



January 11, 2008

RTV-1, John A. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
Research and Innovative Technology Administration  
55 Broadway, Kendall Square  
Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02142

Dear Ms. Bell:

The Vehicle Traffic Information Coalition (VTIC) is a coalition of auto manufacturers and technology suppliers leading in the real-time traffic information industry. VTIC represents the traffic information delivery value chain. Our members include: automobile manufacturers; suppliers to the auto manufacturers; traffic data collectors; dynamic data companies; emergency communications system designers; and disseminators of real-time traffic data to the end user, the driver. VTIC exists to promote advanced ITS solutions, particularly the development of real-time traffic information, which we believe is the foundation of any advanced traffic solution.

The vision of the Vehicle Traffic Information Coalition (VTIC) is to have every road enabled to deliver real-time traffic data at high quality and low cost. Our purpose is to promote the creation, collection and availability of meaningful, real-time traffic data for travelers everywhere in the United States. Drivers when empowered with real-time data become active participants in congestion mitigation instead of passive targets of top-down decision making. Rather than a series of dots on a screen to be managed by transportation officials, real-time traffic technologies empower drivers to make logical, congestion-mitigating decisions. Drivers become part of the solution instead of the problem.

The use of sophisticated information, navigation, and communications technologies is absolutely essential to furthering national transportation goals. Mobility and safety needs require improved driver situational awareness – both as to the immediate surroundings and the road ahead. Drivers equipped with advanced technologies can better respond to the road environment – both the nearby threats to safety (other vehicles and road conditions) and the overall impediments to mobility (recurring and nonrecurring congestion).

As we work to maximize transportation system performance, USDOT should utilize every opportunity to partner with the private sector to provide drivers and transit and commercial motor vehicle operators with real-time safety warnings, traffic, transit, and traveler information, and navigational tools. This information should be multi-modal and address transit, air travel, port and terminal information, and work zone safety needs.

VTIC is interested in partnering with Volpe and other parties in several ways:

- Urban Partnership Agreements/Corridors of the Future: Real-time traffic data creation and distribution should be an essential element of these premier programs. Participants should be required to gather high quality, real-time traffic data and make it readily available to the private and public sectors in a useful format at little or no cost.

- Fully Implement Section 1201: We offer our expertise and commitment to expedite the implementation of Section 1201 which requires among other things, the establishment of, “data exchange formats to ensure that the data provided by highway and transit monitoring systems, including statewide incident reporting systems, can readily be exchanged across jurisdictional boundaries, facilitating nationwide availability of information...”
- Carbon Measurement: The return on transportation investments could be enhanced through effective monitoring and measuring of the performance of our roadways. VTIC and its individual members are willing to coordinate projects through our industry relationships to study the use of real-time traffic information as a proxy for real-time carbon measurement from vehicles. Once measured, it can be better managed and, potentially monetized. Using traffic information to measure (and predict) carbon impact could give traffic managers and drivers an opportunity for a dynamic response to pollution. Traffic and carbon could be dialed up or down using real-time traffic advisories, ramp metering, signal timing, HOV lanes, variable tolling and other means. Armed with real-time carbon and traffic information, conscientious drivers could also choose to time their commute to correspond to greener periods. In a carbon trading environment, real-time traffic information could be used to more precisely measure the impact of road infrastructure and potentially generate investment dividends for mitigating congestion and carbon impact. Additionally, carbon measurement could assist in environmental compliance and giving communities credit for reducing traffic-related carbon.
- UTC Research Projects: VTIC is very interested in pursuing University Transportation Center research projects on the value of real-time traffic information as it relates to safety, mobility and carbon monitoring benefits.
- Probe Data: VTIC is excited about bringing new forms of probe data, such as wireless RF and Global Positioning System (GPS) data from vehicles and portable devices into real-time traffic data systems. Our coalition could bring together suppliers to discuss and evaluate the ability to use probe data to enhance real-time traffic information. We welcome the opportunity to leverage our relationships with the E911 industry and public safety organizations for a demonstration of the use of probe data.
- Weather/Traffic Information: Enhanced situational awareness includes information on road conditions affected by environmental factors such as temperature, precipitation, wind, fog, etc. VTIC members provide a weather-enhanced traffic service that can be deployed in a test bed. Environmental factors are relevant to all driving situations and may be especially critical in rural areas where emergency response times are longer.
- ITS Summit: VTIC is interested in co-hosting with RITA/Volpe a summit of ITS industry professionals related to road data collection, distribution and utilization, and to create synergies for the public and private sectors.
- Comprehensive Testbed/Cities of the Future: VTIC encourages the development of one or more comprehensive ITS/VII testbeds to demonstrate and fully evaluate the benefits of advanced transportation technologies. One or more cities (e.g. Los Angeles, Detroit, Seattle, Minneapolis, and/or Washington, DC) should be designated as SAFE transportation cities of the future. The growing mobility challenge and our heightened desire for further safety improvements require more than a piecemeal approach. Individual projects/solutions demonstrate value but would be furthered if combined comprehensively. Benefits could be demonstrated in one or more cities, thereby creating momentum for further development and deployment. A rollout schedule should be produced based on safety/mobility priorities, domestic needs, and available funding.

International tests of real-time traffic information have demonstrated the benefits of using these advanced transportation solutions. Now is the time to expand these benefits domestically. We encourage greater collection and distribution of real-time traffic information to drivers so that they become part of the solution – enabling millions of individual congestion-mitigating, safety-enhancing and carbon-reducing decisions each day. With enough high quality data, the private sector can put that information to work for the driving public. A modest investment of federal resources in the real-time traffic arena coupled with the substantial private sector investments already made can yield meaningful benefits. VTIC looks forward to collaborating with USDOT through RITA and Volpe to push forward these efforts.

Sincerely,

Robert Schill  
Executive Director