



Corridor Traveler Information Coordination – Operational Test
Event Summary: Winter Storm, February 10, 2013
Event #2 (Unplanned)

Event Details

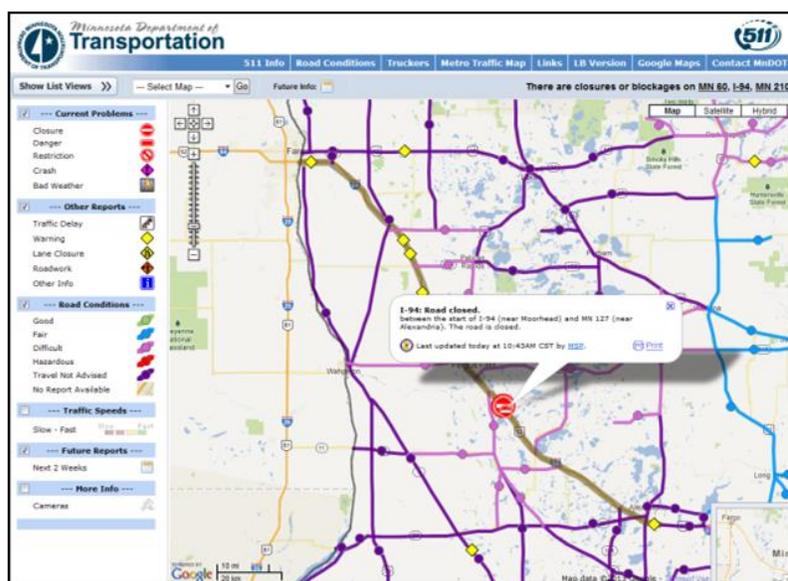
A major winter storm occurred on February 10, 2013 throughout several of the North/West Passage states. Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin all experienced difficult driving conditions from the storm. Several hundred miles of I-90 and I-94 were periodically closed during the storm due to blowing snow and icy conditions.

South Dakota issued a [news release on Saturday, February 9](#), urging travelers to avoid non-emergency travel from late Saturday night through early Monday morning. The National Weather Service reported heavy snow and strong winds would create blizzard-like conditions across much the state. On Sunday, [February 10, a “no travel advisory”](#) was issued by the North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) for the southeast region of the state. Heavy snow and blowing snow caused near zero visibility and hazardous driving conditions. The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) also issued a [February 10 news release](#) advising no travel in west central Minnesota due to heavy snow, blowing snow and very poor visibility.

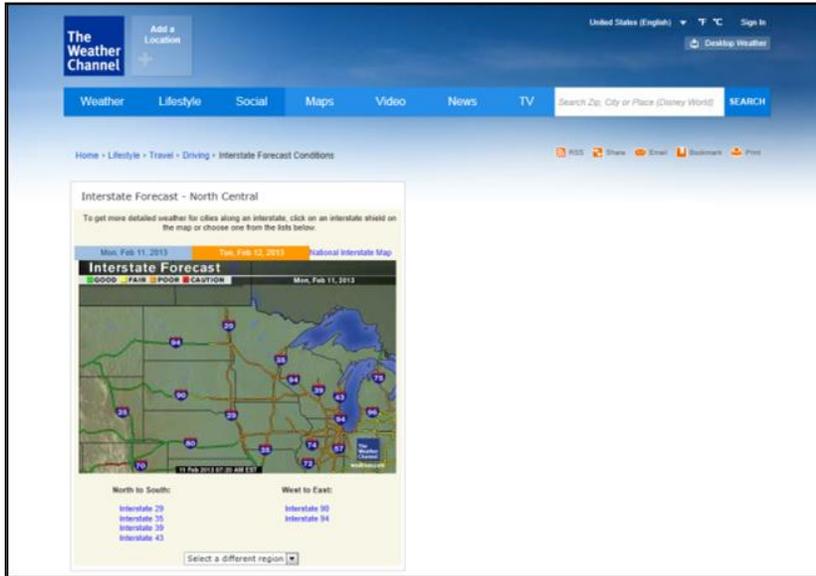
By late Sunday evening, several hundred miles of interstate were closed in three states. South Dakota issued a [news release announcing the closure of I -90 between Sioux Falls and Wall](#), as well as I-29 between Sioux Falls and the ND state line. North Dakota issued a similar [news release announcing the closure of I-94 from Jamestown to Fargo](#), as well as I-29 from Fargo to Grand Forks. Finally, MnDOT [announced that I-94 from Moorhead to Alexandria closed](#) at 5:30 p.m. on Sunday.

The states also reported travel conditions via their 511 web pages and telephone services. The figure to the right shows the closure report for I-94 between Moorhead and Alexandria on www.511mn.org.

Some states also provided reports via [Twitter](#). At 7:14 a.m. on Monday, February 11, [@SDPublicSafety](#) reported that I-90 had reopened between Wall and Sioux Falls. The Wisconsin



Department of Transportation (WisDOT) reported via [511@WI Northwest](#) that road conditions varied and crashes were being reported throughout the northwest region of the state as of 10:46 a.m. on Monday. By 12:07 p.m. on Monday, [@mndotnews](#) reported that I-94 between Moorhead and Alexandria was open again.



Throughout the storm, local and national media also reported on the poor driving conditions throughout the states as illustrated in the figure to the left of [The Weather Channel Interstate Forecast for the North Central United States](#).

Evaluation Summary

For the purpose of North/West Passage operational test, this storm is the first unplanned, major event to be evaluated. After the storm concluded, an Event Evaluation Guide was distributed to and completed by the following staff from the affected states:

- Connie Catterall, Atkins on site at WisDOT State Traffic Operations Center
- Brian Kary, MnDOT
- Brandon Beise, NDDOT
- Brad Darr, NDDOT
- Jason Humphrey, South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT)
- Alysha Ketcham, Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT)

The three fully completed evaluations serve as the basis for the remainder of this summary. Evaluation focused on three key aspects of coordination: tasks, tools and traveler benefits. Staff evaluation of each is summarized below.

- 1. Task Analysis.** Staff was asked to note if key coordination tasks were completed during the event and to briefly comment on why the tasks were or weren't completed (e.g., awareness, understanding, capability, etc.). Tasks were taken from the [Operational Guidelines for Coordinating Traveler Information with Other States along I-90/I-94](#).

Responses to the event evaluation indicate that **although only some of the cited North/West Passage coordination tasks were completed during the storm, coordination clearly occurred** among the states. It appears that most coordination may have occurred among regional maintenance staff vs. TMC/TOC operations staff. It is significant to note that none of the respondents reported logging into the North/West Passage TMC/TOC Operations Coordination page and only one of the respondents indicated that they used the corridor Googlemap. The explanations that respondents noted were a lack of awareness or a lack of staff available to access the page. Other respondents noted there was no information to relay or that coordination occurred among regional maintenance staff. It is possible that respondents differentiated coordination that occurred among regional maintenance staff from any specific coordination that may have been implied by the tasks attributed to North/West Passage. This may have affected how states responded to the event evaluation but should not be interpreted as a lack of coordination during the storm overall.

For the coordination tasks that were completed, three states reported that messages were posted to dynamic message signs, 511 services and [Travel Midwest](#). Travel Midwest is a web site sponsored by the Lake Michigan Interstate Gateway Alliance (LMIGA). The site provides regional travel information, including current travel time, congestion, incident, construction, special event and weather information.

- 2. Tool Analysis.** Staff was asked to answer a series of questions about the North/West Passage tools referenced in the key coordination tasks taken from the [Operational Guidelines for Coordinating Traveler Information with Other States along I-90/I-94](#). Questions focused on awareness, usability and availability of the tools. **Two of the four staff that completed evaluations were aware of the tools** prior to the storm. All staff indicated they **understood how to use the tools and also reported they had all the tools necessary to complete the coordination tasks**. Staff further commented that the North/West Passage coordination tools can provide situational awareness, offer another medium for traveler information, and walk staff through the coordination process – all of which were noted as strengths. When asked how the coordination tools could be improved the respondents noted that the tools do not need improvement as much as **staff awareness and use of the tools need to be improved**. Although the staff responding to the survey was aware of the tools, this comment indicates they may not be the best staff to actually use the tools and that could also further explain the lack of specific coordination tasks that respondents completed during the storm.

- 3. Benefits to Travelers.** The primary objective for coordinating traveler information among the states is to improve travel by providing better, more accessible information for travelers. Although no travelers were directly surveyed in this evaluation, **most of the staff that completed evaluations agreed that travelers benefited** from the additional information that was exchanged among the states. However, two of the states also noted that additional effort is needed to make staff aware of the desire to coordinate corridor events and to incorporate the North/West Passage tools into existing operations to maximize the benefit to travelers.

Conclusion

There was significant coordination among the North/West Passage states during this event and it can also be assumed that travelers had a heightened awareness of the event due to widespread impact of the event and resulting media coverage. Based on the evaluation responses, it appears the **coordination tasks are understandable but not well-known enough** to ensure consistent use as they are outlined in the [Operational Guidelines for Coordinating Traveler Information with Other States along I-90/I-94](#). It also appears that the **tools developed to support coordination are useful for staff but awareness is again limited** and use of the tools needs to be incorporated into agencies' standard operating procedures. Although traveler feedback was not directly sought in this evaluation, there was some agreement that the **coordination of additional information was beneficial to travelers and it could certainly be improved if there were greater staff awareness** of the North/West Passage coordination tasks and tools.

The information in this individual Event Summary will be compiled and compared to summaries of the other events evaluated in preparation of an After Action Report/Improvement Plan at the conclusion of the operational test.