

# I-80 Winter Operations Coalition

## May Webinar Summary

May 24, 2011 1:30 – 3:30 PM PST

### 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this webinar is to discuss various activities and the vision for the Coalition moving forward. Attendees to the webinar included:

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)	Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT)	Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT)
<p><i>Steve Kirkpatrick</i>  <i>Bruce deTerra</i>  <i>Bob McNew</i>  <i>Steve Williams</i></p>	<p><i>Rod Shilling</i>  <i>Lisa Schettler</i>  <i>Denise Inda</i>  <i>John Domina</i>  <i>Kevin Lee</i>  <i>Michael Murphy</i>  <i>Randy Hesterlee</i>  <i>John Talbott</i>  <i>Mike Fuess</i>  <i>Eric Glick</i></p>	<p><i>Lisa Miller</i>  <i>Glenn Blackwelder</i>  <i>Rob Clayton</i>  <i>Leigh Jones</i>  <i>Chuck Solis</i>  <i>Vern Keesler (on behalf of Dan Kuhn)</i></p>
Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT)	Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR)	Consultants
<p><i>Talbot Hauffe</i>  <i>Mark Wingate</i></p>	<p><i>Jim McGee</i></p>	<p><i>Lisa Burgess – KHA</i>  <i>Deanna Haase – KHA</i>  <i>Molly O’Brien – KHA</i>  <i>Ralph Patterson – Narwhal Met</i></p>

### 2. RECAP OF WINTER 2010/2011

Partner agencies discussed the winter 2010/2011 operations and maintenance, major storms that required coordination, new initiatives or processes, challenges, and successes. This was an opportunity for agencies to provide others in attendance with updates from their states’ activities since the October 2010 workshop.

#### Caltrans:

California was hit with record storms this past winter. From November 1 to May 20 there were 14 storms that occurred which broke the record from 1951 for snowfall of 780” with 793” over Donner Summit. Snow fell as low as 1000’ this winter. Caltrans acknowledged the outstanding job by NDOT in supporting them during the 127 traffic holds westbound and the 88 traffic holds eastbound. Caltrans hired 200+ temporary staff for 1,300 lane miles through the Sierras.

Caltrans highlighted the TMC/Communications calls in late March for before and after a weekend winter storm. Decision points for truckers was important during that storm and it helped tremendously to coordinate across state lines specifically for that event.

On June 2, televised on Speed Channel American Trucker, there will be a documentary of a trucker navigating a 40 car pile-up during white out conditions.

## **NDOT:**

NDOT District 2 noted the enhanced information sharing from Caltrans this past winter. They were involved in texts/emails of road conditions and phone calls for closure duration estimates and were able to pass that information east to District 3. From the maintenance perspective, things went very well this past winter.

NDOT District 3 had a relatively uneventful winter. Snow levels were higher than usual in the upper elevations but were lower than usual in the lower elevations. There was much better information received from Caltrans to support DMS messages this past winter and that information went as far east as Utah to post closing notifications.

## **UDOT:**

Utah received lots of snow this winter. Early in the winter there was a classified blizzard and UDOT did a lot of pre-event messaging before storms. This preparation resulted in 58% reduction of traffic because of the information about the storm that got out to travelers. UDOT used its DMS to post closure notifications of I-80 at Donner Pass, which was very successful particularly for truckers who need information at key decision points well in advance of closures.

## **WYDOT:**

From the maintenance perspective, WYDOT is making progress with using chemicals and added resources to treat roadways. WYDOT added an additional Variable Speed Limit section between Green River and Rock Springs, and additional webcams, RWIS, and speed sensors along I-80. The public can see active state of signs online at [map.wyroad.info](http://map.wyroad.info). TMC worked with WalMart representatives to provide detailed weather forecasts and weather impacts on what type of information would be beneficial for WalMart freight and was able to update their website to support the freight industry based on their input. This website will be rolling out later in 2011. I-80 was closed 91 times at an average of 12-15 hours in duration with the longest closing at 22 hours.

## **NDOR:**

The April 13<sup>th</sup> winter storm caused a 17 hour closure of I-80 at North Platt. NDOR did some after-action review with WYDOT to review processes during the closure. The review process highlighted the difficulty of public safety working with truck drivers who did not speak English and those that did not have experience driving in snow. The review process also highlighted the need to specifically ask for the function desired from the neighboring TMC due to some miscommunication in a closure request. NDOR is now initiating after-storm calls with neighboring TMCs to improve operations during the next storms.

### **3. COALITION PARTNERS UPDATE**

- Bill Hoffman – promoted to Assistant Director, Engineering
- Denise Inda – promoted to Traffic Operations Chief
- Welcome Rod Schilling – I-80 Project Manager
- John Domina – former I-80 Project Manager is retiring in June 2011
- Welcome Rob Clayton – UDOT
- Welcome Leigh Jones (weather) and Lisa Miller (traveler info) – UDOT
- Ken Shultz – promoted to Ops Manager at WYDOT

#### 4. TASK FORCES

The three task forces that emerged from the October in-person Coalition Workshop are as follows:

- a. TMC/Communications
- b. Weather
- c. Freight

The group discussed each of the task forces and the goals for the task forces in the coming months. The goals for each of these task forces is defined below:

##### TMC/Communications:

- Develop one-pager on what could be discussed via touch-base calls.
- Continue having the calls before and after weather/incident events.
- Will initiate a summer call to discuss and define who will initiate storm calls, both pre- and post-event.
- Task Force Leads: Steve Kirkpatrick (Caltrans), Deanna Haase (KHA)

##### Weather:

- Visiting TMCs along the corridor.
- Coordinate with states to get on web-based NWS chat – should bypass any IT concerns.
- Develop Weather Task Force – assess current road weather operations programs, develop weather related operational guidelines, standardize messages across the corridor, identify research needs of the coalition states.
- Focus on training for corridor-specific coordination.
- Winter Operations Plan – draft in advance of the I-80 Coalition Fall Workshop, to include what states are involved in what Coalition-type groups (Aurora, Clear Roads, TMC Pooled Fund, etc.).
- Task Force Leads: Ralph Patterson (Narwhal Met), Molly O'Brien (KHA)

##### Freight:

- Coordinate with WYDOT to introduce freight coordinated website at Fall Coalition meeting.
- Introducing a quarterly call would be helpful.
- Freight is envisioned to act in an advisory/coordination capacity with TMC and Weather task forces to provide freight input into the operational discussions.
- Task Force Lead: Lisa Burgess (KHA)

Rod Schilling (NDOT) reviewed the status of the IMO (ITS Mobile Observations) project. This is a pilot demonstration through FHWA Road Weather Management Program and the National Center for Atmospheric Research. Key partners include University of Nevada-Reno. Proof of concept is complete and NDOT is in the process of procuring equipment to outfit 19 vehicles. Data collection tests will occur through the summer to prepare for the winter data collection effort. Information about the project will be posted on the I-80 Coalition website.

#### 5. NEXT COALITION WORKSHOP – FALL 2011

The next Coalition workshop is planned to be held at the same location (Reno, Nevada) and will be a 2-day format similar to the October 2010 workshop. Potential dates/weeks for this workshop were emailed to Coalition members for selection of an appropriate timeframe to occur in advance

of the winter season for all member states. The selected dates for the workshop based on feedback from Coalition members is:

- Dates: Tuesday, September 27, 2011 through Wednesday, September 28, 2011
- Location: Circus Circus, Reno, Nevada

Potential topics include task force updates, modules for introducing/training on services/applications, updates on progress of key strategic actions, updates on funding/grant availability, etc.

Caltrans will have challenges this year with out-of-state travel that requires an overnight stay. NDOT will need to send a letter to Caltrans to request three participants from Caltrans to this meeting.

Coalition members recommended private sector participation only on the second day for vendors that already are working under state contracts. This will allow Coalition partners time to discuss issues among states, while still providing an opportunity to engage private vendors for certain discussions. Additional non-vendor private sector representatives (such as freight) will be invited to participate.