NC Traffic Records Coordinating Committee Meeting Minutes
Thursday February 8, 2007
In the NC DOT Chief Engineer's Conference Room on Beryl Road in Raleigh NC

Present: Brian Mayhew, L C Smith, Don Nail, Terry Hopkins, Chad Lohmeier, Tom Nevlud, Sgt. Jerry Burton, John Stokes, Jeff Jaeger, Ron Hughes, Wanda Thomas, Janet Greene, Joe Geigle, Kevin Breedlove, Carol Martell, Bill Hunter, and Eric Rodgman.

9:04 am Brian Mayhew opened the meeting by introducing the new North Carolina Traffic Records Coordinator for the state: John Stokes of NC GHSP who will be assuming these duties along with numerous other duties at GHSP. John will act as a liaison between the NC TRCC committee, the Executive Committee for Highway Safety (EC4HS), and the 408 grant contacts overseeing the completion of all the NC Traffic Records Improvement projects selected by the NC TRCC for the current year.

John began the meeting by distributing a copy of the Executive Summary from last week's Draft version of the NC Traffic Records Assessment Report. John noted that NC received about $1.1 million dollars this year, but would most likely receive less next year. Don Nail added that, based on his information, that states like NC would most likely be limited to amounts between $500,000 and $750,000 in the next go round.

John proceeded to go through the Executive Summary, noting key recommendations presented by the Assessment authors. John noted the recommendations on page 4: No plan for sustaining the electronic crash reporting in the future. In particular, what will the NC SHP do in 3 years when the Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) purchased this year wear out, the Operating Systems become outdated (currently using Windows 95), and the minimum MDT specifications for efficient field use are exceeded.

John noted there needs to be opportunities for smaller, more localized "mini-assessments" within each TR area. John explained that the NC TRCC would operate under the EC4HS sending recommendations, reports, and requests through him to that committee.

The next Strategic Plan needs to include all the improvements made since the last one was written and should include more and better benchmarks for measuring progress. The report noted that NC was a leader in most areas in spite of various problems that have not yet been resolved.

John noted that the Draft Report is to be reviewed by the various agencies and all the comments should be forwarded through the "voting members" representing each agency in the NC TRCC to John Stokes via email (using email address: johnstokes@dot.state.nc.us). Deadline for comments is February 16, 2007.

Brian Mayhew noted that everyone should review the entire report to see all the 40 recommendations from the NC Assessment Committee. When all the final changes have been resolved, the final report will be available to everyone on the NC TRCC web site. Brian noted that the completion of this latest Assessment meets one of the important requirements for receiving future 408 TR improvement monies. It provides an essential non-biased view of the current TR systems in NC. He added that AOC, with recent NC monies, is well on the way to addressing their problems and upgrades.   This progress should be noted in the next Strategic plan application for money which will be due on June 15, 2007.

Brian noted that these items will have to be attended to for that to happen:

1) update the NC Strategic Plan,
2) refer to recommendations in the latest Assessment,
3) include any new project proposals,
4) indicate progress or lack of on current projects with $ sources identified (if any)

Brian gave an example of the NC SHP looking to add the (x,y) GIS coordinates along with their electronic crash reports to improve the location of crashes.

John Stokes noted that he will provide a form which (similar to current GHSP project application forms) which will be modified slightly for the specific projects where each agency will provide the basic information needed for describing a agency task to be completed. The information will include:

1) Statement of the problem
2) The solution
3) How it will be done (steps in the process)
4) Cost (personnel, resources, etc)
5) Goals and timeline for the process
6) Sources of money – NC, agency, 408, etc.

John will have a MS Word version completed for everyone by the end of next week. I will forward it to everyone via email.

Brian added that this will standardize the process, make it easier to compare projects, and easier to prioritize them in the new plan. The NC TRCC group will then set the priorities and provide input for the next NC Strategic Plan:

1) Create the new Strategic Plan
2) Apply for 2nd year $
3) Be sure each project has the required benchmarks (which make sense)

Brian noted the example of Quality Control and timeliness for the NC crash data. The timeliness is very good with only about a 3 month delay between actual crashes and these same crashes being available of the system. On the other hand, there is no current standard process for providing feedback when inaccurate data codes appear in the data.

Another example is the GIS Roadway System being completed by LC Smith. The main roads are 100% complete while the local roads are only 10% complete.

The purpose of the plan is to explain the needs regardless of the actual cost. This provides information to NHTSA as they work with the US Congress on listing the un-met needs of each state.

Don Nail added that this same planning process could also be used to provide the NC Legislature with information through the EC4HS recommending money to improve TR data processes. John added that the NC TRCC could send resolutions to the EC4HS asking for their support and help.

Brian added that the NC TRCC meetings will help keep the lines of communication open, sharing information, noting money sources, and providing for an opportunity to have different agencies collaborate on projects.

As mentioned before, the NC TRCC needs to keep the EC4HS up-to-date on such issues as the need for permanent funding for the current medical data resources. Dr. Sharon Schiro and Chad Lohmeier are covered completely under grant monies. NC needs to find more permanent sources to help support them.

The NC TRCC should also provide the evidence that linking data can provide better information for the state. Better information can help shape better policy and possibly better legislation.

10:04 am Please note the new NC TRCC web site. The schedule has all the meeting dates for 2007. Any corrections, changes, and other suggestions should be sent to Eric Rodgman (email address: eric_rodgman@unc.edu).

10:07 Brian needs each agency to update their reports of problems, changes, and any new requirements that have come into play. For example, the state is currently looking at restricting the use of the NC drivers license number. They could enact legislative restrictions which must be addressed.

The current ITS security restrictions have made it impossible for outside agencies such as HSRC to access even a copy of the latest NC crash data. The NC TRCC needs to have someone from ITS invited to the NC TRCC

meetings so they can be brought up to speed on how these security restrictions prevent other agencies from carrying out their mission as legislated.

10:16 am Bill Hunter brought up the issue of data quality as it pertains to pedestrians and bicyclists. His group has reviewed the actual hard copies of these reports finding numerous errors where pedestrians and bicyclists were reversed somewhere in the crash data process. Brian added that there needed to be way to identify where the errors were occurring, work to find a way to correct the problem, and improve the quality of our data.

Carol Martell added she had discovered coding errors while working on identifying drowsy drivers. Carol noted that it appeared that a default value might have been used so some codes were inaccurate. There is no mechanism in place for reporting these errors, correcting these errors, and providing feedback to the entire process – it might be a police officer coding mistake on the form, a data entry mistake putting the report into the system, or an internal computer generated mistake setting an unspecified variable value to an erroneous default.

Chad Lohmeier noted that their medical data process reviews data and automatically sends an email back to the provider with an indication of the problem (for correction).

Brian added there could be more technical checks, better auto-set features, and other variable validation checks to help get the data as clean as possible.

Several years ago HSRC (2001-2002) did a NC Crash Data Mapping Evaluation Project which inspected most the NC crash variables comparing old crash variables with new ones which began in 2000. The results were noted, but It is not clear that anything was done to correct any of the problems as a result of this report.

Agency Updates:

AOC noted that all their activities and projects are moving along. Janet Green noted that there was some legislation being considered which might provide AOC with $50 per dismissal. Matt Osborne is probably the best contact for this issue.

L C Smith noted that the local roads committee was meeting soon to discuss the functional guidelines for that process.

Chad Lohmeier noted that NC will be the first state to collect med data from all 100 counties as of last April. PreMis has 400 data elements.   They need help with working with the NC Hospital Association on reconciling issues between them. Again, he noted they are 100% grant funded – still looking for NC legislative financial help. Chad added that they do have the pre-hospital data. Along with the proper IRB review, the data could be useful. Sharon Schiro is working on these data now.

Sgt. Jerry Burton said they were committed to TraCS, but that they badly need additional computer support personnel to move forward. GIS was another issue to be addressed with Emergency Management. He relayed the fact that most troopers see the DMV 349 as an insurance form – don't realize how important these data are. NC DOT TEB, HSRC, Cities, counties, and GIS, and others need accurate data to do their jobs. Jerry asked for an overview flowchart – he thought that might be helpful.

Bill Hunter added that at one time, GHSP sponsored TR Workshops which traveled throughout the state to update LE on various aspects of the DMV 349 report form. John Stokes recommended that this should be a project for consideration to the next 408 fund proposal.

Ron Hughes added that the Heavy Commercial Truck projects he works on have issues with how the truck data is entered. His work needs that information to do their job adequately. Ron really needs the GIS location information since that process using street names is very labor intensive. Ron also noted the problem reconciling differences between NC truck designations and the ones designated by FARS. They are different. With some work, they identified the 50 (?) cases.

GHSP – no comment at this time.

Bill Hunter noted that the barrier information is not straight forward. DOT has provided a pamphlet which helps the officers code these properly. Bill added that such information should be on the DMV web site.

Jerry added that the troopers need to have a refresher course on using the electronic crash report data entry system. He recommended that the Instruction manual be reviewed and updated. Brian noted that there are very few checks in the TraCS system. It is open code which must be customized to each state by that state. DMV (Ethel Keen) must review and approve each vendor verifying that their crash data meets all the basic NC business rules – they must go through a test check before getting final permission to send NC crash data on a routine basis.

Jeff Jaeger noted that there are 2 levels in TraCs – an officer and a supervisor mode. He added that too many data checks would slow everything down. There must be a reasonable tradeoff.

Brian noted that if the crash data entry process were too slow, LE officers might stop using it.

11:20 am The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted – NC TRCC Co-chair Eric Rodgman.

Important upcoming dates / deadlines:

Deadline for comments on the NC Assessment Report to John Stokes: Next Friday February 16, 2007.

Deadline for the old / new projects to be included in the next Strategic Plan: March 30, 2007.

Thursday April 12, 2007: next NC TRCC meeting in the Photogrammetry Conference Room at the NC DOT Century Center from 9:00 till 11:00 am.

Deadline for the second year 408 NC Grant Application submission: June 15, 2007.

New NC TRCC web site: http://www.hsrc.unc.edu/nctrcc/