. Stuart Boggs stated that transit should also be included in the regular meetings. The group agreed that more input is needed from representatives of fire and police. Barbara Hauser suggested that a monthly EMS Luncheon might provide an opportunity to meet with EMS.

13. Transit Mobility

Practices concerning Transit Signal Priority were discussed. The group suggested that the wording be changed from "policy" for Transit Signal Priority, to "evaluate" transit signal priority.

Mike Nevarez said that FHWA will be hosting a seminar on Transit Signal Priority in April in Tucson. The exact date was not known.

Policies for sharing costs for center to center communications (maintaining connectivity, and network maintenance) were discussed. The group agreed that more discussion is needed. An email will be sent using the Yahoo Groups discussion list.

The group agreed that practices and procedures for sharing data and video between agencies are important. The wording should be modified to state "sharing and disseminating" information.

14. Multiagency Coordination

The group decided to defer additional discussion on policies for after-hours traffic signal operations monitoring and control until the next workshop.

The group agreed that practices of providing notification to agencies and organizations of freeway incidents were important.

The group agreed that practices of conducting joint training sessions with police, fire, transportation, and towing personnel are important.

15. Traveler Information Provisions

The group agreed that practices to improve the quality of traveler information are important. This should include practices of entering travel information gathered by cities and towns into HCRS. The group suggested that additional practices to improve the accuracy of travel information should be explored. An email will be sent using the Yahoo Groups discussion list.

16. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the RCTO Stakeholder Group Meeting will be held on **March 5, 2003** at 10:30 a.m. following the regularly scheduled MAG ITS Committee Meeting. A workshop to discuss the contents of Tech Memo No. 5/6: Institutional Issues and Resources Required for Implementation will be held on **March 20**, **2003**. The time will be determined and announced to the group.

17. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.