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Highway Directional Signing Advisory Committee

Minutes

December 17, 2002

Opening Remarks/Introduction/Attendance

Ilona Kastenhofer opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Attendees then introduced themselves and what organization they represented. The following invitees were in attendance:

Ilona Kastenhofer VDOT - Chair
 David Blount, Virginia Municipal League (VML)
 Martha Kapitanov, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
 Roy Knox, Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC)
 Lawrence Land, Virginia Association of Counties (VAC)
 Mauris Mackenzie, VDOT
 Richard McDonnell, Virginia Hospitality and Travel Association (VHTA)
 Michael O'Connor, Virginia Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association (VPM)
 Joy Shepherd, VDOT

Committed to participate but were unable to attend:
 Dale Bennett, Virginia Trucking Association (VTA)
 Randy Green, American Automobile Association (AAA)
 Byron Marshall, (VDOT)

Other attendees, not based on invitation, but as interested citizens, were Danny Mitchell, a member of VHTA, but not the designated representative of VHTA; and Chip Dicks, attorney for LOGOS, Inc.

Purpose

Ilona started the discussion by offering thoughts about the purpose of the committee and asked for feedback from the committee members. As the committee's name indicates, the focus is to address directional signing issues. The committee would not be addressing traditional traffic engineering signing, such as regulatory and warning signs, only directional signing.

There are various directional signs and they are provided under four separate programs: major guide signs, supplemental signs, LOGO and Tourist Oriented Directional Signs (TODS). While the committee's focus will be on the LOGO and TODS programs, clarifying, understanding the differences between these signing programs is essential for effectively addressing related issues.

Some discussion centered on the advertising effect of signs. It is

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recognized by VDOT that advertising is an aspect or byproduct of highway signing, but is not the purpose of highway signing.

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Ilona summarized the purpose of the committee as discussing various sign programs, identifying issues and making recommendations for how to implement these programs. While the Manual on Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) does provide specifics for key criteria for implementation, it does not specify all implementation details.

Roy Knox asked about the authority of the committee in implementing changes and recommendations. Ilona explained that the committee would provide feedback and recommendations to Mr. Frank Gee, while the Commissioner and the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) are the final decision makers.

The question of how this committee relates to past committees/task forces was also brought up. Ilona responded that this committee is a new start to address both TODS and LOGO issues within proper process and with appropriate representation.

Committee Membership

The initial makeup of the committee is based on inviting organizations that represent a cross section of those affected by highway signing programs. Therefore, representatives were selected from local government and motorist's organizations, from the Travel, Tourism, Gasoline, and Trucking industries, as well as from the Federal Highway Administration. Comments were invited from committee members about possible additional participation.

Representatives were suggested from other organizations including:

- American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) to represent maturing driver needs;
- Virginia Transportation Research Council to address and promote research needs;
- A VDOT District Traffic Engineer to address field operations issues; and
- A DOT representative from another state, possibly Maryland or North Carolina, to provide their insight.

The committee supported adding representation noted above. Also, another suggestion was to have a representative from the Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association that represents urban planners; however, planning is not directly related to signing issues.

Directional Signing Programs Overview

Mauris Mackenzie provided an overview of the four major categories of directional signing programs, with handouts provided. It was noted that major guide signs are outside of the purview of this committee. A question was raised about the definition of non-repetitive type traffic. Mauris explained that this refers to sites that are typically only visited once by visitors or very infrequently. Visitors are generally not from the local area and do not have other readily available means of finding their destination. Examples of non-repetitive destinations might be museums or historic sites. An example of a generally repetitive site would be a regional shopping mall; most people visit such a site on a sufficiently frequent enough basis to be familiar with how to get there.

Current Issues

Mauris outlined the following issues that need attention:

- Logo Program
- Full Serve Food Pilot Program

The current pilot program is not in compliance with the MUTCD and no request has been provided to FHWA for approving the pilot. Also, the new MUTCD 2000, which was adopted by VDOT in September 2002, does include new elements for the LOGO program. The committee will look at what changes to recommend and how to best implement those changes.

Ilona noted that the Commissioner has expressed strong support for the MUTCD, and supports exploring the concept of reserving two spaces on the Food background for full serve restaurants, instead of the current pilot. Mike O'Connor noted his objection to this concept. Ilona responded that, if the whole committee decides to, they could propose alternative scenarios to Mr. Gee, who could take the proposal to the Commissioner.

This issue is to be further explored at future meetings.

Attractions Criteria

It was noted that Attractions is a new category in the MUTCD 2000. VDOT has not yet developed criteria for Attractions. With adding Attractions, however, there are five types of panels that can be provided, but the number of panels is limited to maximum of four.

Supplemental Names and Slogans

Current criteria do not allow supplemental names and slogans on logo business panels. This can be quite confusing and difficult to administer. We need to look at how we can better differentiate between what is appropriate and what is extraneous or providing only advertising value.

Urban Program

It was noted that this is an issue that needs to be addressed. The previous task force elected to postpone any activity on this issue until at least 2005 due to the complexities and other pressing issues.

TODS Program

Some background was provided regarding the initial RFP and that it was withdrawn due to issues surrounding the Logo Program such as whether there should be regional contracts. Subsequently, the Attractions category was added to the Logo Program that introduced potential conflicts and the need to completely review the TODS Program.

TODS was identified as a very important program, especially to rural communities, and VDOT is committed to implement the program as soon as possible. It needs to be recognized that this program should be developed while considering other related programs. VDOT is looking to this committee to make recommendations relating to many implementation issues.

Supplemental Guide Sign Program

Two significant issues were identified. First, there are consistency issues relating to program interpretation district by district. Second, there are potential overlaps between this program, TODS and Attractions (of LOGO) that need to be reviewed and addressed. This program has not had a major update since 1993; an update in

conjunction with the development of TODS and Attractions is appropriate.

Other issues

Danny Mitchell asked about conducting a survey to determine what the motorists really want, as opposed to what we think they want. VDOT is supportive of such a survey since the previous survey is somewhat dated. Consideration will be given to using committee resources, especially those with a long reach to motorists such as AAA and AARP, to conduct a survey or otherwise obtain feedback.

Danny asked if the TODS fees would be the same as for the Logo Program. VDOT did not believe the fees would necessarily be the same, although no fees have been established and no analysis has been performed as yet to determine an appropriate fee. However, in VDOT's view, it is appropriate for both the TODS and LOGO programs to be self-supportive. Ilona expressed that the financial setup is different for the four different signing programs. VDOT pays for and maintains major guide signs; requestors pay for supplemental signs, but VDOT maintains them; TODS and LOGO signs are to be self-supportive.

Ilona recognized that there are a large number of issues to explore, and the committee will need to prioritize them. Also, she invited committee members to call or e-mail if they identify additional issues after the meeting.

Closing

The VDOT staff will pursue the following for the next meeting

- Contact additional organizations agreed to for representation on the committee;
- Develop points about each program that distinguish between the four directional signing programs;
- Develop a list of critical issues to be addressed by the committee, with suggested prioritization;
- List issues of concern between the programs; and
- Provide a copy of the previous TODS RFP for the committee's information.

Next Meeting

Due to everyone's involvement with the General Assembly process, it was decided to hold the next meeting sometime shortly after the end of the regular session - around the first week of March. The exact date and time will be established by email with all committee members.

