



Q & A
CAL-ATSSA Virtual Chapter Meeting
April 30, 2020

Speaker: Sri Balasubramanian, Deputy Division Chief, Division of Traffic Operations, Caltrans

Q1: Road utilization % after pandemic is over, will it come back?

A: I am not an economist or a statistician but based on what Senator Beall shared earlier today and what economists are forecasting, the economy is going to be impacted over the next 1-3 years. Based on the economic impact we witnessed around 2008, it is anticipated that the number of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) will go down, but we don't know by how much. We are currently still in the pandemic situation and we will not know its potential impacts for a while. There are various factors that will have an impact on road utilization or VMT, things like people not willing to take mass transit/carpooling and driving their personal vehicle, potential loss of jobs, more employers allowing teleworking, etc.

Q2: Are there any changes in pavement markings on the horizon that Caltrans will deploy to reduce fatalities?

A: Currently, we are not anticipating any significant changes to pavement markings. We are always looking at pavement markings, signs, traffic safety devices or other actions that can be taken to reach the goal of zero fatalities and serious injuries on roadways. For example, in the recent update to our standard plans we included chevron striping in the exit-ramp and connector ramp gore areas to alert people from going into the gore areas. As part of this update we also issued a new specification to use durable-warranty striping materials for all lane lines and all striping on bridge decks. All other lines shall use Thermoplastic with enhanced wet-night visibility. The goal is to reduce maintenance and construction workers exposure to live traffic, lessen traffic delay, and reduce maintenance cost by using more durable materials.

Q3: For the AFAD standard plan, has there been any discussion about allowing the replacement of the Flagger Ahead warning sign with a Signal Ahead warning sign when using a Red/Yellow AFAD?

A: AFAD is not considered as a signal and therefore a signal ahead warning sign will not be used. CA MUTCD (and Federal MUTCD) Section 6E.04, specifically states AFADs are not traffic control signals. "Standard: 07 Because AFADs are not traffic control signals, they shall not be used as a substitute for or a replacement for a continuously operating temporary traffic control signal as described in Section 6F.84."

Q4: Define what can and cannot be done in moving closures. Enforcement to level playing field.

A: Currently, there is no specific list of construction activities identified for moving lane closures. Typically, moving lane closures have been used for activities that can be completed while moving and the roadway can be opened to public behind the activity. For example, striping, placing pavement markers, placing temporary pavement markers, sweeping, etc. SSP 12-4.02(7)(a) states that moving lane closure can be used during traffic striping and pavement marker placement using bituminous adhesive (except when grinding for recessed striping and recessed markers). If there are any issues or concerns, they can be raised to the RE or the Construction Engineer in the district.

Q5: Has there been conversation about modifying lane closure charts based on process? For example, Striping vs. Paving vs. Bridge Deck work?

A: Lane closure charts are primarily developed based on traffic volumes within the project limits. However, the scope of work and location of work are also considered when developing the lane closure charts. The Division of Construction and the Division of Traffic Operations are working together on Expanded Work Windows for Construction Guidelines. This document describes the various factors, including the type of work performed, that should be taken into consideration as the lane closure charts are developed. This is a draft document, which should be completed and posted in the next couple of months.

Q6: What is the position on an ongoing basis to start using more traffic safety reflective drums instead of traffic cones that must be picked up each day?

A: Our specifications cover cones and drums. Drums and cones have their own pros and cons. For example, cones cost less, are easier to be moved, cause a lesser hazard if they fall into a live lane, etc. Drums are more visible and don't get easily knocked over, etc. There may be some activities that are more suitable for the use of drums.

Q7: One of the issues we commonly encounter is resistance at the RE and Inspector level to many of the positive changes made at the top. What recommendations do you have for Contractors who are experiencing push back on some of these changes?

A: Usually positive changes made in headquarters are conveyed the personnel in the field by Construction Policy Directive or Construction Policy Bulletin. If a RE or an inspector is resistant to the change, the issue can be elevated to the District Construction Engineer. If the resistance is encountered at that level, then the issue could be elevated to the district director. If there is widespread resistance to a change, the issue can also be brought up at one of the Caltrans-Industry Partnering meeting.

Q8: I am wondering how come Caltrans does not incorporate a portable concrete barrier system that can be moved out during non-peak travel to expand the work-zone, it can eliminate the need for a buffer lane and in addition provide positive barrier protection throughout the work-zone.

A: All tools that help provide positive barrier to work zone will be reviewed. Positive barrier was identified as one of the high priority topics at the January 2020, Construction Safety Summit. Currently, a team of Caltrans personnel are looking at various options to positive barrier. Once draft guidelines are developed, they will be circulated for comments and before finalizing guidelines.

Speaker: Joe Horton, Chief, Office of Safety Innovation and Cooperative Research, Caltrans

Q1: What is the position of using MASH Certified products such as Roll Up Sign Stands?

A: Caltrans has a webpage that addresses MASH questions:

<https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/mash>

Work zone devices are still an area that could benefit from additional guidance. The official Caltrans position is in the December 23, 2016 memo "IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MANUAL FOR ASSESSING SAFETY HARDWARE" (on the MASH webpage) where it says:

"For temporary work zone roadside safety hardware, including portable barriers, devices manufactured after December 31, 2019, must have been successfully tested to MASH. Such devices manufactured by this date, and successfully tested to NCHRP Report 350, may continue to be used throughout their normal service lives."

Duper Tong in Traffic is developing additional guidance, but it has yet to be finalized.

Q2: What would you guess the timeline looks like for contractors to use ATMAs?

A: I do not see contractors using the current technology in the near future. Caltrans needs legislative changes to test our ATMA on the roadway. To be allowed for general use is years away.

Q3: Would Joe be the right person to start talking to about establishing weight exceptions for striping and removal trucks?

A: I don't know.