

Vehicle **T**raffic **I**nformation **C**oalition

Docket Clerk
U.S. Department of Transportation
400 Seventh Street, SW
Room PL-401
Washington, DC 20590-0001

RE: Comments on Docket RITA-2006-25247

VEHICLE TRAFFIC INFORMATION COALITION COMMENTS ON DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION'S DRAFT STRATEGIC RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY (RD&T) PLAN

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.

The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) RD&T plan focuses on strategic and organizational goals in safety; reduced congestion; global connectivity; environmental stewardship; security; preparedness and response; as well as organizational excellence. VTIC urges the Department to take this opportunity to include research and development initiatives designed to advance real-time traffic data collection and dissemination in its strategic RD&T plan. Rapid advancements in the real-time traffic data capabilities would augment virtually every core program element, including reduced congestion, safety, security, preparedness, response, and environmental stewardship.

While driver oriented products and services are among the most visible examples of the utility of real-time traffic data, it is no exaggeration to say that the intelligent transportation system itself must be built on the foundation of high quality real time traffic data. Quality and timely data will empower travelers and

transportation planners throughout the United States transportation network to make informed decisions. As the adage goes; “information is power.” The challenge is to design systems which share the “power of information” among and between public and private transportation entities and to coordinate the mutual need for information in a manner that advances availability of real-time traffic information. This capability is important not only to empower drivers but to plan and measure transportation initiatives designed to reduce and avoid congestion and crashes.

The USDOT is uniquely situated to help move real-time technologies forward for drivers, traffic managers and emergency responders. There are important research needs related to generating or observing traffic flow on a near ubiquitous basis. Great synergy exists in combining the private sector’s quest for real-time traffic data with the public sector’s need for such data.

VTIC recommends including a program in the proposed RD&T plan to evaluate and enhance real-time traffic capabilities. As an industry-wide coalition, VTIC would welcome the opportunity to provide support for such an effort and to work closely with the USDOT to ensure its successful implementation.

A real-time traffic information research and development effort could assess the effectiveness of various real-time traffic technologies to reduce congestion, increase fuel efficiency, reduce pollution, facilitate emergency response and evacuation as well as enhance safety and security.

There should be a focus on collection. Collection technologies should be evaluated, tested and documented. Through enhanced collection, real benefits may be measured. The Department could examine case studies of traffic aware travelers versus travelers with no traffic awareness. Additionally there could be a project specifically detailed to show if and to what extent traffic data availability improves fuel efficiency. And since traveler needs for information supersedes geography, consideration should be given to regional and multi-jurisdictional solutions and demonstrations that cross jurisdictional boundaries. We also recommend the use of commercial vehicles in some of the tests.

Additionally, understanding the benefits of various technologies and dissemination strategies would be especially helpful to the Department as it works with DHS on transportation security and evacuation matters. Rating the true benefits or value of real-time traffic technology with regards to congestion mitigation and fuel efficiency would provide invaluable insight to the Department in tackling the core program goals of the RD&T plan. It would also assist the traffic information industry, and ultimately – and most important – the traveling public.

There has been some excellent work done by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Intelligent Transportation System Joint Program

Office (JPO) in the past. A 1990s report by FHWA stated real-time technologies resulted in 5% fuel efficiencies. And a recent posting on the JPO website, cited real-time work zone information as reducing delays by 50%. Unfortunately, the work has been spotty at best.

During a May 23rd meeting with senior personnel at the Department, VTIC was requested to provide both short-range and long-range suggestions on ways to mitigate congestion. Included in the response document the coalition prepared, we identified technology evaluation as both a short and long-range goal. VTIC strongly supports incorporating a real-time traffic technology evaluation program in the proposed RD&T plan.

The program could be administered through RITA or in concert with a university transportation center. VTIC would welcome the opportunity to be a partner in this project. Our organization can lend industry expertise to help coordinate the program and assist in moving it forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the plan. We congratulate the Department for its steadfast work in implementing SAFETEA-LU.

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