

# Midwest Work Zone Roundtable – Improved Work Zone Management and Operations through Collaboration

Summer 2007

FACT SHEET

15

The Midwest Work Zone Roundtable has been meeting since the early 1990s to discuss best practices and common issues, standards and specifications, policies, and procedures related to work zone traffic management and temporary traffic control. Representatives from Midwest States that participate include Ohio, Wisconsin, Illinois, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, and Minnesota. The Roundtable holds an informal meeting, typically each year, allowing participants to seek and receive feedback from peers on work zone-related issues and ideas. Participants include traffic control specialists, typically one to three representatives from each State who are responsible for work zone training, process reviews, and specifications development, as well as members of the corresponding Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Divisions. Participants point to growing participation and more uniform work zone set-up, practices, and guidance among participating States as evidence of the group's success.

Often there is a theme identified for a specific year, such as intelligent transportation systems (ITS) in work zones, work zone devices research, or implementation of new work zone rules. Each State is asked to prepare and present their best practices and discuss issues on the specific theme. In addition there is an annual solicitation of questions that each State would like discussed. The list of questions is then used in creating an agenda and States are asked to be prepared to discuss the questions. At the meeting, the soliciting State presents the issue and all States are offered an opportunity to respond to the question. Each State is also asked to bring copies of the appropriate policies, traffic control standards, and specifications to share with the other States.

Questions and issues discussed at the Roundtable have included speed management in work zones; police "hire back" programs; flaggers in work zones; temporary traffic control procedures, methods, and devices; and the use of ITS in work zones. Issues discussed during the 2006 Midwest Work Zone Roundtable included:

- Dynamic merge systems
- Performance tracking
- Law enforcement training
- Positive separation
- Truck mounted attenuator markings
- Mobile operations layouts
- Work zone speed limit practices and policies
- State plans to implement the Work Zone Safety and Mobility Rule.

In the past, participants have captured their own notes, with no formal meeting summary produced.

## Benefits

Participants mention several benefits of participating in the Roundtable:

- Networking is the biggest benefit. The network of peer contacts in surrounding States acts as an informal peer-to-peer program where communication occurs throughout the year on a one-on-one basis to discuss problem-solving on project-specific issues and help with implementing best practices discussed at the annual meeting.
- Increased deployment of new technologies

OPTIMIZING PERFORMANCE

MOBILITY & SAFETY

MAKING WORK ZONES WORK BETTER



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- Sharing of best practices
- Fine tuning of current practices and procedures
- More consistent treatment of work zone traffic control across Midwest states.

The Roundtable has been meeting informally for more than 15 years in an effort to improve work zone traffic control practices, procedures, and technologies. The group thrives on a peer-to-peer collaborative format to address the challenges, issues, and complexities of today's changing work zone environment.

## What are Other States Doing?

Several States have convened work zone task forces to examine, assess, and implement innovative products and practices for use in work zones. For example, the **Arizona DOT (ADOT)** has established the **Traffic/Through Construction Workgroup**. The group consists of ADOT personnel from Traffic Design, Construction Operations, and Roadway Design Divisions, as well as city officials, local American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA) members, and FHWA representatives. The group provides a forum for those involved in traffic control to meet and discuss challenges and resolve conflicts through the evaluation of countermeasures, alternative practices, and procedures. Another example is the **Traffic Control Committee** established by the **New Hampshire DOT** to examine all issues related to work zone traffic control. The group consists of personnel from Design, Construction, Maintenance, Bridge Maintenance, Turnpikes, Traffic, and Materials Offices. The Traffic Control Committee discusses contract specifications, work zone traffic control standards, devices and materials, training, and the use of law enforcement.

The **North Dakota DOT (NDDOT)** sponsored a **Work Zone Mobility and Safety Team** formed in response to the Work Zone Safety and Mobility Rule. The group consists of Central Office Staff representing the Design, Construction, Maintenance and Engineering Services, Local Government, and Traffic Operations Sections. District Staff and the FHWA Division were also represented on the Team. The primary purpose of the Team was to review existing North Dakota DOT policies and practices and update them or develop new policies and procedures, based on the provisions in the Work Zone Rule. Having accomplished that objective in February 2007, the Work Zone Safety and Mobility Team will be reconvened as a Process Review Team every two years. The Process Review Team will provide recommendations to NDDOT Senior Management for potential action and policy change. The reconvened Process Review Team will consider the issues identified by the NDDOT Traffic Control Review Team which, among other activities, meets annually to perform random inspections of active work zones for traffic control and design issues. The Process Review Team will also provide recommendations into a performance measures effort to examine safety and mobility in work zones on "significant projects." The effort will examine number of crashes, delay (in minutes), and change in level of service, with the results being considered by the Process Review Team.

To meet the demands of the traveling public and to address increasing work zone safety and mobility challenges, States will have to continue to implement new and innovative solutions in work zone planning, design, and management. Both the Midwest Work Zone Roundtable and individual State DOT task forces serve as examples of finding such solutions through peer collaboration.



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Publication No. FHWA-HOP-07-117