Regional Operations Forum

Communicating the Value of Operations within an Agency, to Customers and Among Regional Decision-makers

Accelerating solutions for highway safety, renewal, reliability, and capacity
Key Topics

• Why communicate the value of TSM&O?
• How do you build a case for TSM&O?
• Audiences
  – Who are the key stakeholders?
  – What matters to your audience? (motivators)
  – How can you engage your audience?
• Tools and Examples to Promote the Value of Operations
Why communicate the value?

• Compete for funding
• Gain support for TSM&O as a field/practice
• Build partnerships/collaboration
• Explain what taxpayers/investors got for their money

What are other reasons?
Challenges to Communicating the Value of TSM&O

- Defining and describing TSM&O
  - Still a relatively new field
  - Draws pieces from other DOT functions - TE, safety, maintenance...so can be hard to explain that it’s different and should be separate field

- DOT cultures are changing but are still rooted in a traditional construction culture
  - Operating the system may be an afterthought and only noticed when there are problems
  - High value placed on delivering visible projects
Challenges to Communicating the Value of TSM&O (cont.)

- Often distributed nature of TSM&O
  - May not be a separate unit/program with staff, leadership, and a dedicated/single funding source
  - Variety of audiences

What are other challenges you see?

Is there a TSMO culture here?
Building the Case

• What is the “it” you are promoting?
• Why is it a good idea for us? What needs does it address?
• How effective is it?
• Who has used it before? Were they glad they did it?
• How much does it cost?
• What is the ROI?
• Does it really work? What’s my risk?
Case Building Takes Strategy

1. Be intentional
2. Know what you’re “selling”
3. Identify and collect/compile key information
4. Know your audiences
5. Tell the story
1. Be Intentional

• Communicating the value of operations and building culture for TSM&O “is not just going to happen by osmosis”
  – Effort
  – Strategy
  – Data
  – Leveraging opportunities
  – Effective messages
  – Communicating
    • Internally and externally
    • Repetition
2. Know What You’re “Selling”

- Do you have a consistent definition of TSM&O that you use in Caltrans?
- Is it well-known and understood?

**Recommended Product:**

SHRP2 L17 Business Case Primer
Communicating the Value of Transportation Systems Management and Operations
3. Identify and Compile Key Info

• TSM&O-related performance measures
  – Caltrans mobility report

• Cost and benefit information for TSM&O strategies
  – California’s experience
  – Nationally
  – Peers

• Deployment success stories

What other information would be useful?
3. Key Info: Travel Time Reliability

- **Reliability**: Consistency or dependability in travel times, as measured from day to day or across different times of day.

- Matters to the public – less tolerance for unexpected delay.

- What affects Reliability?

- How is the role of TSMO?

- Do you measure Reliability?

![Diagram showing travel time variability from Jan., July, to Dec., with notes on what travelers experience vs. what they remember.](image-url)
3. Key Info: TSM&O Deployment Success Stories

• What are some that you have had in District 11?

• Other Examples
  – FSP testimonials from comment cards
  – Special events that went smoothly
  – Work zone management efforts like “Carmageddon”

• Are these recognized as TSM&O in action?
3. Colorado – I-70 Mountain Corridor

CDOT focusing on a corridor to show deployment success

- Efforts spread out statewide can lose their significance
  - Easy to spread the peanut butter really thin across the State/Region
- Picking corridors can enable you to tell a meaningful story to the public and others
  - Can do enough to show the difference
  - Can provide specific examples of what TSMO can do
- Focused coalition building
- End of season performance report for I-70 corridor

Source: Colorado DOT, 2015
4. Who is Your Audience?

- Decision makers vs. influencers vs. implementers
- Agency organizational leadership
- Elected officials
- Regional agencies
- Partner agencies
- Private sector
- Public
- Media

**Recommended Product:**

SHRP2 L17 Business Case Primer
Communicating the Value of Transportation Systems Management and Operations
## 4. Identifying Your Audience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Audience</th>
<th>Decide or recommend funding?</th>
<th>Part of my Network?</th>
<th>If no, then who can help me (“Influencer”)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Jones, Chief Engineer</td>
<td>Yes --- decides budget allocation for all engineering programs;</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>John Smith, Assistant Chief Engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>recommends lists of projects to include in TIP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Smith, Assistant Chief Engineer</td>
<td>Yes --- recommends allocation of state funds among state funded</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Henderson, Safety Program Manager</td>
<td>Yes—recommends allocation of Safety Program funds to individual</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>projects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Harrison County MPO Board</td>
<td>Yes --- approves improvements to be put in long range plan and</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>DOT Planning and Programming Division Director; Carrie Peterson,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>projects to receive funding in MPO TIP</td>
<td></td>
<td>DOT Liaison to Harrison County MPO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrie Peterson, DOT liaison to Harrison</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County MPO</td>
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5. Tell the Story

Getting to the most compelling reason to implement TSM&O is a matter of identifying the most compelling problem the audience faces that can be solved with a TSM&O strategy.
5. Communicating Value

• “Value” can be subjective…
  – Different audiences need different value propositions

• Where is the value proposition for your stakeholders?  It varies by audience…
  – Mobility improvements and time savings
  – Safety improvements
  – Cost/benefit of operations vs. capital improvements
  – Jobs generated or preserved
  – Performance under budget
  – Customer perception/strong public opinion
  – Regional leveraging and partnering
  – Project delivery schedules
5. Is Your Story Compelling?

**Good Reason**

- Congestion is increasing and we need to address mobility on freeways

**Compelling Reason**

- Voters will decide in 2 years whether to extend our transportation funding tax. TSMO strategies provide “early winners” to show we are investing funds wisely and it is making a difference to travelers in reducing delay on freeways. We can show time and safety benefits from new incident management and operations strategies.
5. Is Your Story Compelling? (cont.)

Good Reason

- Freight is important to our regional economy, and our system management strategies will factor in needs of freight.

Compelling Reason

- We will partner with those major freight operators that might be impacted by this long-term work zone. This region depends on freight mobility and access to warehouses near this freeway project.
- We can collaborate and get feedback on new traveler information alerts or custom information feeds so they are notified of major delays or restrictions.
5. Is Your Story Compelling? (cont.)

• “What you are doing with TSMO is buying the most mobility at the lowest possible cost.”

• Using examples
  – Relatable
  – Specific

• Nothing tells the story like performance measures
  – Communicate the before and after
Why TSMO for CDOT?

- **486** traffic fatalities in Colorado in 2014
- **3,326** serious injury crashes in Colorado in 2014
- **49** hours of annual delay for Denver commuters
- **59%** of our system’s lane miles are congested
- **$1.6 Billion** annual cost of congestion
- **$3 Billion** annual economic cost of crashes
- **22 minutes** of average daily delay, **44 minutes** in 2022

Incredible impacts to health, the environment, and the economy

_Fixing these problems with only traditional methods is cost and time prohibitive._

Source: Colorado DOT, 2015
Why TSMO for CDOT?

Traditional Approach to Managing Congestion
• Predict future (long-range) traffic volumes
• Fund major capital projects to provide additional capacity

This only addresses 40% of the congestion problem
• Also becoming more and more difficult to provide new capacity

Causes of Congestion
(Source: FHWA, 2005)

Source: Colorado DOT, 2015
Why TSMO for CDOT?

TSMO as a “Surgical Solution”

- Cost to address all the needs is astronomical
  - To build your way out of congestion and engineer yourself out of all the safety problems is cost-prohibitive
- Capacity addition is a one-size-fits-all solution
- TSMO is a surgical mitigation focused on fixing specific congestion and safety problems
  - Not a one-size-fits-all approach
  - Requires analyzing underlying/root causes of congestion and crashes to know how best to apply targeted solutions
- Because TSMO solutions are targeted – you get better/more measurable results for less money

Source: Colorado DOT, 2015
Audiences: Influencing Decision Makers/Elected Officials

- Deal with many issues - limited time to address any issue
- Their own interest areas
- Broader policy context
- They are very dependent on staff
- Inter-personal relationships often key to getting things done
- Like to be given credit and recognition (shorter timetables)
- Sensitive to fiscal constraints
- Prefer “plain speak” to jargon
- Can help to get them involved - panelist at key meetings

SHRP2 L31 “CEO” focused presentations:

Operations in the 21st Century DOT: Meeting Customer Expectations
Packaging the Message for Agency Decision Makers

• Concise Facts/Numbers and Narrative
  – Pros/Cons
  – Costs (funding, staff)
  – Benefits
  – Risks

• Trade-offs: If we do that, what else can’t we do?

• Consider who they rely on in making decisions (influencers)
Packaging the Message for Elected Officials

Back to basics

- Focus on limited number of issues or programs that THEY can influence
- Focus on what will be gained by their support
- Provide the right information to the right people
- What are the bottom line fiscal, job or economic benefits
- Public perception
Audiences: Engaging Regional Leaders

• Understand the environment in which they operate
• Demonstrate how operations can leverage regional fiscally constrained budgets/resources
• Make sure issues are easily understood and communicated
• Consider possible influence of industry leaders
• Get to the right advisory staff
  – Agency senior leaders may be a viable conduit
Strengthening Regional TSMO Relationships

• Collaborative momentum to advance TSMO
• Leverage regional funding and resources
  – shared communications infrastructure
  – shared operations responsibilities
  – consistent approach to infrastructure selection and deployment
• “Regionalism”
• Increase visibility
  – program branding
  – highlight achievements
Audiences: Impact of Public Perception

- Public is an important audience, but also an important influencer
  - Are taxpaying customers - and voters
  - Speak up on social media
  - Contact elected officials
  - Can affect Agency reputation

- Effective public outreach = effective decision maker outreach
Public/Customer Outreach

• Importance of customer service
  – Tangible links to the public
    • Traveler Information
    • Freeway Service Patrol
  – Capitalize on successes
  – Address issues

• Tools for gauging public perception
  – Social media
  – Customer feedback surveys
  – Process for following up on feedback
Audiences: Building Relationships with Media

• Media has different objectives
• Educate media about transportation processes, and vice versa
  – Educational “Media Summits”
  – Educate new traffic reporters about available tools
  – Open house at TMC – asset/info available
• Collaborate with your PIOs
  – They have the best relationships with media outlets
  – They know what will resonate with the public
COMMUNICATING THE VALUE OF OPERATIONS:

TOOLS AND EXAMPLES
Value of Signal Retiming - Houston

Traffic light timing keeps congestion in sync

- 20% time savings for synchronized signals
- 20 min vs. 16 min average trip
- Reducing delay saves fuel
- 800 of 2300 timed this year
- Analysis and updates as conditions change
High Visibility Examples

• Integrated Corridor Management
  – Combines freeway, arterial and transit operations
  – Collaborative operations
  – Data and infrastructure sharing

• Traffic Incident Management Programs
  – Transportation, Public Safety, EMS, private tow companies
  – Successful in bringing partners together
  – Strong link to safety

• MnDOT Shut Down of Ramp Meters
MnDOT Ramp Meter Study

- Required by Legislature in 2000
  - Study effectiveness of ramp meters (RM) by conducting a shutdown study

- Results
  - RM is cost-effective (B/C 15:1; $40M savings; reduced TT and crashes, improved TTR)
  - Public thought trips were longer and congestion was worse in study, and had more appreciation for RM
  - Some optimization needed; added auto-monitoring and adjustment
Minneapolis Ramp Meter Benefits

When MnDOT’s ramp meters were turned back on in 2000:

- 22-percent decrease in average travel times
- 91-percent improvement in travel time reliability

Travel time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Travel time</th>
<th>Small improvement in average travel times</th>
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<td>Before</td>
<td>After</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Travel time</th>
<th>Larger improvement in travel time reliability</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before</td>
<td>After</td>
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</table>

Worst day of month
Florida DOT Newsletter

- Promotes/highlights different TSMO Areas
  - TIM
  - Traveler Info
  - Freeways/expressways
  - Disaster response
- Success stories, awards
- Performance measures
- New projects/programs
- New technologies
“The development of a successful TSM&O practice is all about sharing.”
John Moore, Systems Planner, FDOT D5
Conveying Benefits to the Public

Traffic Signalization

New Phone Number to Report Traffic Signal Issues: 775-335-ROAD

RTC will operate a central traffic signal hotline for public comments about traffic signal operations in the Truckee Meadows. Reports of issues with traffic signals will be made to a one-stop shop hotline answered by RTC at 335-ROAD (335-7523). When a report is called in, the appropriate local government that operates and maintains the specific signal will be contacted.

Three agencies operate the more than 350 traffic signals in the Truckee Meadows. The City of Reno, the City of Sparks, and Washoe County each have their own signal responsibilities. Economic conditions have strained the agencies’ resources for operating the signals efficiently. Since the public needs efficient traffic operations without regard to political boundaries, the RTC Board asked staff to work with local agencies to develop a proposal to coordinate regional traffic operations. In addition to the hotline, the new proposal provides local agencies with additional technical resources that will help improve traffic operations, while maintaining local control. Together with local agencies and the University of Nevada, Reno, RTC staff will identify potential traffic operations issues and propose solutions and with agency staff will review and select proposed solutions. The partners will make changes and evaluate them for effectiveness; saving money and providing for quicker and more localized response.

Currently, the City of Reno operates and maintains approximately 250 signals, the City of Sparks is responsible for 110, and Washoe County has 17. The RTC does not operate or maintain any traffic signals but retains engineering consultants to assist agencies in developing coordinated timing plans and to review signal operations. RTC staff also assists local agencies in signal timing.

- NEW: View the RTC Traffic Signal Demonstration Video
- View the RTC Traffic Signalization video
- Traffic Signalization Fact Sheet
Conveying Benefits to the Public

NH DOT Dashboard – TMC Operations

Objective:
To benefit motorists by improving mobility of the state transportation system.

Goal:
To provide a monthly snapshot of all the operations that take place at the TMC in order to improve the state’s highway network.

Listed below are the monthly operational statistics of the TMC. There are reports for each month to view the PDF report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
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<tr>
<td>Apr.</td>
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<td>May</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep.</td>
<td>Sep.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov.</td>
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This graph shows the type of message that was relayed to the public by being displayed on the dynamic message sign (DMS).

This graph shows the total messages that were posted to DMS for the year so far. It also shows the months with the lowest and highest messages that were posted.
Communicating TSMO Value to the Public and Others – D12

Preferred Alternative Recommendation for I-405 Improvement Project

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

transportation network.

Sustainable, integrated and efficient.

Alternative 3 is consistent with the goals of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Senate Bill 375 requirements:

- Mobility and Accessibility—HOT lanes manage travel demand and offer commuters and other users more travel choices
- Congestion Management—Managed lanes provide long-term mobility by preserving a part of the roadway for assured free-flow operation
- Managed Lanes Network—Meets goals of RTP’s Managed Lanes Network; closes Managed Lanes Interconnectivity gaps to provide access to all part of the region
- Transportation Demand Management—Incentivizes carpooling, vanpooling and use of transit; reduces dependence on solo travel
- Greenhouse Gas Reductions—Improved system performance generated by managed lanes improves air quality and greater roadway and vehicle efficiency

Sustainability and enhancing California’s economy.

Regional population and employment growth is expected to continue. Therefore, demand for goods and services throughout the region will also increase.

- Maximizing travel time savings and reducing congestion allow businesses to operate more efficiently and maintain their competitiveness.
- Alternative 3 provides safe and reliable movement of goods and services, including services from emergency responders.
- Alternative 3 adds a new general purpose lane in each direction with an added benefit and choice of a free flow lane for many years to come.

Caltrans and OCTA have worked together in collaboration and partnership for more than two decades in finding solutions to the many challenges facing the State Highway System in Orange County.

Caltrans’ statutory authority over the State Highway System entails a responsibility for sustainable improvements on the system. Caltrans is complementing M2 by optimizing system performance. Alternative 3 connects the I-405 Managed Lanes corridor directly to SR-73-I-605 and the existing toll road network in Orange County.

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Coming soon: Less traffic with a smart Interstate 80

By Frances Cinclasiapil
July 28, 2015 7:00 am

Motorists driving south on Interstate 80 near Gilman might have been surprised recently by a new sign with flashing “Xs,” yellow and green arrows, or a “30” or “55.”

The sign is part of the I-80 Smart Corridor Project, an ambitious and technologically advanced $79 million endeavor to smooth the travel of the 270,000 cars that traverse from the Carquinez Bridge to the Bay Bridge each day.

That stretch of road is frequently regarded as the worst in the Bay Area. Driving the eight miles from Richmond to Emeryville can take as little as 20 minutes or more than an hour, according to transportation planners.

To alleviate that congestion, Caltrans, along with local county transportation agencies, is constructing a network of integrated electronic gantries that will provide real time traffic information that has been collected by sensors and cameras on the freeway and nearby roads. In addition, Caltrans is adding 44 metered on-ramps and signs on auxiliary streets like San Pablo Avenue.
Using Soundbites

- TSMO strategies help address congestion in the near term at a lower cost than options which require additional pavement.

- Traffic signal timing is rated one of the most cost-effective urban transportation improvements.

- Strategies that improve traffic flow and reduce congestion also reduce emissions and improve air quality.

- It is important to make the most effective use of the *existing* infrastructure before adding capacity.

- Providing real-time information to travelers allows them to make choices about when and how they travel.
Using Key Facts/Data

• Cost of adding lanes to an existing highway can be more than 10 times the yearly cost of effective management

• Electronic toll collection can yield substantial savings in travel time: 10 to 30% participation rate in ETC yielded B/C ratios from 2:1 to 3:1

• Traffic signal optimization can decrease delay substantially (13% to 94%) while improving safety at a fraction of the cost of infrastructure capacity expansion

• Congestion costs the average traveler an extra 38 hours of travel time and 26 gallons of fuel each year
Using Visuals

California Department of Transportation
Mobility Performance Report 2010
More Tools for Communicating the Value of Operations

• Annual reports and dashboards
• Social media to promote success stories
  – Share TSMO achievements and performance statistics
  – Announce new programs and services
  – Track ‘likes’ and re-tweets for specific features and stories
  – Partner with PIO
• Infographics
• Executive/Decision Maker Edition of Materials
Green Light Lincoln

- TSM&O initiative in Lincoln, NE
  - Explaining the initiative
  - Making the case for it

Source: City of Lincoln, NE, 2016
Tailoring to the Specific Audience

- **Decision-maker:** TIM can decrease incident duration by 30% to 40%

- **Implementer:** Combined traveler info and TIM can increase peak period freeway speeds 8 to 13%, reduce crash rates, and improve reliability by 1 to 22%

- **Public:** Every minute a freeway lane is blocked, there is at least a 10-minute backup after the incident is cleared

- **First responders, Safety staff:** Likelihood of a secondary crash increases by 2.8% for each minute the primary incident continues

For sound bites and key facts, see SHRP2 L17 Business Case Primer - Communicating the Value of Transportation Systems Management and Operations
Communicating the Value at NH DOT

- Incorporates communicating the value of TSMO and creating a culture supportive of TSMO
- Branding strategies/efforts as TSMO
- Living in both worlds - Interact with Planning and Design
  - Make sure they understand what TSMO is, what strategies are available, why it’s important
  - Encourage them to look for opportunities to include TSM&O in plans and in project designs
- Train rising leaders and other key staff about TSMO
- Look for/create opportunities to brief leadership
- Consider TSM&O in agency structure and processes
Group Exercise

• Identify a target audience (individual or group) that can help you advance TSMO

• Identify their role – influencer, decision-maker, makes decisions about funding for TSMO, implementer

• Craft a message about the value of TSMO that you think will influence them
“Homework” to Take Back

• **Know your audience** – their hot buttons, their priorities
• Identify local/regional **TSMO successes** and prepare compelling stories
• Develop a **focused strategy** for effective decision maker and elected official outreach and engagement
• Consider:
  – How can you **make better use of available tools** to communicate value of operations?
  – What are some things you can change about your strategy and message to **shape perception** of TSMO?
  – What are some ways you can **better engage** PIO and media to help advance your message?
Resources

- SHRP2 L17 Business Case Primer: Communicating the Value of Transportation Systems Management and Operations
- FHWA Operations Story (FHWA-OP-04-059)
- AASHTO Subcommittee on Transportation Communications
  - New tools and strategies (incl. social media)
Resources: National Operations Center of Excellence

• THE place to go for TSM&O information and peer exchange

• Launched January 2015
  – Collaboration of AASHTO, ITE, ITSA with support from FHWA

• Website and Technical Services Program
  – “Why TSM&O?” business case info
  – Technical resources
  – Calendar of events from many sources
  – Discussion forums
  – Peer exchanges
  – Webinars
  – Case studies, and much more

www.transportationops.org