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The Traffic Safety Record

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2006 Traffic Records Forum Program and Call for Presentations - Program Chair, Joan Vecchi

Each year, ATSIP elects a Second Vice President to the Executive Board. This person has a very special task assigned to them - the creation of the next Traffic Records Forum Program.

The Program process begins before the previous Forum is even over. The new "SVP" starts preparing for their new responsibilities by looking at the Forum in a different light. They begin paying a bit more attention to how the Forum works, how the breakout rooms are set up, what people are saying about speakers and presentations, etc. They start taking notes on what worked, what didn't work and how they envision the Program for next year.

Once they leave the Forum, they have two to three months to outline a "theme" that will be presented at the next ATSIP Board meeting in fall. The theme identifies current topics that are of special concern for the traffic records community and serves as a guideline for Program submissions. The SVP presents the proposed theme at the Forum Planning Meeting and directs discussions on the program, sessions, training, keynote speakers and any other content related issues that arise. When all is said and done, the direction of the next Forum is set and the Program Chair can continue their work.

We are now at the next step in the Program process - the Call for Presentations. This year, we do have a few changes. In addition to the Call for Presentations, we are holding a Call for Training. After a lot of discussion, it was decided that training at Forum needed more structure. A special Chair was appointed to help develop the Training portion of the Program and share the workload. Tom Hollingsworth will be addressing training at the 2006 Forum and the Call for Training information is in another article in this newsletter. **For clarification, anything that does not fit into the Call for Training should be submitted to the Call for Presentations.** If you have any questions about this change, please contact Nicole Pappas at pappasn@nsc.org.

We are also changing our submission process. This year, all submissions will be made using an online submission form available on ATSIP

website. This will expedite the collection of the submissions and make the process more reliable. You will be able to cut and paste presentation information from any Word document. You should be prepared to provide: the Submitter's Information (Name, E-Mail Address, Organization's Name, Full Mailing Address, Telephone Number, Fax Number), Name(s) of Presenter(s), E-Mail address(es), Title(s) of Presentation(s), a two sentence description of your presentation/session for the Final Program, a paragraph or two explaining what will be presented, and a one-paragraph speaker bio/resume for each presenter.

Below is the theme that was developed for our 2006 Forum. Submissions for the Forum are not limited to the Program theme, but we encourage presentations that are within this scope.

The Challenges and Opportunities of Improving Traffic Records Systems: With Implications for SAFETEA-LU Section 408

Re-defining the Traffic Records System:

Over the course of the past few years, a great deal of discussion has occurred regarding "traffic records systems." Individual states are striving toward integration and linking of the various components of traffic records. Data users are struggling to make the data work for research and planning, data collectors are seeking middle ground in terms of the amount of information collected versus the time and resources required to collect that data, and data owners are concerned with the appropriate use of the data for which they hold ultimate responsibility. At the same time, Information Technology professionals are seeking means by which to maximize the use and usefulness of the data that is currently available. Presentations which relate to sharing of technology and systems which already exist (to promote economies of scale) would be helpful to all of us who are well-aware of the scarcity of resources in state and local governments.

New Opportunities to Develop Traffic Records Systems:

Following the reauthorization of funds via Safetea-LU, there would appear to be funding available to build data systems. All of these facts lead to the necessity of establishing a vision of what a comprehensive traffic records system should look like. Before moving forward, it is important to establish a "line of sight" to the desired end. The danger that exists is that the available funding will be utilized to build more stovepipe systems which don't link and whose information is difficult to integrate. Prior to development of any component, the entire system should be planned.

There are numerous technologies available, and the potential for data collection and use has never been more promising. The challenge is to plan for a system from the start. What most of us involved in government have been forced to do is to build our systems component by component as the funding becomes available. Then, once built, we attempt to force the linkages that we need to make the data optimally useful. This forum is focused on planning for a "comprehensive" system, one which can provide the data necessary to make informed public policy and highway safety decisions.

Continuing to Provide a Forum for Sharing Among Data Practitioners:

In every aspect of traffic record collection and use, we have experienced successes and failures and are aware of what works and what doesn't. This forum will look at the types of research that are being conducted and what data is being used as well as what is missing; concerns about data accessibility and privacy will be addressed; prioritization of data being collected; future potential of new ways of reviewing the data.

Enhancing Decision-making Capabilities through Data Improvements:

Decision-making for traffic safety is currently dependent in large part on information provided about fatal accidents. We have traditionally overlooked, to a large extent, information that can be gleaned about crash causation through the study of injury accidents. Are there possibilities for forensic examination of such crashes? What can be learned about causation, driver distraction, impact of driver age and ability? Is this information that can be obtained from currently collected data elements, or will we need to change the manner in which data is collected? Much of what we currently glean from records is limited by the amount and availability of data.

Emerging Problems and Technology

We face, in the near future, the impacts of an aging driver population that will grow from fewer than 19 million to more than 30 million drivers over age 70, by the year 2020. These demographic changes will drive the need to adequately determine driver ability, the impacts of pharmaceutical use and multiple ailments on driver safety. More than that, though, both government and private industry will be expected to find ways to allow this group to continue to drive and maintain independence through proper testing, improved vehicle design, and self-assessment. This single example includes more types of data that can be used to facilitate traffic safety in the near future.

Providing Awareness of Privacy and Other Legal Issues Regarding Safety Data:

The growing number of data needs in traffic safety is being matched by the evolving concerns about data warehousing and data mining. These are important issues for the future of government information systems. Concerns are beginning to be voiced about the information that will be collected and aggregated relative to the Real ID law governing driver licenses. We must be aware of the concerns and be prepared to answer, in order to maintain the effective and efficient use of the data that is available to us. Just this week a public forum was held at MIT to discuss the potential abuses of individual freedom that might result from collection of driver information. The issues are broadening, just as the opportunities for data-driven decision-making are escalating. We must be able to describe and discuss the uses and value of our data systems, and be prepared to address any concerns about the results of our data collection. All of this is dependent upon proper planning, with a view to the whole, rather than the component parts of our system.

Training at the Traffic Records Forum - Tom Hollingsworth

It seems as though, no matter what occupation you look at, whether it be the military, private, or public, the most effective and efficient ones are the ones that receive the best training. I'm sure we have all gone to a seminar and found it to be very useful. However, if we think about what we learn when we attend a seminar and compare it to what we learn when we receive training, most of us would agree, the seminar comes up short.

This year, we are taking a different approach to training sessions at Forum. We want to provide training that gives our attendees basic, working knowledge on a topic of interest. The normal Forum sessions and presentations are valuable for sharing experiences and information, but they can be fairly advanced. It is great to hear about how successful a GIS mapping project was, but if you don't understand what GIS is or what its potential is, it can be hard to get excited about it. It is also difficult to get your agency interested in a new resource if you can't intelligently discuss that resource in detail.

What we would like to see at Forum is training sessions that will have the attendees walking out thinking, "Wow, was I glad I went to that! That was great!" This year we are looking for trainers that would be willing to share their expertise in areas for the sheer joy of sharing knowledge with others. We would like people that are interested in training for the sake of training, not strictly for selling a product they have available. To quote one of our attendees: "What we feel is needed is information that will help us to make an informed decision about what product to obtain."

Therefore, instead of asking individuals to train on their specific product, like an electronic crash program, what we would like is someone that can share how a crash module should work. What should I look for when I look at crash modules? We all know that MMUCC is here to stay but what do we actually know about MMUCC? Is there someone that can share what impact it has on data? How do we find and interpret the information in the manual? Instead of teaching me how to drive a Cadillac, could you teach me how to drive a car and point out what the best features are for me to look for?

All that being said, as a result of the surveys that were completed last year for training, we learned the following topics may "scratch the itch" of those attending:

1. Crash analysis software. How do we use the data that is gathered? What is available to us?
2. GIS Software. What is it, how does it work and how can I apply it?
3. MMUCC. How will the new TEA impact MMUCC requirements? How do we interpret them?
4. XML. What kind of foreign language is it? What will this type of program give me that no other one will?

Those are few of the more popular topics that were mentioned in the surveys.

Unfortunately, not everyone that is knowledgeable in these areas is in a position to actually train on the topic. There are a lot of people that have an extreme amount of knowledge that have difficulty sharing it with others. However, if you are knowledgeable in any of those fields, and know how to share that

knowledge with enthusiasm, in a way that can be easily understood, while keeping the attention of the group, then we want to hear from you.

Since we anticipate a huge response to this request for trainers, all those that submit a request may not be able to present. Please understand we only have so many training session slots available.

Thank you in advance for your interest and assistance.

- W A N T E D! -
CREATIVE TYPES WHO THINK OUTSIDE THE CORRAL!
FOR *BEST PRACTICE CHALLENGE OF 2006*****

The competition is intense this year. Does your project stand out from the rest? Saddle up, fill out your application and give it a try!!!

State-of-the-art projects that improve the collection, quality and application of safety data will once again be showcased at the 32nd Traffic Records Forum, July 30th thru August 3rd in Palm Desert, California. Nationwide, governmental agencies at all levels continue to develop new and innovative Traffic Records Systems. They provide the information safety experts need to plan, develop, monitor and evaluate programs to reduce the frequency and severity of motor vehicle crashes on the nation's roadways. It is vital that the benefits offered by these projects are shared with other Traffic Records experts. Now remember partner, the Best Practices competition is open to governmental agencies only, although vendor participation in a project's development is okay. Only one BEST PRACTICES winner, along with a runner-up will be selected and recognized during the Forum. Wouldn't that be a kick!

*****BEST WEB SITE AWARD*****

Here's another category for one creative governmental agency that ATSIP will be recognizing at the 2006 Forum. It's for the best designed web page that most effectively makes traffic safety data available to the public. Here too, the runner-up agency will be recognized. Access to relevant data provides the foundation for planning, managing, and evaluating most projects we administer. Submissions for BEST WEB SITE of traffic records data will be rated for ease in accessing the site, user friendliness, availability of crash data, querying data, ease of navigation, and availability of multiple years of data.

SUBMITTING A PROPOSAL

Best Practice Projects and **Best Web Site** applications should be submitted via e-mail as attachments to Al Tindall at: al.tindall@lps.state.nj.us. Applications for both categories can be found on the ATSIP web page, in the 2006 Forum section.

Now this is important! Proposals for **Best Practices** and **Best Web Site** should be received by March 3, 2006. The ATSIP Best Practices Committee will review *all operational projects* only. If your project is still in the planning or development stages, well.....there's always next year.

Describing the Relationship Between Traffic Records and Homeland Security

G. Thomas Steele

CIO, Delaware Department of Safety and Homeland Security

The relationship between Traffic Records and Homeland Security is not obvious to all. Some have even said it is a “stretch” to bring the two together. It behooves everyone involved in traffic records to expand your vision to include the changing world we live in since 9/11. The presentation by Mr. McMahon at our Buffalo Conference was the best description of the relationship between traffic records and homeland security I have heard. Those in attendance had the opportunity to really understand the value of timely, accurate and complete traffic records for purposes beyond the norm. Listening to his presentation should have instilled in everyone that we need to reach out and bring this message to others in our transportation communities. We must subscribe and champion this issue in the forums we attend and plans being laid for the future. We CAN have a positive impact upon our society and nation beyond the reporting of crash information.

Just as 9/11 pointed out the need for our society to change our views on privacy, it also showed the need to change the manner in which we dealt with traffic management, information collection, crash data and the relationships with our fellow government and industry partners. Hundreds of vehicles clogged the streets of New York in attempts to deliver emergency supplies and rescue volunteers to ground zero. Parallel to that, many vehicles and personnel descended upon the gulf coast in an attempt to aid in the recovery of life and property. Traffic is a major concern when coordinating any disaster response or evacuation effort. Transportation and public safety professionals need to see how our efforts to reduce traffic congestion are also vital to helping plan effective rescue and evacuation efforts in times of disaster.

After the gulf coast tragedies, it is apparent that almost every document and bit of information collected for traffic records has the potential to contribute to saving someone's life and proving the identity of persons displaced by disaster. Many people lost their identity documents during their escape from the gulf coast. How were they able to prove who they were? Most used the information contained in their state motor vehicle registration and driver license files. With the help of these files and the photos they contained, many individuals were able to reestablish their identity and file for federal assistance. When people attempted to dupe or falsely claim benefits, these same database systems were invaluable in aiding law enforcement agencies across the country to identify and arrest those individuals. People attempting to claim false benefits were stealing not only from those individuals deserving assistance but also causing angst by casting doubt and suspicions on those legally entitled to benefits..

Traffic resources are also capable of identifying the safest and quickest routes to use in dispatching emergency personnel and even have the potential of providing mobile resources for local, county, state or federal authorities. Trucks loaded with supplies and emergency medical equipment were stalled along highways leading into the devastated areas of the gulf. Traffic congestion was monitored

through the use of traffic cameras, as well as, overhead aircraft that downloaded voice and image files to command centers and the media. Traffic record databases allowed command centers to identify vehicles and people and assisted in the opening of closed roads and identification of downed bridges. Our records and resources were vital to their efforts!

As you can see, the data already collected in traffic and transportation databases provides valuable information for homeland security and rescue personnel before, during and after disasters. The existing computer equipment and communications capabilities used to collect data at crash and emergency medical scenes can and should be utilized in disasters. It can expedite and enhance the evaluation of involved areas and provide valuable information that can be used ensure the proper deployment of personnel and equipment. Our transportation and traffic resources have to be seen as potential resources for security and emergency planning and response. In the end, it is still about something important to all of us - saving lives.

New York is on the Fast Track with TraCS - A Best Practice - Submitted by Sami M. Richie

Background

Paper based accident and ticket systems normally rely on a costly, time consuming, and inefficient manual process. Timely and accurate data is essential for effective strategic planning and program management in traffic safety. Prolonged traffic stops place the motoring public and police officers at a greater risk of vehicle collisions. Motorists' unsafe driving practices and distractions at crash scenes cause traffic congestion, property damage, injury, and death. To remedy this, the New York State Police (NYSP) partnered with a coalition of state and local agencies to bring the TraCS (Traffic and Criminal Software) system to New York State.

In November 2001, New York began to pilot test TraCS with NYSP and a limited number of county and local police agencies. Since the successful pilot and for the past five years, New York State has been continuously improving its current traffic **ticket** and **accident** reporting system.

Under the leadership of NYSP, in January 2004, TraCS was rolled-out in a limited fashion and expanded to primarily include major metropolitan police agencies in the State. The limited agencies' involvement was conducted in order to further test TraCS and maximize its full benefit for statewide use.

Participating/Partnering Agencies

New York TraCS is a cooperative effort by the following New York State agencies and organizations:

- Association of Chiefs of Police (ACP)
- Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)
- Department of Transportation (DOT)
- Governor's Traffic Safety Committee (GTSC)
- New York State Police (NYSP)
- Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS)

- State Park Police (SPP)
- Sheriffs' Association (SA)
- New York City Police Department (NYPD)
- Magistrates Association (MA)
- Association of Magistrates Court Clerks (AMCC)
- Prosecutors Association (PA)
- Office of Court Administration (OCA)
- Office for Technology (OT)

Current Status of New York TraCS

Benefits of TraCS

TraCS is a front-end automated data collection system. It is an electronic, field information gathering system using in-vehicle laptop computers that automatically enriches (fills-in) information from existing files (driver, registration, etc.) normally collected by law enforcement officers in completing an investigation. Since February 2000, the TraCS Team has created universal electronic **ticket** and **accident** reporting forms in TraCS for use statewide by all police agencies in New York. The use of GPS devices and GIS maps have been incorporated into TraCS in the spring 2003 release. A data movement infrastructure has been developed that allows police agencies to electronically send ticket and accident data to the DMV, DOT, and the OCA, who forwards ticket data to the respective local courts.

TraCS benefits the police officer by decreasing the amount of time to issue a traffic ticket or collect accident report information. The less time police officers spend parked along busy roads, the less chance of an accident, injury, or traffic disruption. The accuracy of accident and ticket data that police officers collect is greatly improved. Finally, reducing the time officers spend on paper work increases their availability for patrol. TraCS offers time-saving features, such as, barcode scanners that scan license and registration information directly into documents, and auto-populate, which allows officers to enter data once into TraCS and populate other documents with the same information with a click of a button. TraCS also provide police officers with daily downloads of suspended or revoked licenses and registrations, enabling ready identification of motorists who may be driving illegally.

TraCS enhances government efficiency by reducing duplicate entry by the DMV and the courts; at the same time, it saves time and minimizes errors. TraCS allows the court clerks to download tickets to case management software, to view the court calendar of tickets that are returnable on any given night, and enter data electronically. Also, the court clerks are able to electronically transmit traffic ticket dispositions to the DMV. Accelerating the flow of accident and ticket data to highway safety managers allows agencies to deploy their limited resources to high-risk accident areas based on the most current and accurate data.

Results

The NYSP is the lead agency in TraCS. The NYSP has continued to move forward with the development, implementation and training of the TraCS system. A statewide rollout of TraCS to local police agencies began in April of 2004.

As of October 2005, approximately 725 NYSP vehicles have been equipped, and all Troopers have been trained to use TraCS. Installation of TraCS in all state police vehicles will be done by the end of 2005. All computers are equipped, or have been retrofitted with GPS (global positioning system).

As of October 2005, the local law enforcement rollout is as follows:

- Over 190 local police agencies have signed the TraCS use and dissemination agreement. This means that they've asked for TraCS; and they are in the process of installing TraCS. More agencies are requesting information on TraCS.
- With the agencies listed above, an estimated 30 percent of police road patrol vehicles have or will have TraCS capabilities in the immediate future.
- 47 of the 62 counties in the State are in the process of being TraCS-enabled.
- Sixty-six local police agencies, representing 19 counties, are actively using TraCS.
- Fifty local agencies are sending their ticket & accident data electronically to State Police.
- Five more agencies are in the process of setting up their electronic transmission to NYSP. This includes countywide solutions in Monroe and Erie counties.
- Nine requests for training countywide in Cayuga, Ontario, Broome, Genesee, St. Lawrence, Essex, Clinton, Chenengo and Schenectady counties have been received and will be conducted.
- In November 2005, the NYSP are hosting a weeklong TraCS training session at the Academy for local police agencies. Over 100 local agency representatives are scheduled to attend.

Traffic tickets and accident reports that are completed by Troopers and local police officers in TraCS are flowing electronically to DMV, DOT, and the respective courts.

Future Direction

While the statewide rollout to local police agencies and NYSP continues, the TraCS team has moved forward with the release of a New York State "incident and arrest" module in the spring of 2005. This incident/arrest module has the capability to capture data and provide an interface to DCJS's Spectrum Justice System (SJS) back-end records management system.

Each county has a lead agency that will assist in installing TraCS and provide first level support and training to smaller agencies that may require assistance with TraCS. The NYSP will provide support to lead agencies within their counties with any issue that they cannot resolve.

New York State held its first TraCS Steering Committee Meeting in Syracuse, New York, in February 2005. The NYSP, local police who are lead agencies in their respective counties, and other government agencies attended this meeting. Topics discussed included improving the existing software, technical and hardware issues, process changes resulting from the software, and planning the future direction of TraCS.

Full implementation of TraCS statewide is totally dependent on available funding. The New York TraCS team is targeting 2010 for completing TraCS implementation in the State.

Accomplishments

The NYSP, where the central server is housed, is receiving **electronically** from all TraCS-enabled police agencies on average:

- 1642 traffic tickets daily
- 210 accident reports daily
- All data is flowing electronically from NYSP to DMV, DOT and OCA

Cost

TraCS in New York was initiated with a \$3.5 million grant from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) for commercial motor vehicles safety purposes. Funds were used by NYSP and DMV to purchase computing devices and other necessary peripheral devices for in-vehicle use. These funds were also used to set up an infrastructure for the electronic transfer of data from all police agencies to a central server, where the data could then be forwarded to various state highway safety agencies. An additional \$1.5 million grant from FMCSA was used to purchase server equipment and personnel to manage the system that is centrally located at NYSP. To continue development for all law enforcement use, pilot test, and roll-out TraCS statewide; nearly \$10 million in NHTSA State and Community 402, Section 410 Traffic Records, Section 163 Alcohol, and 164 Repeat Offender Transfer Incentive funds have been used thus far through Federal Fiscal Year 2005. Additional funding from the GTSC is planned to assist local police agencies purchase the equipment they need such as computing devices, printers and bar code scanners for the total statewide implementation.

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The Next ATSIP Newsletter is due out March 2006. If you have any article or other information you would like to submit, please email Nicole Pappas at pappasn@nsc.org.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO YOU ALL! - From ATSIP and the NSC.