

THE BENCHMARKING PROJECT

State DOT Scan: Phase II

*Performance/Project
Assessments*

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STATE DOT SCAN: PHASE II – PERFORMANCE/PROJECT ASSESSMENTS

=== Discussion Draft ===

Bill Wilkinson: 17 December 2003

We at NCBW have been working on this project for the past several months. We've gone through a couple of iterations: We're not there yet. Here are our thoughts on how we might get there. We'd like your help. Please read this over, think about it, and offer your comments by 31 December. Thanks.

Background

In March 2002, the NCBW issued its report, *Are We There Yet?* (AWTY) in which we considered the plans and policies of State DOTs. In most cases, the information reported was provided by the State DOT's bike/ped coordinator.

Based on first hand experience and comments from folks from around the country, it seems safe to say that a bit of a gap exists – at least in some states -- between policy and practice. Some recent State DOT highway projects don't appear to include reasonable accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians, despite policies or stated practices to the contrary.

The objective for this Phase II of our scan of State DOTs is to look at what the agencies are really doing to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists in highway projects. We will accomplish this by encouraging local advocates, state bike-ped coordinators, APBP and ITE members, public health officials, and members of the general public to participate in an assessment of at least a sample of recent state projects, providing a tool and a methodology for conducting this post-project review and assessment, and encouraging meetings with appropriate State DOT staff to discuss their findings. Our hope is that this process will help improve both the policies and practices of the State DOTs with regard to highway design to accommodate all users.

Concept

We envision packaging a program/process whereby recently completed State DOT highway projects could be assessed to establish what, if any, provisions to accommodate bicyclists and/or pedestrians were included in the design and traffic engineering treatments. The data collected would provide the basis for a meeting/discussion with the State DOT to assess the findings:

- (a) to verify and agree on the conditions observed,
- (b) to assess *how well* pedestrians and bicyclists are or are not accommodated,
- (c) to compare this outcome to the stated policy and design guidelines adopted by the State DOT related to pedestrian and bicycle accommodations,

(d) to discuss, if appropriate, why certain projects may not conform to the stated policy and adopted design guidelines (and, if appropriate, to discuss actions to correct the deficiencies),

(e) to identify what actions may be needed to ensure that future practice conforms to policy, and

(f) to develop an implementation plan (e.g., tasks, assignments, schedule) to make it happen.

This project assessment activity would be undertaken by a group, organization or committee (i.e., Work Group) in each state. The primary focus/objective is action in each state to improve practice and outcomes.

We would encourage each state Work Group to keep us posted on their progress and share the results of their assessments. We would make this information available on our web site to monitor progress and encourage action. We would also create and support a “Community of Practice” site to foster problem-solving and the sharing of successes and challenges.

Issues, Questions, and Challenges

This is our current thinking on this activity: we’d like to invite you to share with us your comments and suggestions. Some of our specific questions are:

1. Should we seek the support/involvement of the State DOTs and/or AASHTO? If so, for what and how? How about FHWA? ITE? APBP?
2. How should the Work Groups be organized? Who should we encourage to participate? Who would make good candidates to lead the task?
3. How do we get potential stakeholders excited about participating?
4. What should the assessment data collection process include and how might the data be collected? What items do you need to identify/quantify/qualify to determine appropriate accommodations for bicyclists and/or pedestrians? [A draft Project Assessment Tool is presented below.]
5. What data elements should we send folks out to collect in the field vs. requesting from the State DOT (e.g., current and planning year ADT, design speed, lane width, shoulder width, etc.)?
6. How should the process of selecting the projects for assessment be managed: Ask the State DOT for a list of recently completed (e.g., past two years) projects and select a sample of 5 – 10? Stratify the sample by functional highway classification?

Project Assessment Tool
[DRAFT]

Bicycle-Friendly?

[Note: we need to consider and address how to segment a “route” for assessment purposes. Your thoughts?]

1. What improvement(s) is provided that could accommodate bicycling?
 - Marked bike lane
 - Paved shoulder (space to the right of the edge strip)
 - Parking lane
 - Shared lane (inc. wide curb lane)
2. What is the apparent width of this improvement? Is it continuous along the route?
3. If there is a paved shoulder, are there rumble strips? If so, provide details.
4. What is the posted speed limit that corresponds to each section of roadway and related “improvement”? Does the posted speed limit vary?
5. Are intersections easy to negotiate by bike?
 - Through movement?
 - Left turn?
 - What kind of traffic control is provided? (list options)
6. How comfortable would the following kind of cyclist likely to find this route:
 - [Provide a set of choices or Likert scale]
 - Experienced cyclist
 - Casual adult cyclist
 - 12 year old child cyclist

Pedestrian-Friendly?

1. Is a sidewalk provided? If so, width, set-back, continuous?
2. If there is a sidewalk provided, does it generally conform to ADA requirements?
[Provide a checklist]
3. Is a shoulder provided? If so, width, surface type, cross slope?
4. What is the posted speed limit that corresponds to each section of roadway and related “improvement”? Does the posted speed limit vary?
5. Intersections: Does it serve pedestrians well (main street/side street)?
Kind(s) of traffic controls? (Provide checklist)