Traffic Safety Council Notes

June 2, 2005

Present: Rose Phetteplace, Patrick Fernan, Major Dan Lonsdorf, Bill Bremer, Dennis Hughes, Steve Olson, Todd Szymkowski, Beth Cannestra, Tim McClain, Dick Lange, Carolyn Bourie, Xian Qin, David Leucinger, David Noyce and Jerry Smith

1. Dennis Hughes reported that Iowa has decided to raise the speed limit on their rural interstate highways to 70 mph effective July 1st. When the Federal National Maximum Speed Limit of 55 mph was repealed in 1996, a WISDOT Work Group was assembled. After careful consideration, the Work Group recommended 65 mph on rural freeways and some rural expressways. They also recommended that 55 remain the speed limit on rural two lane roads. WISDOT was concerned about increased speeds and monitored all fatal interstate crashes and district office staff made field visits to problem areas. If we make any recommendation to raise to 70 mph, we need to first look at all crashes back to 1994, especially A, B and C injury crashes. Automatic Traffic Recorder (ATR) data has recently been updated. Rural 2 lane roads have not seen the same dramatic increase in speed that rural 4 lane roads have experienced. All types of rural 4 lane roads now have an average speed of 69 mph and an 85th percentile speed of 75 mph. About 3% of traffic exceed 80 mph.

Senator Wirch has received a letter from a constituent wondering why Wisconsin has not adopted a 70 mph speed limit? DOT will have to respond to this request. We are unclear if crashes went up due to raising the speed limit to 65 mph. Environmental concerns, weather factors and perceived risk of law enforcement action are all factors to be considered in this issue. Mainline, ramp and intersection crashes all need to be considered. Interstate ramps are too close together to make any changes in Milwaukee County.

Traffic Lab has been asked to look into possible speed study and to pilot test an increased speed limit on a segment or road. Freeways and expressways need to be differentiated from this issue.

Traffic crash reconstruction shows that slight increases in speed can be a factor in who lives and who dies in a traffic crash. Speed is a factor in rollover crashes and impacts the violence that occurs in a crash.

The Wisconsin fine structure is also a factor in the speed issue. The raise in monetary fines resulted in an increase in the tolerance law enforcement officers permit.
2. David Leucinger reported that the Bureau of Planning have moved beyond the safety matrix in their 2030 planning cycle. They hope to have a second draft ready by next week. They desire the TSC membership review and give them a prompt response. Recommendations contain policy statements.

3. Rose Phetteplace recommended that TSC membership needs to be revisited due to department reorganization. Do we still have the proper representation and do we have clear lines of communication? For instance, a DTIM programming representative should be considered.

4. Membership Reports:

Major Dan Lonsdorf – The Strategic Highway Safety Plan will be discussed at next weeks Board of Directors meeting. Ruben should let Champions know what their role is. Goal and objective identification and strategy selection needs to be accomplished. It is time to get re-energized and get the Plan completed. The WISDOT Long Range Plan takes the Strategic Highway Safety Plan into consideration in its development. TSC members may attend Board of Directors meeting, if desired.

Carolyn Bourie – Congress has passed an extension to the US Department of Transportation, including funding, through June 30th. A Conference Committee is being convened to resolve differences between the House version and Senate version. At the state level, the Joint Finance Committee meets this week and plans to complete DOT budget process.

Steve Olsen just back from month long medical leave. He had Major Lonsdorf report on the Click It or Ticket mobilization. We are in the second week of intensive enforcement program. BOTS put $1.5M into media buys and another $3/4M into overtime enforcement. Officers have a 0 tolerance for no belt use. Pre-surveys are back and indicate a 66% usage rate. Post-program surveys will be conducted in mid-June and we are looking for at least a 75% usage rate.

Tim McClain – He is developing a background paper on the speed issue.

David Noyce – The Traffic Operations Lab is available to assist the Council in any way they can.

Rose Phetteplace – WPS is concerned about the Beltline safety issue. They have many employees who use Beltline to get to work. They desire to see more enforcement and ITS solutions. BOTS has placed WPS on the mailing list for PSA’s, Traffic Safety Reporter newsletter, etc. This material will be passed on to employees in their company newsletter.
Xian Qin – College of Engineering has received a $50,000 FHWA grant to digitize crash data for local roads. AAA Road Safety Audit Team is coming to Dane County June 6-9. Work Zone Management Task Force meeting will be held next week. Xian will be participating in NCHRP Report 500 Phase 3 meeting shortly.

Bill Bremer – National Roadway Safety Awards guidelines and application booklet was distributed. Deadline for applications has been extended until June 30th. Marquette Road Safety Audit will be recommended for an award.

Beth Cannestra – High Tension Cable Barrier will be installed in Fond Du Lac County on a six mile stretch of US 41 to prevent median crossover crashes. Two different systems will be utilized and studied to see what is most effective, requires less maintenance, etc. This is part of another project so will be let this fall.

Dennis Hughes – Several LRB drafts have been received at DOT. Larger and heavier trucks is one of the issues. AB-70 is in Joint Finance Committee because it would change the surcharge structure for child safety seat violations. State-wide body count is similar to last year. March has been the only bad month so far but multiple fatality crashes have increased. Ernie Stetenfeld has left AAA - Wisconsin and formed his own consulting firm. TRaCS roll out is scheduled for next week. BOTS offered to help DMV with the event.

Jerry Smith – Aggressive Driving cooperative program planned for Beltline has hit a snag. Captain Bill Hoesley of the Madison Police Department chairs the Task Force working on the contract and he just announced his retirement and is moving to become Chief of Police is a small Colorado city.

David Leucinger – It is easy for safety themes to become fragmented and it is nice to see that the Traffic Safety Council is working to keep themes unified across the Department.

Next meeting set for July 7, 2005 at 9:30 a.m. in Room 701(Waukesha) conference room.