Traffic Safety Council Notes

November 2, 2006

Members present: Major Dan Lonsdorf (BOTS), Phil DeCabooter (DTSD), John Corbin (DTSD), Steve Olson (OPA), Carolyn Bourie (OPBF), Dave Leucinger (DTIM), Dennis Hughes (BOTS), Xiao Qin (UW-TOPS), Rose Phetteplace (DTSD), Patrick Fernan, Jerry Zogg (DTSD), William Bremer (FHWA).

Others present: Chuck Thiede (DTIM-State Highway Programs). Frank Huitt (DTSD).

1. SHSP Outreach and Update

Have been some problems with the PDF version of the final SHSP plan. Vicki Schwabe is working to solve it. Then 200 hard copies will be published. It will also appear online.

Bremer will complete the FHWA checklist for the SHSP, then forward it to Washington. Formal approval will come from Bruce Matzke. Not sure if or when DC might weigh in on future improvements to SHSP process.

Hughes suggested FHWA include website links to every states SHSP when (and if) available.

2. 10% Flex Funding: Opportunities and Requirements

Safety LU provides that up to 10% of HSIP funds may be used for non-infrastructure projects (enforcement, education, advertising, etc. See correspondence condensed and reproduced below). What ensued was a wide ranging discussion of this topic.

Bill Bremer; Program called “Equity Bonus” and total may equal $27 million for Wisconsin. But it’s unlikely all of that will be available. Washington hasn’t given them much guidance yet on requirements, etc. It’s in the rule making process now. This is intended as an inducement for all states to do an SHSP.

Bremer Q&A:
   Q. Any guidance from Washington yet?
   A. None yet but the local offices have asked for it.
   Q. How much can be flexed?
   A. 10% of HSIP. HSIP is $27 million, but core is only about 20 million. As a practical matter this will be the limit or roughly $2 million available for flex.
   Q. How does a state certify that it has met all of its infrastructure and safety needs?
   A. Don’t know at this time. Key is the federal rule making which will be complete in 2007. Key is understanding congressional intent. FHWA really believes
congress wants states to implement their SHSP's so they won't want to lock up the process of implementing infrastructure projects.

Q. TOPS Lab activities – infrastructure or non-infrastructure?
A. Infrastructure until a rule says otherwise.

Q. Can flex $ be used to supplement existing $?
A. Yes, until federal rule says otherwise.

Q. Are signs considered infrastructure?
A. Yes.

Q. Do non-infrastructure projects have to be tied to SHSP?
A. Yes. Implies a limit to solicitation of candidate projects. Could simply review the top 10 issue areas and solicit project proposals associated with each one.

Difficult to answer many questions as there’s no rule and no word from Washington.

Lonsdorf: We should take a “snapshot” of what we’re doing now and how it’s funded ... then look for gaps. Seek suggestions then seek funding through flex. LTE coming on board to help with this kind of need. Will have plenty to do.

Unlicensed drivers becoming more of a problem for enforcement. It is not one of our top 10 issues in the SHSP. That may make it difficult to fund.

3. Membership reports (All members)
Fernan – Older drivers;
A bill has been introduced to require drivers age 75-84 to come in for vision test every 3rd year. 85 and older, every other year. Elder drivers have a variety of problems that DMV personnel are trained to spot. Bill is good because it gets them in to the office where they can be evaluated.

The vision test is not really a very good indicator of an elderly person’s ability to drive. In fact there is no correlation between visual acuity and crashes.

There’s a new test of reaction time available. It’s better than the vision test at screening elderly drivers ability, but it’s expensive.

DeCabooter – Update
Doing interviews for safety engineer position next Tuesday. Hope to have person in place by end of the year. Have had trouble getting qualified applicants and that could continue. Might slow down process.

Doing contract to have the TOPS lab do work on intersection safety. Phase 2 will identify high risk intersections. It’s a priority and part of the SHSP. It’s an example of implementing the plan.

Upcoming events – Traffic Safety Engineering Summit next week in LaCrosse. Brings together several states to discuss common safety and operations topics. In January planning the Traffic Engineering Conference in Mosinee near Wausau. Everybody welcome. Will send info to the TSC.

Lonsdorf – Comprehensive Accident Reduction Enforcement (CARE) conference. We’re hosting Nov. 21. Attend if you can.

BOTS will be doing paid media over the Thanksgiving period. Spot features Miss America and talks about drunk driving (Her primary issue). NHTSA will kick in two weeks prior to Christmas.
Next Meeting – December 7 (Agenda will be sent to all members prior to date)

Agenda Item: Standard Safety belt enforcement – most important safety issue now on the agenda. TSC should examine the issue and make a recommendation to the Department about our support for it in coming legislative session.

ABATE and motorcycle safety issues (Corbin)

Correspondence re. 10% Flex Funds

-----Original Message-----
From: Thiede, Charles
Sent: Monday, October 23, 2006 3:28 PM
To: Wolfgram, Mark
Subject: FW: Whether to Flex and If So, How Much Now that SHSP Has Been Signed

Mark,

SAFETEA-LU has provided some flexibility in HSIP funding. "A State may use up to 10% of HSIP funds to carry out other safety projects identified in the SHSP. The State must certify that:

1) it has met needs in the State relating to railway-highway crossings; and,
2) it has met the State’s infrastructure safety needs relating to highway safety improvement projects".

This 10% flexibility is for funding non-infrastructure type projects (education, enforcement, advertising campaigns, etc). I have a number of questions about how this 10% should be implemented:

1) Who decides if all or part of this 10% is used for non-infrastructure projects?
Right now, it seems to me that the Traffic Safety Council thinks they have the authority.

2) People are already lining up for this money. The only thing holding it back was FHWA saying nothing could be approved until the SHSP received final approval. Now that the SHSP is signed, there will be mounting pressure to have a process in place.

3) What should the process be for soliciting, prioritizing and approving projects? The process I have had in place for improvement projects doesn't seem appropriate.

4) Who is the staff lead on this effort?

Chuck Thiede
(608) 266-3341

From: Wolfgram, Mark
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2006 2:29 PM
To: Lonsdorf, Daniel
Subject: FW: Whether to Flex and If So, How Much Now that SHSP Has Been Signed

Dan, a question has come up as to whether the Dept should take advantage of the provision to use up to 10% of HSIP funds for non-infrastructure related safety needs identified in the SHSP. Bill Bremer (below) suggests the TSC might deal with it.....with possible board concurrence on the recommendation. Chuck Thiede highlights that there are certifications that must be made before the flex can be used, and I question whether we can legitimately make the certifications as Chuck outlines them.....ie I'm sure we haven't addressed all legitimate infrastructure needs.

Is this an issue you intend to deal with through the TSC or is that unfounded speculation at this point? If it is something you were planning, I'd like to meet beforehand to get on the same page regarding approach/background. If it isn't something you were planning, I think we should arrange for a meeting to discuss how to proceed to when considering this decision. I know this would be of interest to Kevin Chesnik and Casey Newman in addition to myself.

Your views??

-----Original Message-----
From: Lonsdorf, Daniel
Sent: Thursday, October 26, 2006 7:34 AM
To: Wolfgram, Mark
Cc: Hughes, Dennis - DSP
Subject: RE: Whether to Flex and If So, How Much Now that SHSP Has Been Signed

Mark, I agree with having the TSC discuss the issue. Since the option is contingent on certifications, we should confirm an ability to even qualify first. The TSC is well attended by members of your staff, FHWA, along with representative from the other Divisions and Offices.

I can put this on the agenda for the Nov. 2nd meeting of the TSC. Would you like to meet with me ahead of time?

Major Daniel W. Lonsdorf
Director, Bureau of Transportation Safety
Wisconsin State Patrol, WisDOT
Madison, Wisconsin 53705
608-266-3048
daniel.lonsdorf@dot.state.wi.us
I'd ask the TSC to do the staff work to fully understand what's involved here. The presumption must be that the transfer is a possibility being checked out by the TSC.....not a charge to move forward and implement. Basic information should be collected, and then there should be a meeting with the DTIM/DTSD/DSP/OPBF administrators to discuss the findings. Essential information includes at least the following....

1) What are the exact certifications/requirements that need to exist before a transfer of HSIP funds to non-infrastructure uses can be made?

2) Do the facts support WisDOT making those certifications and do we meet whatever other requirements there may be?

3) If #2 is answered affirmatively, the what are the potential uses of the funds that might be transferred, the general range of $ proposed, and the general types of benefits that would be produced?

Does this make sense to you? If it does, I could formalize it as a specific request from DTIM to the TSC if you'd like. If you have concerns, let's discuss. Thanks.

(Via DeCabooter)

Agenda elements of the SHSP discussion could include:

Mark's questions from below...

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2) Do the facts support WisDOT making those certifications and do we meet whatever other requirements there may be?

3) If #2 is answered affirmatively, the what are the potential uses of the funds that might be transferred, the general range of $ proposed, and the general types of benefits that would be produced?
Also...

* The question of whether the Dept should take advantage of the provision to use up to 10% of HSIP funds for non-infrastructure related safety needs identified in the SHSP.

* Could HSIP funds be used as a kind-of one-time grant for updating media spots?

* All of Chuck Thiede's issues, to wit:

  1) it has met needs in the State relating to railway-highway crossings; and,
  2) it has met the State's infrastructure safety needs relating to highway safety improvement projects”.

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  3) What should the process be for soliciting, prioritizing and approving projects? The process I have had in place for improvement projects doesn't seem appropriate.
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