

# **V**ehicle **T**raffic **I**nformation **C**oalition

U.S. Department of Transportation  
Dockets Management Facility  
400 Seventh Street, SW  
Room PL-401  
Washington, DC 20590

***RE: Docket No. FHWA-2005-22986 / FHWA RIN 2125-AF09***

## **VEHICLE TRAFFIC INFORMATION COALITION COMMENTS ON NPRM FOR STATEWIDE AND METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING**

The Vehicle Traffic Information Coalition (VTIC) was formed on April 1, 2006 by leading auto, navigation and technology companies to promote the creation, collection and availability of high quality, real-time traffic data for drivers everywhere. We envision a transportation system where high quality real-time traffic information is available for every road at low cost. VTIC's membership includes: ESRI, Honda, Inrix, Mark IV, NAVTEQ, Tele Atlas, TeleCommunication Systems, Toyota, Traffic.com, Volkswagen, Wavetronix and XM Satellite Radio. Non-profit organizations also participate in VTIC as ex officio members of the coalition.

Sec. 6001 of SAFETEA-LU includes a specific planning requirement to include "operational and management strategies". The coalition urges the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) to ensure that measurable improvements in the availability and dissemination of real-time traffic data be made an essential element of statewide and metropolitan operational and management strategies.

Enhanced real time-traffic capabilities provided by the public and private sectors will reduce traveler delays; improve public safety and security; enhance reliability and service efficiency; and improve information for the traveling public.

The June 9<sup>th</sup> Federal Register Notice sites examples of management and operations strategies; such as: "traffic detection and surveillance, work zone management, emergency management, freight management systems, and

traveler information services” (page 33523). And with regard to congestion management systems, it appropriately included approaches that provide “accurate, up-to-date information on transportation system operations” (page 33560).

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century transportation system is a dynamic organism. Real-time traffic data is the way to measure the system’s “pulse” and “blood pressure.” Without accurate data on the real-time health of the system, it is impossible for individual drivers to make intelligent day to day decisions and for transportation professionals and traffic managers to measure the success of their interventions or judge the long-term health of the system.

VTIC recommends that Sect. 1201, the Real-Time System Management Information Program be incorporated into state planning. Traffic monitoring is key to effective operations and management strategies. The data under the language of the law stipulates the information will be for both state and local entities as well as the traveling public.

The traditional view is that operations and management is solely the purview of a relatively small group of transportation professionals. In reality technology provides a new paradigm. At any given moment millions of drivers from across the U.S. transportation network make decisions that impact the operations and management of the roadways. Improved information from navigation devices, satellite and terrestrial radio, roadside messages, cell phone and other consumer information services are helping drivers make more intelligent decisions. Many of these same tools are assisting transportation officials. The information that helps traffic managers make informed decisions is generally the same, or through disseminating the data via the distribution supply chain can be the same, information which also allows drivers everywhere the same benefit. What is needed is an overarching commitment to produce and distribute more and better data to improve decision making at the state, local and driver levels.

Early investments in traffic data collection are rapidly aging. The availability of data is spotty across the nation. Incorporating real-time traffic objectives in state planning can put the nation on course for more ubiquitous availability of traffic data and more optimal use of transportation infrastructure.

VTIC applauds the USDOT’s interest in advancing traffic detection and surveillance as well as its keen focus on congestion and crash reduction. As a 2004 FHWA study revealed, congestion grew for all city sizes in the U.S. over the past two decades. Real-time traffic data can empower drivers, traffic managers and public safety to ensure that the intelligent transportation investments are intelligently made and implemented.

The integration of “smart” transportation policies and innovative technologies opens an exciting new chapter in transportation efficiency.

The members of VTIC welcome opportunities to work with USDOT and state Departments of Transportation to pursue public private partnerships (PPP) which can cost-effectively improve both public and private traffic data gathering and dissemination efforts.

*For more information regarding VTIC, please contact Mike Kanger at 202-292-4604 or [mike.kanger@e-copernicus.com](mailto:mike.kanger@e-copernicus.com).*