Minutes for the AASHTO Task Force for Roadside Safety Meeting

October 3-5, 2001

Portsmouth, New Hampshire

Attendance

The Task Force convened at 8 a.m. and began the meeting with self-introductions. Several new members or member’s representatives were attending for the first time, including Rod Lacy, who will replace Ron Seitz as Kansas’ DOT representative, Jim (silent “g”) Tenaglia representing PennDOT, and Aurora (Rory) Meza, representing Mark Marek from TxDOT. Brian Blanchard accompanied Billy Hattaway from the Florida DOT. Members of the Task Force who are listed on the enclosed roster, but were unable to attend the meeting included Dan Davis (AZ), Monique Evans, a new member from Ohio, Earle Freedman (MD), Ken Hurst (KS), Harry Lee James, a new member from Mississippi, Greg Fredrick, replacing Pat Collins from Wyoming, and Richard Wilder from New York who has replaced Art Perkins. All other members listed on the roster were present for the meeting. In addition, Jim McDonnell from AASHTO, Chuck Niessner from TRB, and Messrs. Artimovich, Oskard, Powers, and Taylor from FHWA were also present.

Task Force Vice-Chair

Dave Little announced that Keith Cota was confirmed by the Subcommittee on Design as Vice Chair of the Task Force.

Formal Presentations

The first formal presentation was made by Malcolm Ray from Worchester (sounds like “wuss-ter”) Polytechnic Institute (WPI), who is the principal investigator for NCHRP Project 22-17, “Recommended Guidelines for Curbs and Curb-Barrier Combinations.” The objective of this study is to develop design guidelines for using curbs and curb/barrier combinations on high-speed roadways. These guidelines will be developed using a combination of live driver tests, crash data analysis, computer simulation, and a limited number of full-scale tests.

TTI’s Roger Bligh, the PI on Project 17-11, “Determination of Safe/Cost Effective Roadside Slopes and Associated Clear Distances”, made the second formal presentation. Details on both of these NCHRP projects can be found at http://www4.trb.org/crp.nsf/NCHRP+projects.

Mort Oskard from FHWA’s Office of Safety Research and Development outlined that office’s 2001 program in general and provided a detailed summary of the goals and
current status of FHWA’s research project conducted by TTI on the causes of vehicle rollover crashes. The proposed research problem statement on roadside topography developed by this Task Force last year was not selected because it was believed to duplicate, at least in part, the FHWA-sponsored TTI study. The proposed Problem Statement objectives were to develop guidelines for traversable slopes and ditches for inclusion in the Roadside Design Guide. The TTI contract will also include looking at slope combinations as they relate to rollover and will examine other features present on slopes or near the roadway that may also precipitate a rollover. Tasks L and M in the TTI contract require the development of evaluation procedures and implementation guidance, and these are expected at the end of the contract, about three years from now. Thus the study proposed by the Task Force may duplicate at least some of what TTI will eventually be producing, both in this study and in Project 17-11 described previously. In view of this potential duplication it was recommended that the update study be delayed.

RDG issues

Jim McDonnell said he believed the 2001 Roadside Design Guide would be published by the end of December. The final editing is being done by AASHTO rather than Trauner Consulting to expedite the process. Dick Powers offered (?) to prepare a summary of significant changes from the 1996 edition as well as a brief PowerPoint presentation highlighting these changes. Chapter authors were requested to provide Powers (via e-mail) with bulleted topics from their respective chapters to include in this summary. The final version of the RDG will be sent by AASHTO to chapter authors for a last look prior to publication. Needless to say, this review must be done quickly to preclude any further delays. A two-week turnaround time was suggested.

Because of the time and effort required to update the RDG, there was much discussion on methods to streamline the process in the future. Suggestions ranged from making revisions as the need arose and publishing revised pages when needed to making annual Interim updates. No specific course of action was decided. However, due to the turnover in the task Force as well as conflicting job requirements, assignments for lead authors for each RDG chapter and their teams were revisited and revised. These new assignments are shown in Attachment 1.

AASHTO Geometric Design Standards for Low Volume Roads

Ron Seitz expressed concern that some of the wording in the draft AASHTO publication on Geometric Design Standards for Low Volume Roads regarding clear zone was contrary to AASHTO policy as expressed in the Green Book and the RDG. As originally stated, these new guidelines suggested that a “zero clear zone” might be appropriate on roads with traffic volumes lower than 400 VPD. This concern was shared by the Task Force and resulted in subsequent correspondence between Dave Little/Keith Cota and Norm Roush, which is likely to result in some slight changes in wording. As a result, the Task Force identified a possible need for a new chapter on safety treatment for low volume roads in the next edition of the RDG and assigned individual members to assist Billy Hattaway in this effort.
NCHRP Project 17-20 Problem Statements

Project 17-20 was developed to provide technical support to the task Force. The first project initiated under this project was funding Trauner Consulting to compile a final draft of the 2001 RDG for balloting. The three projects were carryovers from last year, and include (1) a RDG review to identify significant safety recommendations whose origins are not clear and to identify the research upon which these recommendations were made, (2) a re-evaluation of the flare rates recommended for both permanent and temporary barriers, and (3) an evaluation of the crashworthiness of the newer vandal-proof/secure mailboxes. Attachment 1 shows the teams assigned to prepare RFPs for each of these projects. Additionally, Dick Albin agreed to draft a new problem statement investigating the “crashworthiness” of trees (4-inch vs. 6-inch diameter) for submission to NCHRP under Project 20-7.

AASHTO Scanning Study – Highway Safety Issues

AASHTO is seeking proposals for scanning studies to be conducted in FY 2004-05. These studies typically include AASHTO (State DOT), FHWA, and other members and involve visiting several countries to review specific topic areas. There was a general belief that the U.S. generally leads the way in roadside safety, but a team led by Billy Hattaway was assigned the task of identifying potential safety issues that could be the subject of a scanning tour. Harry Taylor suggested that some countries may have good examples of aesthetic designs that would be of interest. An initial decision on a safety topic must be made by March 2002, with a proposal then due in December 2002.

New research Problem Statement

The task force agreed to revise and resubmit one of last year’s problem statements on appropriate safety treatments for urban/suburban roadsides. Dick Albin will revise the original statement, incorporating some of the contents included in a similar statement developed by the TRB A2A04 Committee at its summer meeting and submitted to the TFRS by A2A04 Chairman King K. Mak. This revised problem statement will be submitted to the NCHRP for consideration in its FY 2003 program.

AASHTO Resolution on review of 350 hardware acceptances

The task force re-confirmed the resolution passed by AASHTO in 1998 that recommended the Federal Highway Administration retain its role in reviewing crash test results to determine the acceptability of new roadside hardware for use on the National Highway System and continue to act as a national clearinghouse for hardware acceptance letters.
Highway Safety Manual (Project 17-18(4))

Harry Taylor discussed a project initiated under NCHRP’s blanket Project 17-18 that supports implementation of AASHTO’s Strategic Highway Safety Plan. Project 17-18(4) is a scoping study intended to produce a draft prototype chapter on safety considerations for 2-lane rural roads. The Safety Manual is envisioned as a “companion” to the Highway Capacity Manual. Taylor also described FHWA’s efforts towards developing and implementing its internal run-off-the-road (ROR) action plan.

Next meeting/Coordination with TF-13

The next annual TFRS meeting will again be held in conjunction with the Task Force 13 fall meeting in St. Louis, Missouri. It is expected to be in the late September/early October time frame with the exact date to be announced.

While several TFRS members were able to attend the Task Force 13 meeting this year and found the technical presentations to be both informative and valuable, there was some discussion about TF-13 offering a one-day registration fee to TFRS members who only wanted to attend the second day sessions. Powers will investigate this possibility with appropriate TF-13 members.