

## Introduction

Regional Operations Forums were developed and are being conducted as part of [SHRP2 Project L36](#) “Regional Operations Forums for Advancing Systems Operations, Management and Reliability.” The forums provide practitioners with new and innovative approaches for managing and operating the highway system, drawing from the cutting edge work being carried out under the SHRP2 program and other national programs. The Regional Operations Forums are locally hosted extensions of the [Operations Academy](#) which was originally developed with support from the I-95 Corridor Coalition. The forum goals are to:

- Mainstream systems management and operations into the culture of agencies by transitioning the state of the art closer to the state of the practice
- Strengthen systems management and operations programs at the state and regional level
- Develop a community of practice through the development of a peer network
- Provide the next generation of leadership with the critical thinking skills for advancing system management and operations
- Provide training on the “best use” of SHRP2 Reliability products

North/West Passage hosted a Regional Operations Forum in Minneapolis, Minnesota from May 13-15, 2015. This document provides a brief summary of the forum details, all of the action strategies developed during the forum, and specific action strategies for further consideration by the North/West Passage Steering Committee.

## Forum Details

The Minnesota Department of Transportation, as the administrative state for North/West Passage, contracted with the University of Maryland, SHRP2 contractor for the Regional Operations Forums. The North/West Passage Operations Task Force provided input to the University of Maryland on the forum agenda and content as it was developed.

The forum was streamlined from five to two and a half days, and emphasis was placed on topics most directly related to rural transportation and corridor operations. The agenda (Attachment 1) focused on the following topics:

- TSMO Overview
- Road Weather
- Special Events
- Work Zones
- Traveler Information and Operations
- Freight Mobility
- Performance Measurement
- Coordinating across State Lines
- Past Event Review and Best Practices
- Action Planning

Special consideration was given to select topics based on current or previous North/West Passage projects. For example, the Performance Measurement session included a brief discussion of the work being done through Project 9.5 – Research Need for Corridor Performance Measures. Similarly, the Coordinating across State Lines session referenced the North/West Passage Operational Guidelines for

Coordinating Traveler Information and other tools that support coordination. Winter Storm Atlas from 2013 was targeted as a past event for review and group discussion about best practices. There was additional discussion about Sturgis in light of the 75th anniversary of the rally that will take place August 3-9. Over 750,000 people are expected to attend the celebration with activities scheduled before and after the rally dates. Event planning has been underway since last summer and will continue over the next several weeks leading up to the rally.

The forum also included a special session focused on the [National Operations Center of Excellence \(NOCoE\)](#) that was established through a partnership of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), and the Intelligent Transportation Society of America (ITSA) with support from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The Center is designed to offer a comprehensive set of resources to serve the transportation systems management and operations community. The new Center will offer an array of technical services such as peer exchange workshops and webinars, ongoing assessments of best practices in the field, and on-call assistance. Dennis Motiani, NOCoE Executive Director, joined the forum to introduce the Center and learn about specific issues with rural operations.

It was recommended that participation in the forum include staff who directly deals with traveler information and operations along I-90/I-94 or the managers of such staff. It was also recommended that participants not be limited to transportation agencies, but include law enforcement and other disciplines actively involved in transportation management and operations. The final list of forum participants (Attachment 2) included staff from various functional areas throughout the North/West Passage member agencies, as well as representatives from the Great Lakes Regional Transportation Operations Coalition.

### Action Strategies

Following the instructor presentations and large group discussions regarding the select forum topics, participants were distributed into three groups (Attachment 3) to further discuss potential action strategies. The groups were loosely based on portions of the corridor that work most together closely during major events impacting I-90/I-94. The groups were instructed to develop action strategies that all or a small group of North/West Passage members could implement at individually or collectively. The strategies could directly benefit the states' individual management and operations activities, or the North/West Passage activities to coordinate during major events. The groups were further instructed to remember that in order to make the action strategies work, all agencies need to be capable and able to implement them. Each group presented their action strategies as outlined below.

#### *Group 1 (States of Washington, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming)*

- Improve state to state communications
  - Clarify how far back to notify other states
  - Come up with events that warrant state to state callouts
    - Create checklist
    - Call outs will depend on truck parking and on decision points
    - State variation will require many discussions
    - Identify champions in each state – could be North/West Passage Steering Committee representatives

- Hold annual pre-event conferences (including winter, Sturgis, etc.)
- Provide better freight restriction information
  - Explore ArcGIS for trucking information
  - Weight, height, length, width with links to more detail
  - Can we find a way to provide restriction information to national providers?
  - OTIIS
- Explore GoogleVoice as an option to establish one number for states who don't have a TMC
- Apply Capability Maturity Model (CMM) for the I-90/I-94 corridor

*Group 2 (States of Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota and South Dakota)*

- North/West Passage chat
  - Can elect to follow the chat
  - On website where people could submit comments
  - Place to submit question on North/West Passage website
- Single phone number per state
  - One number forwarded to whoever is on the schedule
  - Always have someone on call
- One spot to click on the North/West Passage map for each state
- Include hyperlinks to neighboring states in each states' traveler information web sites
- Push notification system
  - Focused on the important information
  - Cannot inundate staff
  - The key is to perfect the notification system
- Construction work zones
  - Within certain distance of state border
  - If state thinks it could impact another state
    - Width restrictions, for example
  - Know these are out there and when the planned dates are
  - Five-year planned construction map for each state; will change, but good information
  - Issue is with the smaller chip seal type projects; not as much coordination and more open ended on when the contractor could be out there
- Discussion focused on how to "sell" the coordination concept for states without a TMC: ND, SD, MT
  - What problem(s) will a center fix if there is not a perceived need for it?
  - Do regional (multistate) TMCs work for rural states?
  - Will the proposed performance management rulemaking and requirements coming affect agency perception of a TMC?
  - Perhaps the solution could be looking at it less from the perspective of a physical center and more as a set of procedures for operations

*Group 3 (States of North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa)*

- Work zones
  - Share planned projects with known traffic impacts ideally three years out
  - DOTs to draft TMPs early in the process to share with adjacent districts in other states
  - Purpose is to avoid conflicts at borders or multiple work zones within an area of influence
  - Responsible players are possibly the traffic operations engineer, programming/planning personnel, design project manager
  - First step is to identify first points of contact
- State-to-state communications
  - Develop a framework of contacts from State-to-State but keep it simple
    - TMC contacts for real-time events
    - Traffic Operations or Public Info staff for planned events
  - NOCoE develop a national map based contact list that states can access to edit
    - Email for non-critical event notification
    - Phone for critical event notification
- Traveler information
  - NWP to continue to develop a corridor wide traveler information page
  - NWP to develop a synthesis report of what information DOTs can provide to 3<sup>rd</sup> party traveler information providers or freight companies
- Freight
  - Coordination of permitting between states
  - Sharing E-screening between states

### Select Action Strategies for North/West Passage Consideration

The action strategies presented by each of the three groups were further discussed during the forum and several were selected as strategies that should be further considered by the North/West Passage Steering Committee. These strategies were selected for further consideration because they impact all of the states along the corridor or they require additional resources and discussion that could be provided more readily by North/West Passage. The strategies are numbered for reference only and do not imply a priority order.

1. **North/West Passage Traveler Information.** Identify how the corridor traveler information web site – developed through the MCOM OTIIS project – is intended to be used for the corridor and how the states should connect to it, make others aware of it, etc. Further explore how North/West Passage could transition from providing corridor level traveler information via a web site, to how the states should be gathering the best information possible and providing it to third-party traveler information service providers (e.g. Google, INRIX) who will deliver it more broadly to travelers.
2. **Third-Party Traveler Information Services.** Develop a synthesis report about what information third-parties currently provide, how they obtain the information, and how agencies could better provide the information.

3. **North/West Passage Operations Web Site.** Determine if there is a need for an operations oriented web site to support coordination among the states, similar to the existing TMC/TOC Operations Coordination web page. Such a site could be used to provide agency contact information, access to state alerts, upcoming construction work zones, operator “chat” function, coordination checklists, etc.
4. **GoogleVoice.** Explore options and approaches for establishing single points of contact within each state. This would be useful to the states individually but may also be good for NOCoE establishing a national framework
5. **Push Notification Systems.** Research approaches used, identify best practices, and explore the possibility of a common framework for push notification systems – for travelers and agencies – among the North/West Passage states.
6. **Future Regional Operations Forums.** Forum instructors noted that the forum participants all become part of the listserv to facilitate future networking and information exchange. It was also envisioned that forums would be held periodically for similar reasons. If another forum is considered for North/West Passage in the future, it would be good to have it prior to annual work planning process so project selection can be influenced by forum discussions, as appropriate.
7. **Neighboring State Coordination.** States need to talk directly with their neighbors to further define the unique attributes of their coordination (e.g. which events to coordinate on, how far across borders to go, etc.). It would help if North/West Passage could establish a procedure that could be used by the states to facilitate these discussions among neighbors.

In addition to identifying action strategies that North/West Passage may further consider, there were some strategies identified that NOCoE could potentially address. These included:

- State contact information for operations 24/7
- Options for sharing freight related information online
- Support exchange of information among corridor groups – center has online information exchange forum also and the forum allows some tailoring to specific groups (e.g. NWP)
- Area of NOCoE that’s specifically focused on rural issues and best practices on specific issues

## Conclusion

This summary presented a brief summary of the forum details, action strategies developed during the forum, and specific action strategies for further consideration by the North/West Passage Steering Committee. It will be shared with the forum instructors and participants. It will also be shared with the North/West Passage Steering Committee to facilitate discussion about the select action strategies identified for their further consideration.

**North/West Passage  
Regional Operations Forum Daily Agenda  
Bloomington, MN**

<b>DAY 1 - Wednesday, May 13, 2015</b>	
Breakfast (Pawnee Room)	7:15 AM
Welcome and Program Opening, Bill Legg (Cherokee/Navajo Room)	8:00 AM
Participant Introductions, Les Jacobson	8:30 AM
<b>BREAK</b>	9:30 AM
Road Weather, Lisa Burgess & Les Jacobson	9:45 AM
<b>LUNCH (Pawnee Room)</b>	11:30 AM
Special Events, Lisa Burgess	12:30 PM
<b>BREAK</b>	2:00 PM
Work Zones, Lisa Burgess & Les Jacobson	2:15 PM
<b>BREAK</b>	3:45 PM
Traveler Information and Operations, Lisa Burgess	4:00 PM
Evaluation	5:30 PM
<b>BREAK</b>	5:45 PM
<b>DINNER (Pawnee Room)</b>	6:00 PM
<b>Day 2- Thursday, May 14, 2015</b>	
Breakfast (Pawnee Room)	7:15 AM
Freight Mobility, Donald Ludlow (Cherokee/Navajo Room)	8:00 AM
<b>BREAK</b>	9:30 AM
Performance Measurement, Tim Lomax	9:45 AM
<b>LUNCH (Pawnee Room)</b>	11:30 AM
Coordinating Across State Lines, Lisa Burgess & Les Jacobson	12:30 PM
<b>BREAK</b>	2:30 PM
Past Event - Development of Best Practices for the North/West Passage, Les Jacobson	2:45 PM
Evaluation	5:15 PM
<b>BREAK</b>	5:30 PM
<b>DINNER (Pawnee Room)</b>	6:00 PM
<b>DAY 3 - Friday, May 15, 2015</b>	
Breakfast (Cherokee/Navajo Room)	7:15 AM
Introduction to the National Operations Center of Excellence, Dennis Motiani	8:00 AM
Development of Action Strategies, Les Jacobson	8:30 AM
<b>BREAK</b>	9:45 AM
Presentation of Action Strategies and Development of Overall NW Passage Action Strategies	10:00 AM
Follow up Discussion with Dennis Motiani, National Operations Center of Excellence	11:15 PM
Evaluation	11:45 AM
Adjourn	12:00 PM

## North/West Passage ROF Participants May 13-15, 2015

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**North/West Passage ROF  
Group Assignments**

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<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
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Tony Ernest	Idaho DOT
Vince Garcia	Wyoming DOT
Gabe Guterrez	Wyoming DOT
Brandi Hamilton	Montana DOT
Jason Minzghor	Idaho DOT
Evan Olsen	Washington State DOT
Bill Preston	Washington State DOT
Bob Schumacher	Idaho DOT

<b>GROUP 2</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
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Patrick Brueggeman	South Dakota DOT
Travis Dressen	South Dakota DOT
Jason Feranandez	Wyoming DOT
Monica Heller	South Dakota DOT
Mike Kisse	North Dakota DOT
Doug McBroom	Montana DOT
Daris Ormesher	South Dakota DOT

<b>GROUP 3</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
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Gary Brunner	Wisconsin DOT
Ted Coulianos	Minnesota DOT
Tiffany Dagon	Minnesota DOT
Capt. Jeffrey Frenette	Wisconsin State Patrol
Dave Huft	South Dakota DOT
Mike Kamnikar	Minnesota DOT
Brian Kary	Minnesota DOT
Scott Marler	Iowa DOT
Steve Misgen	Minnesota DOT
Jared Smith	Iowa DOT
John Wilson	Iowa DOT