

I-80 Winter Operations Coalition Advances Multi-State Operations Strategies

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The I-80 Coalition has brought together State DOT maintenance, traffic operations and freight planning from five western states to focus on improved operations and maintenance coordination on the I-80 corridor. Representatives from Caltrans, Nevada DOT, Utah DOT, Wyoming DOT and Nebraska Department of Roads are collectively addressing the unique operations and management needs of this corridor, with a particular focus on winter operations and maintenance. This coalition program builds on this concept of multi-state coordination and expands it to not only highway closures, but also general road conditions information, consistent traveler information along the corridor, traffic management strategies, maintenance operations and potentially shared use of infrastructure near state boundaries, where applicable.

The Coalition has held two successful in-person meetings. The first, in January 2010, served to bring DOT traffic and maintenance managers from California, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming together to discuss collaborative approaches to better managing I-80. At the second meeting, in October 2010, additional perspectives were brought to the table, most notably freight planners from the state DOTs. Freight mobility emerged as a key operational issue common to each of the Coalition states, and this perspective has been integrated into the core stakeholder base for the Coalition. Weather, and the need for corridor wide forecasts and improved weather data sharing also is a high priority. There are a variety of sources of weather data, ranging from National Weather Service, agency-operated road weather information systems, and additional weather data providers, and the Coalition wants to have a more coordinated and consistent strategy for how that data is used and shared.

This presentation will focus on the three focus areas and Strategy Groups that the Coalition is moving forward:

Weather Strategy Group – The Coalition is focusing on improving weather forecast data, actively sharing that data among partners, and working on improved methods to translate weather data into actionable information on road conditions and impacts. Emphasis here is to improve how DOT operations and management can use available forecast and road conditions data, as well as how to make this information more consistent when presented to travelers along the corridor.

Freight Strategy Group – A Freight Action Plan has been developed, and will be updated with additional input from DOT freight stakeholders in this strategy group. This group is continuing outreach to the freight industry to be sure that these perspectives are integrated with the freight-focused activities.

TMC/Communications Strategy Group – This group is focused on providing a forum to increase interaction among TMCs and operations centers along the corridor. This includes establishing processes for coordination during winter weather events, contact lists for operations and maintenance, and

helping to standardize some of the traveler information messages and practices on 511 and roadside infrastructure.

The I-80 Coalition is not a pooled-fund project. Nevada DOT is leading the initial coordination and strategic planning efforts, and the achievements to date are in large part due to the active involvement and participation by partner Coalition states. As such, the group is focusing on low-cost activities, such as improving operational processes and coordination, outreach and involvement of specific stakeholders (freight, weather providers), leveraging individual state program activities, and seeking innovative partnerships to be able to deliver some of the priorities that have been identified in the I-80 Coalition.