Event Details

The Sturgis Motorcycle Rally occurred August 6-12, 2012 in Sturgis, SD. The Rally is an annual event that was first held in 1938 with a group of nine men who raced their motorcycles in front of a small crowd. Several decades later, the event has grown into the largest motorcycle gathering in the world, now attracting over 400,000 attendees each year. Rally attendees arrive on motorcycles after traveling hundreds of miles from all over the country. For the town of Sturgis with a population under 7,000, the Rally presents a unique set of transportation challenges each year. The South Dakota Department of Transportation and Highway Patrol are actively involved in management of the event each year.

The additional coordination of traveler information among South Dakota, Wyoming and Montana was introduced, discussed and planned prior to the Rally. All three states agreed to post congestion/safety messages on their 511 telephone and web services, as well as relevant dynamic message signs (DMS) along I-90 and other key routes leading to Sturgis, SD. Wyoming placed several portable DMS along I-90 between Montana and South Dakota to display their messages.

Variations of this message were used on DMS and 511 services, "I-90 STURGIS SD – TRAFFIC CONGESTION – WATCH FOR MOTORCYCLES." Messages were adjusted as needed to accommodate portable DMS space limitations. They were posted in most locations on August 3 and removed on August 12. Concerns for wildfires also prompted preliminary discussions about the potential need for fire prevention messages. It was agreed that South Dakota would post fire prevention messages, in place of the congestion/safety messages, if needed during the Rally.

Specific event contact information was also added to the North/West Passage Map: State Traveler Information Tools and TMC/TOC Contact Information that's available after logging into the North/West Passage TMC/TOC Operations Coordination web page.

Evaluation Summary

For the purpose of North/West Passage operational test, the Rally is classified as a planned event and it was the first to be evaluated. The event impacted travel in the states of South Dakota, Wyoming and Montana. Wyoming was particularly impacted during an August 8 ride to Hulett, WY from those attending the Rally. Evaluation participants included the following staff and agencies:

- Brandi Hamilton – Montana Department of Transportation

- Vince Garcia – Wyoming Department of Transportation

- Alysha Ketcham – Wyoming Department of Transportation

- Kevin Cox – Wyoming Department of Transportation

- Dave Huft – South Dakota Department of Transportation

- Jason Humphrey – South Dakota Department of Transportation

- Tom Horan – South Dakota Department of Transportation

- Todd Seaman – South Dakota Department of Transportation

- John Mattheson – South Dakota Department of Transportation

- Capt. Kevin Karley – South Dakota Highway Patrol

After the Rally concluded, an Event Evaluation Guide was distributed to the staff noted below. Five evaluations – with representation from all three states – were completed and the remainder of this summary is based on those responses. Evaluation focused on three key aspects of coordination: tasks, tools and traveler benefits. Staff evaluation of each is summarized below.

1. **Task Analysis.** Staff was asked to note if key coordination tasks were completed during the event and briefly comment (e.g., awareness, understanding, capability, etc.) on why the tasks were or weren't completed. Tasks were taken from the [Operational Guidelines for Coordinating Traveler Information with Other States along I-90/I-94](#).

   Staff that responded to the event evaluation noted that **all of the key coordination tasks were completed** during the Rally. There were a few instances where staff responded that they did not complete tasks themselves, but they noted that the tasks were completed by others. Under the tasks instructing states to exchange event information, it was also noted in the evaluations that general information about heavy traffic and the event end date was exchanged prior to the Rally, but no additional information was distributed during the Rally. Finally, outside of the formal evaluation South Dakota staff also noted that a standing event should be created in IRIS (511 operating software) that would allow them to easily activate messages for the Rally each year.

2. **Tool Analysis.** Staff was asked to answer a series of questions about the tools referenced in the key coordination tasks taken from the [Operational Guidelines for Coordinating Traveler Information with Other States along I-90/I-94](#). Questions focused on awareness, usability and availability of the tools. **Four of the five staff that completed evaluations was aware** of the tools prior to the Rally. **All indicated they understood how to use the tools and also**

reported they had all the tools necessary to complete the coordination tasks. Staff further noted the following strengths of the coordination tools that were used.

- Access to timely coordinated corridor information

- Facilitated communication

- Contact information is important

- Making contacts with others for future coordination

- Easy access

- Speedy resolutions

- Shows location of other state's DMS boards

Although no specific improvements were noted by staff in their evaluations, there was a minor yet valuable adjustment made to the map reference tool that may need to be accommodated in the future. Specifically, for planned events like the Rally there is often a need to share additional contact information – beyond the routine TMC/TOC operations information listed in the map reference tool. The current tool – North/West Passage Map: State Traveler Information Tools and TMC/TOC Contact Information – and the coordination web page are maintained by contractors for the North/West Passage pooled fund. The map is accessible through Googlemaps which is easy to maintain and use. However, the states are not currently able to add or modify information in the map or the coordination web site without contractor support. The states may wish to **consider modification access to the map and coordination web page for TMC/TOC operations staff**.

3. **Benefits to Travelers.** The primary objective for coordinating traveler information among the states is to improve travel by providing better, more accessible information for travelers. Although no travelers were directly surveyed in this evaluation, **all of the staff that completed evaluations agreed travelers benefited** from the additional information that was exchanged among the states. Following are specific comments about how believed the coordination benefited travelers.

- I believe that travelers benefited by being prepared for increased motorcycle traffic and potential congestion. An informed traveler is typically a happy traveler!

- Advance warning of the event is good information.

- May have alerted some motorist of what to expect when travelling I90 near Sturgis.

Conclusion

Based on the evaluation responses, it appears the tasks outlined in the [Operational Guidelines for Coordinating Traveler Information with Other States along I-90/I-94](#) are straightforward and easy enough to ensure consistent use. It also appears the tools developed to support coordination are useful and provide adequate detail for event participants. And although traveler feedback was not sought in this evaluation, staff from the participating agencies all agreed the additional information was beneficial to travelers.

While planning the traveler information coordination that took place for this event, the states noted that such coordination did not typically occur for the Rally. Because Sturgis is so close to the Wyoming border, there is routine coordination among law enforcement and regional transportation staff annually. However, it was noted that the **traveler information coordination prompted by the North/West Passage operational test will be valuable to continue in the future**.

The information in this individual Event Summary will be compiled and compared to summaries of the other events evaluated in preparation of an After Action Report/Improvement Plan at the conclusion of the operational test.