



Congratulations to the North/West Passage Pooled Fund Study!

At the Opening Session of the 2010 National Rural ITS Conference, the North/West Passage Transportation Pooled Fund Study was recognized as the winner of the 2010 Best of ITS Rural Award under the category Best New Practice. The Best of ITS Rural Awards is the only program in the world that recognizes the best and brightest of the rural ITS community. Bill Legg, North/West Passage Chair, accepted the award on behalf of the North/West Passage Program. The following North/West Passage Steering Committee members were recognized and acknowledged at the award presentation:

- Bill Legg, Washington State DOT, North/West Passage Program Chair
- Bob Koeberlein, Idaho Transportation Department
- Vince Garcia, Wyoming DOT
- Brandi Hamilton, Montana DOT
- Ed Ryen, North Dakota DOT
- Dave Huft, South Dakota DOT
- Matt Gjersvik, Minnesota DOT
- John Corbin, Wisconsin DOT

The North/West Passage also participated on the agenda at the rural ITS conference. Dave Huft, South Dakota DOT, presented the results of the North/West Passage Regional Permitting project. This project focused on identifying how the North/West Passage states might pursue a regional permitting process. The final report can be found at: <http://www.nwpassage.info/projects/phase4/proj4/>. Bill Legg, Washington State DOT, presented the North/West Passage Corridor Wide website (<http://i90i94travelinfo.com>). This website was developed to relieve the need to check each state's website for traveler information along the North/West Passage Corridor.

Background

The North/West Passage Corridor encompasses the eight states along Interstates 90 and 94 from Wisconsin to Washington. Interstates 90 and 94 function as major corridors for commercial and recreational travel. Extreme winter weather conditions, prevalent in the northern states within this corridor, pose significant operational and travel-related challenges. Idaho, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming are predominantly rural and face similar transportation issues related to traffic management, traveler information, and commercial vehicle operations.

Recognizing the value of coordinated, crossborder collaboration for ITS deployment to address these issues, Minnesota initiated a meeting in 2002 with representatives from each of the states within the corridor. The group established itself as a Transportation Pooled Fund in 2003 through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

The North/West Passage Corridor has successfully implemented four work plans containing 18 projects including development of a corridor-wide traveler information website (<http://i90i4travelinfo.com>). Currently the group is moving forward with the fifth work plan containing 6 projects.

For more information on the North/West Passage Program visit: nwpassage.info

Accomplishments

Accomplishments of the North/West Passage corridor include:

- North and South Dakota 511 callers can select to receive information on Minnesota's highways.
- Creation of the program website (nwpassage.info).
- Development of one proposal to hire a contractor to perform work in two bordering states.
- Completion of a Strategic Plan to guide the future of the corridor.

- Each state uses their own phrases to describe road events. The North/West Passage defined and agreed upon a set of consistent event description phrases to use across the I-90 and I-94 corridor.
- Created a website to provide traveler information along a corridor (i90i94travelinfo.com)
- Provided a forum for state patrol/police and DOT staff to discuss integration of systems.
- Held a workshop to identify action items for increased cross-border operation and maintenance collaboration.
- Participated in the USDOT Clarus initiative which demonstrated an integrated surface transportation weather observing, forecasting, and data management system. The result of the project was an example of all North/West Passage states working together to develop a corridor Concept of Operations document.
- Summarized recommendations to advance the ability of travelers to access information about adjacent states traveler information.
- Identified what would be the options (and related costs) should the North/West Passage member states decide to move towards regional permitting
- Identified options and recommendations to Enhance Existing and Corridor-Wide Trucker Traveler Information Dissemination Systems

Benefits and Successes

The North/West Passage member states have identified the following benefits they have gained from participating in the pooled fund:

- Provided important contacts
- Served as a forum to share lessons learned
- Led to the revamping of one state's 511 system
- Provided topics and addressed issues that have been timely and important before moving forward with a project
- Led to an evaluation of the way business is conducted in our state
- Assisted in making revisions to road condition reporting phrases
- Promoted exchange of traveler information with neighboring states
- Provided the opportunity to share ITS experiences as well as operation and maintenance experiences
- Promoted data sharing between state agencies and public safety
- Developed a corridor wide tangible website to provide travelers with road conditions along the entire corridor