

**A DECADE OF PARTNERSHIP, EVOLUTION
AND GROWTH:
THE I-95 CORRIDOR COALITION**

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SUMMARY

This technical paper highlights the ten year evolution of the I-95 Corridor Coalition - an alliance of transportation agencies, toll authorities, and related organizations, including law enforcement, from the State of Maine to the State of North Carolina, with an affiliate member in Canada. The Coalition provides a forum for key decision and policy makers to address transportation management and operations issues of common interest. This volunteer, consensus-driven organization enables its myriad state, local and regional member agencies to work together to improve transportation system performance far more than they could working individually.

The Coalition has successfully served as a model for multi-state/jurisdictional interagency cooperation and coordination for over a decade. It began in the early 1990's as an informal group of transportation professionals working together to more effectively manage major highway incidents that impacted travel across jurisdictional boundaries. In 1993, the Coalition was formally established to enhance transportation mobility, safety, and efficiency in the region. During the late 1990's, the focus of the Coalition's program evolved from studying and testing intelligent transportation systems (ITS) technologies to a broader perspective that embraced integrated deployments and coordinated operations. The Coalition's perspective also evolved from a highway concentration to one that encompassed all modes of travel and focused on the efficient transfer of people and goods between modes. The facilitation of regional incident management in areas such as pre-planning, coordination and communication among transportation and public safety agencies in the corridor have remained as a key part of the Coalition's focus. Today, the Coalition emphasizes information management as the underpinning of seamless operations across jurisdictions and modes.

The Coalition's ten-year partnership is strong, real and growing. The next decade holds many more challenges and opportunities for the Coalition to improve the transportation system as its evolution continues.

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WHY IS THE COALITION NEEDED?

In a country whose Constitution values state's rights, and where local government home rule is nearly sacred, visionary leadership is required to stimulate cooperation and communication across lines of authority and jurisdictions to solve problems. In the early 1990's that visionary leadership was critically needed to address transportation problems in the Country's heavily populated northeastern corridor. The corridor's transportation network was pushed to capacity limits and the economic and physical health in the region was in jeopardy. This was due to the region's rapid housing development growth, population shifts from urban to sprawling suburban areas, increased commercial vehicle travel, and congestion delays.

To their credit, state transportation leaders in the corridor recognized that new cooperative approaches were required to address these developing and complex transportation challenges. They believed that existing capacity could be better utilized and management and operations of the entire transportation network could be improved through institutional cooperative arrangements and technology systems.

The federal government also recognized the strain on the northeast transportation network. In late 1992, the U.S. Department of Transportation included a 12-state region from Maine to Virginia as one of four designated "Priority Corridors" in the United States. Priority Corridors were defined as having "traffic density above the national average, severe or extreme ozone non-attainment, a variety of transportation facilities, and an inability to significantly expand capacity."

The Priority Corridor designation helped to solidify the informal relationships that had begun in the Northeast and the I-95 Corridor Coalition was formed. Twenty-six agencies representing states; highway, bridge and tunnel authorities; rail and ports moved quickly to establish the Coalition's identity and organization, and began the planning process for this unique multi-state/jurisdictional partnership.

HOW IS THE COALITION STRUCTURED?

Creating a structure for a coalition of multiple organizations to develop and administer a broad federally funded program was challenging. Transportation leaders decided that the Coalition would neither be a chartered regional transportation authority nor an incorporated entity. Instead, it would be a “virtual” organization with an organizational and membership structure that reflected a bottom-up and top-down approach. The structure also had to support the Coalition’s lifeblood -- the work of its member agency volunteers whose participation would be in addition to their regular agency responsibilities.

After much discussion the Coalition’s structure was put in place and consisted of a program area base, Steering Committee, Executive Board and a small professional staff to provide support and conduct the Coalition's day-to-day business. The program area base initially consisted of a number of issue-related Working Groups, Task Forces and Ad hoc Technical Committees. In 1998, the Coalition adopted a Program Track Committee based structure that allowed members more program-focused participation. Today, six Program Committees form the Coalition’s base structure: Program Management, Inter-Regional Multimodal Traveler Information, Coordinated Incident Management, Commercial Vehicle Operations, Intermodal Transfer of People and Goods, and Electronic Payment Services. Member agency volunteers develop and oversee annual programs of projects and activities in the Program Track functional areas.

The Steering Committee, consisting of senior transportation management and operations officials from member agencies, coordinates the work of the Program Track committees. The Executive Board, consisting of chief executives from member agencies, provides policy and programmatic guidance.

The need for full-time attention to program and project management became obvious soon after the Coalition formed. Three full-time staff positions were initially identified and in 1998, a Contract Manager was added to the positions of Executive Director, Operations Coordinator and Technical Coordinator. These positions are filled by loaned member agency staff. In addition to Coalition Staff, a team of consultants was hired through a multi-year contract to provide logistical, program development, and program support.

Coalition membership does not involve payment of dues, and no formal agreement exists among its members. Members come to the Coalition table because of the importance of the Coalition’s work. The table is held together by members’ good will and the Coalition’s “Four C’s”: consensus, cooperation, coordination, and communication.

Coalition membership has broadened over the years, reflecting the depth and application of Coalition projects. For example, recent Coalition’s work plans include projects that involve regional passenger and freight movements analysis, long distance trip planning on public transportation modes, port access, and international border crossing security. This

had led to an expansion of the number and types of agencies that participate in Coalition projects and activities, including transit agencies and metropolitan planning organizations. In addition, agencies bordering the Coalition's original 12 state region have expressed interest in participating in the Coalition's work. For example, both the North Carolina Department of Transportation and the New Brunswick Department of Transportation in Canada recently joined the Coalition. The Coalition is continuing discussion with other Canadian Provinces that present opportunities for a broad array of border crossing, security, and other projects.

Coalition organizational and membership structure reviews are conducted on a regular basis have resulted in modest changes that have improved the Coalition's efficiency and effectiveness. The May 2002 review performed in conjunction with the Coalition's strategic plan did not recommend any structural changes.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED, AND WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

Accomplishments

Throughout our 10 year history the Coalition has benefited the public in many tangible and intangible ways. For example, by emphasizing issues that transcend jurisdictional boundaries—such as management of major incidents and emergencies and commercial vehicle safety and operational efficiency, people and goods move more efficiently throughout the region. The Coalition conveniences the public by enhancing multimodal traveler information services with an emphasis on long-distance trips, and interoperable electronic payment systems. By leveraging strong relationships with the freight community, the Coalition adds value to its member agencies' efforts for safe and efficient freight movement critical to the economic vitality and security of the region and nation. The Coalition also provides numerous learning and information sharing events for its members on important and timely topics.

Specific examples of how the Coalition's projects, initiatives and role as a relationship broker for its members and others benefit the traveling public and member agency personnel are briefly described below.

- The public experiences fewer unnecessary delays and secondary accidents due to dramatically improved coordinated responses to highway incidents and emergencies. These improvements are the direct result of the learning, information sharing, and personal relationships established during regional meetings of transportation operations and law enforcement personnel regularly hosted by the Coalition. This was particularly evident in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 tragedies when the trust rooted in personal relationships established through the Coalition helped overcome the overload and destruction of communications systems. The Coalition is extending these relationships to include the broader emergency response community, and focusing on more complete and coordinated coverage across jurisdictions.
- Travelers can obtain advance notice of operational problems and experience fewer delays because the Coalition helps to coordinate traffic management and traveler information services throughout the region through its Information Exchange Network (IEN). The IEN allows transportation agencies to obtain or share travel times, the locations and impacts of construction activities and major incidents, and other important travel information.
- Travelers avoid delays associated with planned construction activity as a result of the Coalition's popular Traveler Alert Map. More than 300,000 copies of the Map are distributed twice a year to the traveling public and transportation companies at rest areas and welcome centers, and by member agencies' public affairs offices.

- Travelers can more safely and conveniently travel through the Coalition's rural regions because they can obtain travel information through Web sites and other methods, including information related to road conditions, lodging and recreational activities, as a result of seed funding that the Coalition provided to help establish systems in New England and along the I-81 Corridor.
- Travelers will be able to obtain current travel information through coordinated implementation of the national 511 travel information telephone number across state boundaries.
- Travelers will be able to make better long-distance travel decisions as the Coalition works to establish capability that will allow intercity travelers to better plan entire origin-to-destination trips with regard to factors such as travel time, cost and available modes.
- Intermodal freight movements will be facilitated by extending concepts developed by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, with support from the Coalition, under the Freight Information Real-time System for Transport (FIRST). This system provides timely information on ship/rail arrivals and departures, cargo status, drayage operations, and traffic conditions to improve landside access to New York and Northern New Jersey ports.
- Commercial vehicle safety has been improved and the cost of freight movements reduced through Coalition technical assistance with member agency implementation of the Commercial Vehicle Information System and Networks (CVISN). For example, the Coalition sponsored development of software that enables participating states to provide inspection program safety and accident history information in real time to a national database, a process that had been taking as long as 9-months.
- The Coalition is increasing motor carrier participation in the CVISN program by sponsoring a pilot program that demonstrates the use of a single transponder that supports both electronic toll collection and commercial vehicle electronic screening applications.
- The Coalition is improving security by investing in the testing, evaluation and deployment of technologies related to vehicle safety and vehicle and driver identification for safety and security screening.
- The Coalition is making payment for transportation services much easier and convenient by facilitating discussions about establishing an electronic payment method and process that integrates payment for tolls, public transportation, parking and other transportation and commercial services.

- The Coalition Connection Web site (www.i95coalition.org) offers a wealth of information to personnel in member agencies; other professionals; and, via links to other Web sites, directly to travelers in the region.
- The Coalition's Information Exchange Forums, typically attended by 75 to 100 participants, offer opportunities for personnel from member agencies to learn and share information on important topics. Past Forums have explored issues such as staff hiring and retention, telecommunications resource sharing with private providers, and techniques for clearing incidents quickly.
- The Coalition co-sponsors important conferences and workshops with organizations such as the U.S. Department of Transportation and ITS America on topics such as integrated implementation of the 511 national telephone number; commercial vehicle operations, safety and security; and emergency transportation preparedness and response.
- To further advance learning among transportation professionals, the Coalition provided seed money to form the Consortium for ITS Training and Education (CITE). Led by the University of Maryland, in conjunction with more than 70 university partners worldwide, CITE uses distance learning to train graduate students and transportation professionals in system management and operations.
- The Coalition has been helping to lower the cost and risk of implementing transportation management systems by advancing the development and use of national standards through various testing, evaluation and training activities.
- The Coalition is helping to improve the multi-jurisdictional analysis of proposed capacity-enhancing and operational improvements by sponsoring the development of information systems that will assist member agencies in analyzing the movement of people and freight across jurisdictions.
- The Coalition provides a table at which critical regional transportation issues are addressed. For example, the Coalition sponsored a project known as the Mid-Atlantic Rail Operations Study that involved pooling of resources among five contributing states (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Virginia) and three private railroads (Amtrak, CSX and Norfolk Southern) and a cooperative examination of rail bottlenecks and potential solutions in the Mid-Atlantic region.

The Future of the Coalition

The I-95 Corridor Coalition will continue to evolve in directions that allow it to effectively serve the needs of its member agencies and the traveling public for seamless and effective transportation system management and operations across all modes of travel.

- It will provide organizational and technical support to foster learning and information sharing among Coalition member organizations and others.
- It will help develop and manage information systems that will assist member agencies with system management and operations, provide a source of long-distance travel information for the traveling public, and support investment decisions of the Coalition and its member agencies.
- It will accelerate coordinated system management and operations by facilitating deployments of cross-jurisdictional and multimodal programs and services.

The Coalition will continue to be a doing organization. Our future holds a more active role in performing analyses of important regional transportation management and operations issues, and stronger ties to sister organizations such as the regional organizations of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG), and ITS America. Our future also holds a continuing successful partnership with the Federal Highway Administration and other modal agencies of the US Department of Transportation.

The Northeast and Mid-Atlantic region of the United States hosts many of the nation's vital governmental, business, industrial, agricultural, entertainment, and recreational activities. In order for the nation to thrive, the transportation facilities that serve these activities must be managed and operated efficiently. Since many of the trips resulting from these activities, whether transporting freight or people, cross over multiple state and authority jurisdictional boundaries, no single operating entity is responsible for the overall efficiency, safety, comfort, or cost of travel, or its effects on the environment.

The members of the I-95 Corridor Coalition recognize that the region's complex and growing transportation management and operations problems must be addressed through an institution that provides a mechanism for coordinating and resolving issues in a spirit of cooperation and consensus. The I-95 Corridor Coalition will continue to evolve in directions that allow it to effectively serve the needs of its member agencies and the traveling public for seamless and effective transportation system management and operations across all modes of travel.