

WZSTF Technical Committee Meeting Minutes
Olympic Region
September 19, 2007

Attendees: Kevin Waligorski, Les Miller, Marty Weed, Frank Newboles, Tony Hernandez, Mike Novak, Steve Haapala, Vicky Thorniley, with guests Sue Tellesbo and Brian Walsh. Absent: Bonnie Nau.

Membership:

- Frank explained the technical team consists of representatives from maintenance, design, construction, and traffic that look in depth at any technical issues introduced by the Work Zone Safety Task Force (WZSTF). Recommendations are then taken back to the WZSTF.
- Dave Hamacher of HQ Safety Office left state service so the committee doesn't have a safety representative. Sue is a safety officer in NWR, she investigates accidents and makes recommendations, teaches safety courses to region staff. The committee voted to invite Sue to become a member to represent the safety office.
- With Kirby Wallace leaving the Technical Committee, Eastern Region is not represented. **Action item: Tony will do some research and bring ER nominations to the next meeting.**
- Frank stressed the importance of team members taking information from the Technical Committee back to the regions; he suggested looking at statewide forums as an additional method to share information.

Short Duration Work Zone Issue:

- Two SWR maintenance employees were reprimanded after receiving a citation from L&I due to the methods used to fill a pothole on an on ramp to a rest area, the reprimand was later withdrawn. WSDOT appealed the citation since it wasn't based on a written standard but L&I did not agree with the appeal. A final appeal with the AG office is pending. It would have been more productive in this instance for L&I to discuss the situation or issue a warning to the crew rather than issue a citation.

WZSTF update:

- The September meeting of the WZSTF was cancelled by Chairs Chris Christopher and Linea Laird since they felt the agenda did not contain enough clear, tangible needs or issues that would warrant the team getting together.
- Frank believes there are still legitimate issues to pursue and John Conrad agrees, but now may be a good time to refocus the task force since the HQ Traffic Office has work zone experts to coordinate statewide issues where in the past when the task force was initially started this was not the case.
- The Technical Committee will be kept intact regardless of the continuation of the WZSTF, there is validity to the issues the committee works on and the committee ensures decisions made have statewide support.

Region Roundtable Discussion:

- Kevin said with higher volumes of traffic, they are doing more work at night or doing full closures. Looking at ways to keep workers safer, NC Region tried a couple of projects with no ticket-takers, there are glitches to work out but it can be done. They are using flashing lights on stop/slow paddles and have looked at which projects could use the automated flagger assistance device (AFAD). Marty said five projects statewide used the AFAD this season. Kevin said NCR is concentrating more on design than construction this next season so the construction program will be slower than normal.
- Mike explained traffic control in SW Region still is not going well on the I-5/SR502 Interchange project. The work zone has had numerous reviews, the speed has been reduced and inattentive drivers still run into each other. Frank said this could have already been a problem area that did not become apparent until construction was introduced, this might be the ideal place for more vigorous advance warning using VMS or other ITS equipment. Mike mentioned that the region has developed a portable trailer with a camera and DVD player that can be used to record driver actions and find solutions to the incidents.
- Steve talked about an alternate merge sign used by Olympic Region that basically illustrated a merge movement instead of specific left or right merging. The idea behind it is to reduce road rage when drivers merge and force them to take turns. The project engineering office felt that it worked well on the high volume-low speed application where two lanes were being taken down to one just past a signal. The topic was brought up as to who is at fault in the case of a crash if there is no sign assigning a left or right merge. Also, since this is a non-standard sign it will be required to have a request for formal experimentation through FHWA. Steve also talked about the road stripe removal processes and is looking for options to try to create a better visual with less scarring. Steve discussed use of standard plans by local agencies when the template is used as is instead of building a plan around it. Steve asked for suggestions on the best way to include work zone ITS in a contract, the group mentioned possibly using low cost portable HAR and VMS can add value and flexibility. Maybe look at opportunities to use permanent ITS features in temporary applications or advance new permanent ITS devices early in a contract for benefits in a temporary application.
- Les of SC Region said the region is also using more night work because of traffic volumes. He then asked about the requirement on using only aluminum signs in work zones and why it is so restrictive, Frank said the decision is based on performance of the sign material and how the sign sheeting adheres to the aluminum better than plywood. Les gave the group a handout of the GSP on work zone clear zone, he explained that Phil Nickson had some concerns that the spec was not clear enough on the use of devices during working hours. The group discussed the wording and it was agreed that Frank and Marty would have a follow up discussion with HQ Construction and see if there was a better way to clarify the work hour statement. **Action item: Frank and Marty will discuss with HQ Construction the Work Zone Clear Zone spec for opportunity for better clarification on what is necessary during working hours and report back to the group at our next meeting.**

- Tony talked about worker safety next to railroads and wondered if we should consider adding wording in the M54-44. Tony talked about reflective gear, Class 2 outerwear must be worn any time an employee is near traffic. Tony mentioned that Class 2 t-shirts are being bought for all maintenance crews. Marty gave the committee an informational handout on high visibility safety apparel from FHWA.
- Sue shared that most of the questions she receives concern mobile flagging operations. This has been a concern of L&I as well. She also talked about traffic control for surveyors. Sue mentioned that on the Pre-activity safety plan the crews are now including a note to say what TCP they are using during their shift.
- Brian explained that roundabouts constructed correctly should need very little maintenance. If maintenance is required, ideally the roundabout can be closed and all the work can be done in it during one closure (paving, landscaping, and catch basin). Marty said there is a guide created by the federal government on roundabout construction, parts of which could be included in the WSDOT *Design Manual*. Brian and Marty will look at opportunities to add guidance in the future Design Manual updates on roundabout work zones.

Discussion Items:

- Drivers Ed Program – Vicky said with school starting back up, the driver’s education program regarding young drivers in work zones is being reactivated. Handouts were provided that explained the new program WSDOT is endorsing, *Turning Point*. Marty told the group that work zone driving information will be included in the Department of Licensing manual for new drivers in 2008, more information will come as this progresses.
- FHWA Final Rule – effective October 12, 2007 the rule mainly affects project development. WSDOT is pretty much up to speed except for training. Marty will be critiquing an Advanced Work Zone Design class being offered by National Highway Institute (NHI) to see if this class can be offered to WSDOT employees as is or if pieces of it could be used to build WSDOT curriculum.
- Work Zone Bulletins – one is being created that outlines procedures to follow in the event of a work zone crash (this does not apply to the initial first response but to the overall interaction of WSDOT with WSP, the media, and others; this will ensure that details are not missed.)
- M54-44 – Marty is keeping a master book with comments to the M54-44 that he receives throughout the year from the regions. Frank has created a supplement on determining traffic volumes in work zones that will be included in the next update. Discussion took place on the definition of volume. NWR and OR both have work hour restrictions in place on many of their routes and these restrictions are listed in work hour charts for their maintenance crews. An updated manual will be available in early 2008; before it is finalized it will be previewed by the Technical Committee, and a selected group of maintenance people. Sue offered to have her safety reps review the manual as well. Because of funding issues the manual will be distributed electronically, the printed version can be ordered from

WSDOT HQ Engineering Publications. **Action item: Marty will bring copies of the draft manual update to the next committee meeting for discussion.**

- A discussion on the need to create work zone inspector training, there is a general need for training but it was discussed that this could possibly take place perhaps as part of the regions Design/Construction Conferences.
- Photo enforcement in work zones – the Legislature gave WSDOT funding for a two year pilot program. This year WSP and WSDOT partnered to lay the ground work, next season photo enforcement will be deployed in select work zones. A report will be written for the legislature explaining how well the program worked, with an emphasis on safety. The legislature will decide if the program will be funded in following years.
- Next meeting will be hosted by NW Region, possibly in Bellingham, mid January. The meeting will begin at 1:00 pm the first day and end at noon on the second day to allow for travel.

Action item: Tentative date of January 15 & 16, 2007 in Bellingham, Marty will send out a meeting request with the meeting minutes to tentatively hold the meeting date.