California Department of Transportation

TRAFFIC OPERATIONS PROGRAM POLICY

Number: TOPP 97-3

Effective Date: December 1, 1997

Supersedes: New

Title: Access to Traffic Detector Data

POLICY

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) will make lane-by-lane raw traffic detector data available to the public. The detector data will be passed to researchers, information service providers and other entrepreneurs without edit checks or adjustments and with no implied warranty from Caltrans. Recipients of the data will sign an agreement with Caltrans that relieves Caltrans of any liability for either the accuracy or continued delivery of the data. The agreement will also make it clear to the data recipient that the data is free until such time that Caltrans determines the data should be treated as an asset by Caltrans. This policy does not preclude Transportation Management Centers (TMCs) from also disseminating summary data or data that has been adjusted for known deficiencies.

The raw traffic detector data will be made available upon written request. In order to receive direct access to live video, a subscription agreement will be required. Costs for the access connection will be determined by Caltrans and paid for by the subscriber. Payment of a monthly fee to cover Caltrans' operating expenses of the connecting equipment may also be required, if significant. Additionally, Caltrans may, in the future, also charge an additional service fee.

BACKGROUND

Many of Caltrans' TMCs collect and process real-time traffic data from traffic detector stations spaced at frequent intervals along urban freeways. The data is used by Caltrans for traffic management such as freeway status displays, incident detection, system performance measurement and end of queue determination. The same raw data from the traffic detectors Caltrans uses for traffic management is of interest to researchers, information service providers and various entrepreneurs for a variety of reasons.

There is considerable interest in Caltrans' real-time traffic data. The sharing of traffic data with a wide group of users enhances the communication of current conditions and allows for better use of the transportation network by individual travel decision makers.

DEFINITIONS

Transportation Management Center is the central focal point for the collection and dissemination of real-time traffic condition information.

Raw Traffic Detector Data consists of the loop level counts and occupancies and status information typically transmitted to a TMC every 30 seconds.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Traffic Operations Program Manager ensures that the objectives of traffic management are implemented statewide to effectively and efficiently operate the highway system.

The Legal Service Center will ensure that agreements between the recipients of the data and Caltrans relieve Caltrans of any liability for the accuracy, quality, timeliness or continued delivery of the data and that the agreements are legally consistent with State laws.

District Directors ensure implementation of traffic management functions, policies and procedures

District Division Chiefs for Operations where appropriate, ensures installation of traffic operations systems including detection systems and TMCs to provide increased awareness of the operating conditions of the highways and to communicate and coordinate traffic management activities. Ensures that requests for traffic data are filled. Ensures that known deficiencies in the traffic detection system are addressed in a timely manner.

Managers and Supervisors coordinate efforts to fulfill requests for traffic data from the public, other government organizations and private partnerships.

Employees directly involved in providing the traffic data to requesters will be resourceful and cooperative in carrying out this policy.

APPLICABILITY

All employees involved with Traffic Operations Systems and Transportation Management Centers.

JAMES B. BORDEN
Program Manager
Traffic Operations

Distribution:

District Directors
District Division Chiefs - Operations
Legal Service Center, Chief Counsel
External Affairs, Deputy Director
HQ Traffic Operations Office Chiefs
HQ Traffic Operations Reviewers