

Alternative Fuels at Safety Rest Areas: Synthesis

Prepared for
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Transportation Synthesis Reports (TSRs) are brief summaries of currently available information on topics of interest to WSDOT staff. Online and print sources may include newspaper and periodical articles, NCHRP and other TRB programs, AASHTO, the research and practices of other state DOTs and related academic and industry research. Internet hyperlinks in the TSRs are active at the time of publication, but host server changes can make them obsolete.

Request for Report

Kim Johnson, J.D., Project Development Manager, in the WSDOT Public-Private Partnerships office requested a literature search on what other states are doing relative to permitting commercial activity in safety rest areas—specifically for alternative fueling stations.

Report Summary

A search of available literature and online resources has revealed only one state, New York, actively developing alternative fuel service at rest areas. A California state legislator introduced a bill on the topic in 2007.

Information on alternative-fuel incentives and the commercial development of safety rest areas follow discussion of the aforementioned measures. Commercialization has been researched by Texas, California, Virginia, Idaho, and British Columbia. As of February 2008, Idaho has entered into a public-private partnership to develop a safety rest area.

Databases Searched:

- Transport, available through WSDOT Library
- TRIS Online
- Research in Progress
- Google
- Wisconsin DOT Transportation Synthesis Reports

Development of Alternative Fuels at Safety Rest Areas

New York:

New York State: A Leader in Alternative Fueled Vehicles

New York Office of General Services, January 2008

<http://www.ogs.state.ny.us/supportservices/vehicles/cleanfuel/epactInfrastructureUpdate.pdf>

This is a bulletin on the state's alternative fueled vehicles program. An item under "Developing the State's Alternative Fuel Infrastructure" notes, "The Thruway Authority is planning a project to install E-85 [85 percent ethanol, 15 percent gasoline] pumps at Thruway Travel Plazas" (p. 2).

(Note: Travel Plazas are commercial centers along the New York State Thruway, a state toll highway system, that offer such services to motorists as food and fuel. For information, see <http://www.nysthruway.gov/index.shtml>.)

New York State: A Leader in Alternative Fueled Vehicles

New York Office of General Services, September 2006

<http://www.ogs.state.ny.us/supportServices/vehicles/cleanfuel/newsletter200609.pdf>

A bulletin on the state's clean-fueled vehicles program. From page 3, "Governor Pataki further directed NYSTA to undertake a plan to install E85 fueling at the 27 rest areas along the Thruway, the first of which will open in November 2006."

Related Link:

- **New York State Alternative Fueled Vehicles Program**
<http://www.ogs.state.ny.us/supportservices/vehicles/defaultCFV.html>
The main web site for the state's alternative fueled vehicles program.

California:

California Assembly Bill 1566 (Niello), Introduced February 2007: Rest areas: joint economic development demonstration projects

http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/07-08/bill/asm/ab_1551-1600/ab_1566_bill_20070223_introduced.html

This bill would require that one or more new rest areas be considered as a joint economic development demonstration projects. Item (c) stipulates that such projects should consider and incorporate as possible "alternative fuel service, recharge facilities for electric vehicles, and emission reduction facilities for commercial trucks."

(Note: this bill died in 2008. For more on the bill's history and commentary by the assembly transportation committee see http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/postquery?bill_number=ab_1566&sess=CUR&house=B&author=Niello.)

Alternative Fuel Incentives

State and federal laws and incentives related to alternative fuels and vehicles

US Department of Energy, Alternative Fuels and Advanced Vehicles Data Center, 2008

http://www.eere.energy.gov/afdc/incentives_laws.html

This database captures state and federal laws and incentives related to alternative fuels and vehicles, air quality, fuel efficiency, and other transportation-related topics. State-level information is updated annually after each state's legislative session ends. To access state information, select a state from the map below. Federal information is updated after enacted legislation is signed into law. Select the Federal Incentives and Laws link below for the latest federal-level information.

The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-140, H.R. 6) was signed into law on December 19, 2007. This broad reaching energy policy law consists mainly of provisions designed to increase energy efficiency and the availability of renewable energy. Three provisions are specifically transportation-related focusing on Improved Vehicle Fuel Economy, Increased Production of Biofuels, and Energy Transportation and Infrastructure. Selected summaries from The Energy Policy Act (EPAAct) of 2005 (HR6) are also available at this site.

States Offer a Variety of Incentives for Alternative-Fuel Use

Posted at US Department of Energy website, 2007

http://www.fleet-central.com/resources/State_Incentives_Alt_Fuel_Use.pdf

This site contains a chart of state programs and laws.

Excerpt: To spur compliance with mandated air quality regulations, most state governments offer incentives to invest in alternatively fueled vehicles, infrastructure, and alternative-fuel production. Here is summary of incentives available in each state.

Alternative Fuels Incentive Grant (AFIG) Program

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

<http://www.depweb.state.pa.us/enintech/cwp/view.asp?a=1412&Q=502176&enintechNav=%7C>

Excerpt: The Alternative Fuels Incentive Grant (AFIG) Program was established in 1992 under Act 166. Act 178 was passed in 2004, resulting in two new programs designed to stimulate the production and use of biodiesel and ethanol in the Commonwealth.

Periodicals on Commercializing Safety Rest Areas

2003 Fueling American Prosperity: How Rest Area Commercialization will Devastate the Economic Contributions of Interstate Business

The University of Maryland was contracted to work on an updated version of the 1997 Fueling American Prosperity. This study demonstrated how much revenue interstate businesses generate for the United States economy and what will happen, if the ban on rest area commercialization is lifted.

Natso Pleaded Congress Dropped Commercialization of Rest Areas

Kristi Cox, *Transport Topics No. 3572*: January 26, 2004, p. 3+, Ill.

No abstract provided.

Evaluating the Potential Impact of Interstate Highway Rights-of-Way Commercialization on Economic Activity at Interchanges

T.M. Corsi, R.J. Windle, and A.M. Knemeyer, *Transportation Journal* 39(2): 16-25, Winter 1999 (6 Tab., 18 Ref.), ISSN 0041-1612, American Society of Transportation and Logistics, 229 Peachtree Street, NE, Suite 401, Atlanta, GA, 30303-1600, USA

[Transportation Journal](http://www.entrepreneur.com/tradejournals/article/print/62528217.html)

<http://www.entrepreneur.com/tradejournals/article/print/62528217.html>

Abstract: Debate over interstate highway commercialization began with the enactment of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 and accompanying Revenue Act. This legislation established the Highway Trust Fund with the purpose of constructing the interstate highway system (IHS). Legislators were faced with the decision on where commercialization should and should not occur on this developing system of interstate highways. At the program's inception, legislators decided those businesses at the interchanges could best serve the needs of motorists, so they specifically prohibited the commercial development of the IHS rights-of-way. This status has remained unchanged over the past 40 years. Because of this ban, most rest areas on the IHS rights-of-way offer only picnic areas, restrooms, and vending machines. Only those highways that pre-date the IHS and were converted to interstate routes provide exceptions to this general prohibition. Over the past few years, several challenges to this prohibition of commercialization on the IHS rights-of-way have occurred. The primary purpose of this study is to examine the potential impact of IHS rights-of-way commercialization on the level of economic activity at highway interchanges. Specifically, the study attempts to quantify the potential impact that this type of commercialization would have on annual sales at highway-oriented service establishments located off the IHS

rights-of-way at interchange locations. The goal is to provide relevant information to parties involved in this policy debate.

Feasibility of Safety Rest Area Commercialization in Texas: Final Report

M.A. Euritt, R. Harrison, and S. Grant, November 1992, 70 pages (Figs., Tabs., 22 Ref., 1 App.)

Report Numbers:

- FHWA/TX-92+1269-1F
- Res Rept 1269-1F
- CTR 3-18-91/2-1269-1F
- Contract/Grant Number: Study 3-18-91/2-1269

Corporate Authors:

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- Texas Department of Transportation, Transportation Planning Division, P.O. Box 5051, Austin, TX, 78763, USA
- Federal Highway Administration, 400 7th Street, SW, Washington, DC, 20590, USA

Abstract: Rest area facilities are an integral part of the Texas state highway system. In recent years, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) has become concerned about the physical condition and appearance of some of its rest area sites, and mounting costs of construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance. The feasibility of rest area commercialization is explored. A 2-tiered analysis is presented—Tier 1: examining policy development issues and Tier 2: examining policy implementation issues. Based on a review of privatization literature, there is strong conceptual support for commercialization. Moreover, all state barriers have been removed, permitting commercial activities on state-owned right-of-way (ROW). The federal government, however, still restricts commercial use of interstate ROW, although this is expected to change in the next few years. Existing ROW should accommodate most plans for commercial services and provide a new revenue base, though small, to the State Highway Fund. Provision of rest area services could change from a TxDOT cost source to a revenue source, if commercialization were pursued. Public rest area user surveys reveal a desire for commercial services at rest areas. TxDOT should pursue commercialization of rest areas, initially, through a pilot program. There are several sites on U.S. highways that appear feasible.

Commercialization of Rest Areas in California

E.N. Kress and D.M. Dornbusch, *Transportation Research Record 1326, Safety Rest Areas, Roadway Vegetation, and Utility and Highway Issues, Report No. 0-309-05166-5: 1-5, 1991*, ISSN 0361-1981, Transportation Research Board, 2101 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC, 20418, USA

Abstract: The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is studying the feasibility of establishing private commercial services in rest areas. A lease was signed in late 1990 for the first traveler services rest area (TSRA), which provides such commercial services. Under the agreement, a private partnership will build, operate, and maintain the rest area for 35 years, after which all improvements will become the state's property. Caltrans will contribute the land and \$500,000 in exchange for an operating rest area and revenues from the commercial operations, estimated to be at least \$9 million over the life of the agreement. TSRAs are still in an experimental stage, and two main obstacles impede further developments: federal law prohibiting commercial services on Interstates and opposition from local business operators who fear additional competition. However, during development of the first TSRA, ways were found to avoid these obstacles. Procedures being used in the investigations and implementation of the first TSRA development effort are discussed here, including the importance of community relations, dealing with local opposition, and approaches to the division of responsibility between the private sector and state. It is concluded that the approaches used to develop commercial services in new and existing rest areas in California hold great promise. State officials are encouraged that the new federal attitude toward privatization and the willingness of the state to work with local interests will engender greater latitude in implementing future projects.

Opportunities for the Privatization of Virginia's Rest Areas and Welcome Centers: Final Report

A.W.M. Phillips and M.A. Perfater, May 1991, pp33 (2 Tab., 20 Ref., 1 App.)

Corporate Authors:

- Virginia Transportation Research Council, P.O. Box 3817, University Station, Charlottesville, VA, 22903, USA
- Virginia Department of Transportation, 1221 East Broad Street, Richmond, VA, 23219, USA

Report Numbers:

- VTRC 91-R27
- Project 9274-093-940

Abstract: The report presents the findings of a study that investigated the opportunities for the future development, expansion, and operation of Virginia's rest areas and welcome centers through joint efforts of the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), the Virginia Division of Tourism (VDT), and the private sector. The researchers examined rest facility operations from historical, financial, legal, state and motorist perspectives and considered the positive and negative components of privatizing these facilities. The report addresses the activity underway aimed at altering the federal prohibition of rest facility commercialization. Included is an overview of the recent AASHTO activities as well as those of other states. The researchers concluded that when and if federal legislation is modified, privatization in the form of joint commercial ventures by the private and public sectors is a viable alternative for offsetting the costs to build and maintain rest areas and welcome centers. As a result of their finding that the climate for modifying federal legislation that prohibits rest area commercialization looks promising, the researchers offer several recommendations for VDOT's consideration.

Final Report of the Aashto Standing Committee on Highways Task Force on Commercialization of Interstate Highway Rest Areas

American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), July 1990, pp. 17, 444 North Capitol Street, NW, Suite 225, Washington, DC, 20001, USA

Abstract: This report contains the issues examined and recommendations made by the AASHTO Task Force on the Commercialization of Interstate Highway Rest Areas. Also included is an Executive Summary of the Task Force recommendations for each issue. The issues examined were in the following areas: legal requirements; vending machine program; services provided; utilities; rest area maintenance; overnight truck parking; truck inspection/weighing; local involvement; financial considerations; State operated welcome center; access options; privatization/commercialization expenses of State highway agencies with recent rest area development projects involving private developers; State interest in a voluntary rest area commercialization action plan; and an action plan proposal.

Idaho Transportation looking at lean times

Betsy Z. Russell Staff writer, *Spokesman Review*, February 13, 2008

<http://www.spokesmanreview.com/breaking/story.asp?ID=13645>

The Idaho Transportation Department entered into a public-private partnership to provide rest-area services to motorists at a truck stop in eastern Idaho to avoid the cost of replacing a rest area near Inkom, ID.

Excerpt: Wrapping the rest area into the truck stop through a public-private partnership cost the state just \$300,000, instead of the \$14 million it would have taken to replace an aging rest stop at Inkom in eastern Idaho—and now, the state Transportation Board has decided that's how all future Idaho highway rest areas should be built.

Administrative Policy A-05-14, Safety Rest Areas

Idaho Transportation Department, October 1998

http://www.itd.idaho.gov/manuals/Online_Manuals/Current_Manuals/POLICIES/A0514.doc

This bulletin outlines the objectives of Idaho's safety rest area program. An excerpt from page 3 describes cooperation with other agencies:

Joint funding and participation with other governmental agencies, private entities, and public entities for Safety Rest Areas is encouraged. Public and private partnerships may provide opportunities to improve and expand the Safety Rest Area Program . . . Partnership agreements may be negotiated and entered into for operation and maintenance of safety rest areas including those that are scheduled for closure.

Scan tour gives ITD's Carri Rosti unique insights on auditing public/private partnerships

Idaho Transportation Department staff Carri Rosti gives a report on her recent international scan tour, *The Transporter*, Idaho Department of Transportation

http://itd.idaho.gov/transporter/2007/060107_Trans/060107_Rosti.html

Excerpt: Transportation departments throughout the U.S. are turning with increasing frequency to public/private partnerships and innovative financing to address demands for highway improvements.

Traditional revenue sources can no longer keep pace. European countries have endured similar challenges for years, and one of the most common solutions is to use private investments in public systems. The question that a group of transportation auditors addressed during a two-week tour last year was how to provide oversight that ensures the greatest benefit to public agencies while allowing a reasonable return for private businesses.

Priority Issues for the 109th Congress

Petroleum Marketers Association of America

http://www.pmaa.org/issues/ira_commercialization.html

Excerpt: Some state transportation departments are calling on Congress to commercialize interstate rest areas, and President Bush's draft highway reauthorization plan would overturn the commercialization ban, changing longstanding federal law. Rest area commercialization would devastate communities across the nation by threatening interchange businesses that serve the needs of the highway traveler. Since Congress banned Interstate right-of-way development 47 years ago, we can see the wisdom of that decision to protect communities. Over 60,000 businesses have sprung up at interchanges across America, serving the needs of highway users and providing jobs and taxes for counties, cities, and towns.

Investigation of Commercial Advertising on Kiosks at Safety Rest Areas

British Columbia Ministry of Transport, 1995

http://www.th.gov.bc.ca/publications/eng_publications/environment/references/Commercialization_of_Rest_Areas.pdf

This paper investigates developing an advertising program for safety rest areas in British Columbia and surveys the practices of Ontario, Canada, and Washington, Oregon, and California.

Quantifying Roadside Rest Area Usage

Dr. Per E. Gårder, PI, and Mr. Nicolas Bosonetto, Research Assistant, Prepared for the New England Transportation Consortium, *NETCR38 Project No. 99-4*, November 2002

Briefly mentioned on pages 22–23 of <http://docs.trb.org/00941461.pdf>

This report outlines issues relevant to the design and operation of Interstate rest areas. The study concentrates on the New England Region and is sponsored by the NETC. Usage trends and

motorists' preferences were collected through a survey program conducted at eleven sites and with residents of all the New England states. Motorists in general see rest areas as a necessity, and favor keeping them, but many have issues with public safety and cleanliness. The results also show that restrooms are the primary demand but that road condition and tourism information services are rated as highly desirable by some rest area users. This report suggests a kiosk system to provide this information to travelers using a GIS interface. Other recommendations include region-wide comprehensive parking development and management, as well as improvements in waste water systems. Rest area improvements are essential to the New England tourism and freight sectors of the economy.

Give MDOT a Potty Break: Private State Rest Areas

James Hohman, Mackinac Center for Public Policy, Spring 2004

<http://www.mackinac.org/article.aspx?ID=6508>

Excerpt: When Michigan's snow and cold give way to summer, people from across the state and nation take to state roads hoping to enjoy a few months of comfortable outdoor recreation. Along the roads they travel from Southeast Michigan to the Tahquamenon Falls—and everywhere in between—are restroom areas owned and run by the state. Michigan could reap great benefits from selling or leasing these rest areas to for-profit firms. Either route would require a change in the law, which currently prohibits such sales.

See PDF of full publication at <http://www.mackinac.org/archives/2004/mpr2004-01.pdf>.

Commercialization/Privatization (AASHTO/SCOH Ad Hoc Task Force)

AASHTO Subcommittee on Traffic Engineering, Savannah, Georgia, June 11, 2003

<http://www.transportation.org/sites/scote/docs/2003Meeting/Commercialization.pdf>

A PowerPoint presentation of AASHTO recommendations on commercialization and privatization of safety rest areas.