

National Winter Maintenance Peer Exchange

Columbus, Ohio

AUGUST 28-29, 2007

STEERING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Clarification of Problem Statements

The Steering Committee asked four of its members—Dennis Burkheimer, Tina Greenfield, Lee Smithson and Linda Taylor—to consolidate the original list of 70 research needs statements by grouping like problems. The results of that consolidation, with clarifications by the moderator and facilitator for each track, appear below:

- 1. How to determine the proper timing and frequency of anti-icing and deicing.** This was a discussion on determining when and at what rates deicing materials should be applied to the roadway to maximize effectiveness. Items such as product type, pavement temperature, pavement type, relative humidity, precipitation rate and type, etc. The discussion also recommended a guide for when and how much deicer should be used for reapplication of materials.
- 2. Develop anti-icing, deicing and pre-wetting implementation guidelines.** The group felt there was a need to develop a standard set of guidelines or “best practices” that covered anti-icing, deicing and prewetting.
- 3. Synthesis of unconventional staffing strategies to meet increasing demands.** The participants in Track 3 felt government agencies are being downsized but the work load hasn't been reduced. When faced with critical events such as a major winter storm that must be dealt with in a timely manner, an agency may need to implement unconventional staffing strategies to meet these needs. The thought was to perform a literature search and international survey to determine what transportation agencies have done to meet these needs and prepare a synthesis to document staffing strategies. The synthesis should consider both successes and failures and include a variety of storm scenarios.
- 4. Develop standardized performance measure for snow and ice.** The states were all over the board with performance measure for winter maintenance. There was a need to standard the performance measure so that a roadway classification was consistently set across the United States. Motorist traveling across state boundaries experienced the same level of service of interstate system.
- 5. Are the FHWA TE-28 anti-icing guidelines accurate, appropriate, effective?** The group felt the anti-icing guidelines need to be proven under actual conditions to determine if the

application rates are accurate and effective for the different precipitation events and pavement temperatures. The tests were done in the early 1990s and the group felt with advances in technology it should be possible to test the guidelines to see if they are still valid.

- 6. Identify long-term impacts of not funding maintenance fully for summer and winter activities.** The group felt that the impacts of not funding maintenance activities fully would come back and bite us in the future and the cost to replace these system would be much more expensive. The research initiative would identify the maintenance activities that have been eliminated or reduced due to resource reduction and quantify the long term impacts on department and system to raise awareness and support.
- 7. Improvements in sensing and forecasting of ice, freezing rain and frost conditions.** This project was suggested because of discussions regarding how hard it is to detect freezing drizzle on radar and common RWIS equipment. Hand-in-hand were issues with freezing rain forecasts, the rain/snow line, and frost forecasts. They observed that sometimes the first indication of any freezing drizzle in the area was a call from the state patrol or your neighboring garage and that is not acceptable.
- 8. Determine staffing and funding for core maintenance activities.** The group felt strongly about determining the staffing and funding needed to support the core maintenance activities. Privatization, outsourcing and downsizing has impacted the DOT's ability to adequately perform core maintenance activities (summer and winter). Flexible workforce has helped address needs of winter maintenance but doesn't address the summer needs. Summer crews are under staffed and unable to perform some maintenance function because of lack of resources.
- 9. Develop tools to manage and communicate LOS, expectations and costs associated to urban, suburban and rural routes.** DOTs need tools to assist them in managing and communicating with motorists, management, politicians, stakeholders etc. They need effective ways to communicate and explain level of service, expectations, and costs on various roadway systems.
- 10. Build a test facility to provide objective data regarding the effectiveness of various winter maintenance treatments.** The group felt there was a strong need for a national test facility that could be used for testing materials, methods and equipment used in winter maintenance. Having a national test center would establish a rigid set of research guidelines, protocols and procedures which should make the results more accurate. Can also test RWIS sensors and MDSS logic at this facility.
- 11. Developing the next generation concept vehicle and optimized plow design.** The group felt there was a strong need to continue focusing on new technologies for equipment (robotics, GPS/AVL, zero velocity spreaders and plow design) that would allow operations to

be more efficient and effective in the future. The group sensed the work that was done in SHRP and with previous concept vehicle projects was great but wanted to see a national push for developing the next generation snow plow.

- 12. Seamless wireless communication for transferring data from vehicle to maintenance garage.** The scope of this discussion was to develop a standard communication protocol that could be used to move data between systems in a truck and back to a data collection system. I think this was more about developing a set of national standards for data exchange with snowplows that would allow states to use non-proprietary software and hardware to collect data from trucks. Plug and Play technology for snowplows with better integration of existing and new equipment

- 13. Is there a defensive way to determine or establish LOS nationwide (corridor management and seamless LOS across state boundaries)?** Develop a national LOS to better transition motorists across boundaries without sudden change in conditions. (Similar to No. 19). Consistency across state lines is a challenge. This would document successful practices some states have worked out which would help other states gain from these experiences

- 14. Best way to measure the chloride content on the surface and determine how long it lasts.** The group was interested in a real-time feedback of chloride levels and expected time period the chemical could maintain the roadway. The discussion focused on roadside and vehicle mounted sensors along with work in the laboratory. The research can focus on evaluating the accuracy and reliability of devices and their relative performance when dealing with different deicers which would be beneficial for the success of MDSS.

- 15. Support more meetings similar to this one for peer exchange.** I can't think of anything more to say about this one....

- 16. Cost-benefit analysis of winter maintenance equipment purchases and upgrades.** Develop a standard method to measure the cost/benefit of adding different components like wings, guidance systems, GPS, additional sensors, etc., and determining the expected service life of the new equipment.

- 17. Develop on-vehicle salinity sensor.** People wanted to know how much salt was on the road so they could track dilution, re-freeze potential, and how much more chemical (if any) should be applied at that time.

- 18. The importance of post-storm meetings.** The participants in Track 3 felt that the importance of post storm meetings was not recognized by many governmental agencies. A

literature search needs to be accomplished and results analyzed to learn what type of information is most valuable to document and share. A survey is needed to determine what is working, how to learn from mistakes, do post-storm meetings improve morale, and have the benefits of post-storm meetings been quantified.

- 19. Determining an appropriate wintertime LOS for specific areas.** Develop a road prioritization formula to determine LOS and see if it can be used nationwide.

- 20. Better use of RWIS and weather forecasts for decision making.** Develop more training on how to use RWIS and weather forecasting to help decision making. Improvements also need to be done to the RWIS for a more accurate chloride sensor for integration into the decision making process. There seems to be a lack of understanding on the correct action to take based on weather conditions and forecasts.

- 21. Best practices in winter maintenance performance (e.g. post-storm assessment).** The participants in Track 3 felt more needed to be understood about balancing politics and performance. What are some best practices in communicating with legislators? What performance metrics seem too meaningful and how to communicate these metrics to the crews. Post-storm assessment is also covered in No. 18 above. Each state has developed best practices in winter maintenance to improve performance. One example was post-storm assessment. These winter maintenance best practices need to be compiled and distributed to states so that they continue to improve winter operators.

- 22. Synthesis of best practices for reducing corrosion on winter maintenance equipment.** Synthesis to include investigation of better designs, use of corrosion resistant materials, coatings, stainless steel, etc. Cost/benefit analysis would need to be included to make sure the practice is cost effective.

- 23. Synthesis of strategies of retaining trained personnel.** The participants in Track 3 felt agencies are losing valuable trained and experienced personnel to other agencies and contractors. More needs to be understood about how to keep these people from going elsewhere to work. Exit interviews need to examine why people are terminating employment and what could be done to make their job more attractive.

- 24. How do we establish appropriate dedicated funding levels for maintenance?** Several state indicated ways they had worked with upper management, legislature, etc. to secure appropriate funding for maintenance. These methods should be examined and documented and the results shared with other states. .

- 25. Investigate alternative blade inserts.** Investigate alternate blade inserts such as taller carbides, ceramics but also look at alternative methods to clear the roadway with one pass. Also of interest is a way to evaluate and compare different models of blades to determine their wear.
- 26. Developing improved precipitation sensor.** Need an RWIS precipitation sensor that is very reliable and can at least do precipitation Yes/No. Precipitation type and rate are desirable as well. Strong emphasis on its ability to sense (at least yes/no) all types of precipitation reliably and ability to live in a roadside environment without frequent maintenance. Sensor needs to be relatively cheap.
- 27. Pilot evaluation of virtual pavement sensors and on-board friction devices.** Develop low-cost, simple friction measuring device or other method to determine slipperiness of roadway surface and transmit that information to users to assist in decision making.
- 28. State-of-the-practice for using driver simulators as a training tool.** The participants in Track 3 felt driver simulators seem to be an attractive training tool. Since they are very costly, management wants to know the payoff for the investment. Can results be measured? How are agencies that have simulators implementing them into their training programs? How do they staff this effort?
- 29. Development of standards for in-vehicle equipment.** Can be combined with No. 12. States cited problems interfacing new or existing spreader or sensor equipment with each other. Need standards so you can be sure that one system will work with the other.
- 30. Can chemical blends cause slippery roads and refreezing?** This focus on “blends” of different deicers. How they might interact to complicate the application and re-application rates/timing and resulting deicing/anti-icing performance. Also discussed optimum pre-wetting rate when use liquid deicer to prewet solid deicer. This effort should include conducting extensive lab and field tests on different deicing products to determine under what conditions the product caused slipperiness on the roadway surface and then determine optimum application rates for prewetting and anti-icing.
- 31. Optimizing the ergonomics for snowplow operators.** Determine if the new technologies, equipment changes or multi-tasking requirements are taxing equipment operators. Investigate the physical characteristics needed in the cab of a snowplow to provide safety and comfort for operators plowing for long periods of time. Also discussed was determining the ideal lighting for a snowplow to see and be seen by the traveling public and how to keep the rear of a plow clean during plowing operations.

- 32. Develop standard ratings and descriptors for road conditions.** Road condition reports vary greatly from one area to another. Also, the interpretation of a given road condition is different to different people. The road itself also can have different conditions along a given road segment. It was felt that we need a standard way of reporting to help bridge these gaps.
- 33. Develop acceptable dynamic messages for snow and ice.** The group felt that common, consistent and uniform snow and ice messages should be developed for the United States. There was concern and confusion over how to present winter messages without generating liability issues.
- 34. Develop standard specifications for components and communications.** To allow plug-and-play to minimize incompatibility of hardware and software and minimize training. Need to work closely with vendors. Could be continuous partnership, e.g., standard specs for GPS/AVL. (Same as No. 12)
- 35. Developing Tools for Outreach.** The participants in Track 3 felt more needed to be done to reach out to the younger audiences to excite them about careers in transportation. What types of promotional materials are being developed and are they affective? What type of education outreach should be done—e.g., presentations at schools, fairs, etc?
- 36. Develop a state winter severity index as a tool to compare materials use and costs (MnDOT, Washington DOT, New Hampshire).** Evaluate the winter severity index tools currently be used by states. The group felt that a uniform and consistent winter severity index needed to be established so that states could normalize performance and costs.
- 37. How to most effectively communicate performance measures and associated costs to internal staff, operators and stakeholders.** (Same as No. 9).
- 38. Need a tool to provide or ensure funding is available to cover salt/sand stockpiles and secondary containments for liquids.** Several states still struggle with meeting the requirement to cover salt/sand stockpiles and provide secondary containments for liquid chemicals. They felt that dedicated funding should be secured to ensure compliance with these environmental requirements.
- 39. Training for how to use technologies (e.g. RWIS, in-vehicle pavement sensors).** The group discussed how lots of maintenance folks are not as RWIS sensor-savvy as they should be. For example, the differences one can expect between in-pavement and infrared road temperature sensor readings under certain conditions.
- 40. Road prioritization formula for winter maintenance LOS.** (Same as No. 13)

- 41. Best practices for balancing politics and performance.** The participants in Track 3 felt that a literature search needs to be done and probably a survey to determine what are the best practices for communicating to legislators the need to establish performance measures and then provide the staffing and funding necessary to meet those measures. There is also a need to be able to communicate performance metrics to field crews so they understand their importance.
- 42. Is there a defensive way to determine or establish LOS nationwide (corridor management and seamless LOS across state boundaries)?** (Same as No. 13)
- 43. Inform stakeholders of the critical activities and impacts of maintenance on daily lives.** The image of maintenance workers is two fold—snowfighters in the winter and slugs in the summer (standing around doing nothing). The image of the maintenance worker needs to be improved. The critical activities of maintenance need to be explained to the public so they understand the how impact their daily lives.
- 44. Investigate what factors influence refreezing on the road.** Investigate all the various factors that may cause refreezing on the roadway in the lab and field, such as weather, previous application, pavement type/structure, product type, application rate, pavement temperature, air temperature, humidity, etc. Can be a different topic than No. 30.
- 45. Investigate collision-avoidance systems for snowplows.** Synthesis of work done in this field that would include investigation of the alert (lights, audible alarms, motion, etc.).
- 46. Explore use of highly detailed satellite imagery in winter maintenance operations.** The goal of this statement is a way to remotely monitor the condition of a road along its full length—not just at certain points like most in-situ sensors do. Something that can be presented visually, like high-detail satellite imagery is optimal.
- 47. Training for maintenance personnel to interpret forecasts.** Forecasts may contain a lot of information that can be easy to misinterpret. Additionally, forecasts often contain information that is missed (clues to tell when a forecast is already off to a bad start, forecast details like wind or relative humidity that can really make a difference to maintenance, etc.). Need more training on not just the weather info in the forecast, but also “reading between the lines.”
- 48. Meeting increasing training challenges.** The participants in Track 3 felt the employment pool is changing. There is a lack of work ethic and work skills. New techniques are needed to fill these work skill gaps and instill a good work ethic.

- 49. Optimization of the in-vehicle driver interface.** Drivers need certain information to help them make appropriate treatment decisions but information overload can be harmful. What information should be presented? How should this information be presented?
- 50. Synthesis of how to effectively relay and communicate winter maintenance budget needs to upper management and legislature.** (Same as No. 24) Develop successful communication strategies to inform, educate and communicate funding maintenance needs to upper management and legislature to ensure adequate funding. They also need to understand the ramifications of not funding maintenance activities and the long-term impacts on the infrastructure.
- 51. Standardized tests for winter maintenance equipment.** May be accelerated lab tests coupled with field evaluation of various brands so that it can be used to determine their service life as an input to the cost-benefit analysis or for side-by-side comparison.
- 52. Improved chemical sensor.** Need a better in-pavement chemical sensor that can reliably tell how much chemical is still out on the road. Current sensors do not seem reliable enough to base decisions.
- 53. Developing methodologies for evaluating training efforts.** The participants in Track 3 felt methods need to be developed to determine if training does make a difference and how this difference can be measured.
- 54. Developing measures of forecast accuracy.** Need a good way to tell how accurate different forecast sources are. This would be used to monitor forecast services and keep track of which sources do the best when you have more than one to look at. Also it can be used to test whether complaints about a new forecaster are real or just because it's new. What is the most accepted way to gather or use observations as "truth"?
- 55. Develop guidelines for BMPS to achieve attainment in areas of concern.** As our groundwater, lakes, and rivers are tested and designated attainment areas, we need to develop guidelines for agencies to effectively manage these areas. What methods are being utilized by other states to meet BMPs and how best to achieve these goals without compromising safety and mobility of motoring public.
- 56. Educating meteorological community about the maintenance personnel's weather information needs.** The group felt that there is a need for more meteorologists who understand the needs of maintenance personnel. Develop a way to educate more forecasters about what maintenance requires in a forecast and how to "speak our language."

- 57. Pursue objective testing to verify the effectiveness of innovative maintenance treatments.**
- 58. Establish seamless boundaries for winter information across states.** (Similar to Nos. 13, 33 and 42.)
- 59. Feedback of customer expectations on winter maintenance.** Several states use customer feedback as a way to manage and determine their targets and performance measures. A synthesis of the different methods used should be documented and evaluated. The most effective approaches should be summarized so that states can more effectively manage customer expectations of maintenance activities.
- 60. Can the road surface refreeze due to over-application of salt?** More research needs to be done to determine under what condition salt may refreeze on the roadway surface. We talked about the right side of a typical phase diagram would imply that the road surface could refreeze due to over application of salt. Needs laboratory investigation and maybe some easy-to-use rules to help practitioners properly use phase diagrams.
- 61. Improvements in forecasting of low-elevation weather conditions.** Similar to No. 7, improvements need to be made in forecasting fog, freezing fog, drizzle, and things which otherwise slip under radar and are hard to monitor and forecast.
- 62. Innovative solutions for real-time vehicle-to-center data communications.** Need to collect or research different solutions to get vehicle data into the department's network or web. Often what works best for one person or area will not work for another so we need pros and cons for many methods. Need low-cost and relatively easy solutions. Communication costs can be quite substantial for equipping a whole fleet so an agency must be able to choose wisely from its available options.
- 63. Develop plan for improving weather forecasts through outreach to meteorological community.** DOT folks need to know what they can do to help make their forecasts better—i.e., do meteorologists need better RWIS, different types of sensors? What do they need from us? Are they getting it?
- 64. FHWA develop pilot/demonstration projects for seamless winter operations (NCHRP 20-74A problem statement).** The FHWA should develop pilot or demonstration projects of seamless winter operations. This would include LOS, winter messages, RWIS, and other technologies. The results of the pilots can be used to establish and/or revise standards and policies.

65. Synthesis of innovative methods to compete with industry. The participants in Track 3 felt a synthesis should be prepared to illustrate innovative ways that government can compete with private sector salaries and benefits. Ways need to be developed to overcome the stigma that government jobs are of lesser value than private sector jobs. Also examine government processes for hiring—do they need to be streamlined to avoid unnecessary delays and other time-consuming seemingly bureaucratic delays.

66. What is the true cost of a data collection system (e.g. AVL)? How much does it cost to get a maintenance data collection system—communication, maintenance, operator time, and equipment? Also, what is the payback? Estimating costs can be hard to do and we need more guidance before we jump in.

67. Case studies on ensuring consistency in winter maintenance practice across state borders.

68. Boilerplate language for data sharing. Concerns over litigation have slowed down the ability of states to share data. This project would develop some standard language that could serve as a starting point for states to address legal issues that may be involved with data sharing. Also nice to know what language is out there and how it has worked for those who put it out.

69. Education about microclimates. Weather can change dramatically in small areas. Local weather quirks are often well-known in the heads of veteran vehicle operators and supervisors, but new employees are at a disadvantage. This project would investigate ways of using technology to “record” the ways that veteran personnel respond to microclimates so if the veteran retires or are otherwise not around, the new employee (or the one who is just from a different area) is armed with much the same knowledge.

70. Best practices for snow fences

- When to use live fences;
- Cost-benefit considerations;
- Guidelines for various types of live snow fences (grasses, corn);
- Understanding political challenges (e.g., killing nice grass before planting natives which look like weeds at first) and dealing with land owners.