

DRISI

CALTRANS DIVISION OF RESEARCH,
INNOVATION AND SYSTEM INFORMATION

Research

Notes

Rural

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Project Title:
Vehicle Detection on Rural
Roads Using Optical Fiber Sensing
Technology

Task Number: 4296

Start Date: April 2024

Completion Date: June 2026

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TPF-5(494) Vehicle Detection on Rural Roads Using Optical Fiber Sensing Technology

Using existing fiber communication cables to detect traffic on rural highways

WHAT IS THE NEED?

Detection is an integral part of managing the State Highway System. Detection systems are used to determine metrics such as vehicle count, classification, occupancy, and speed. The data can then be used to communicate travel times and queue warning messages to the traveling public via in-route traveler information.

Detection systems can provide rural TMC Operators the ability to provide travel times and warn motorists of slow or stopped traffic ahead. System-wide detection can be cost-prohibitive, especially in small rural districts with limited resources. Per the Caltrans 2022 Transportation Asset Management Plan (TAMP), detection station costs are over \$151k per element, not including the operation cost to support each site.

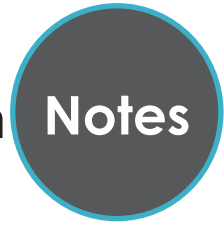
Optical fiber detection is an emerging technology in the transportation market. Caltrans needs to understand how to leverage existing fiber optic infrastructure and the Middle-Mile Broadband Network (MMBN) effort, to find a cost-effective alternative to detection station deployment for resource-limited Districts.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

We will procure, install, and operate an optical fiber vehicle detection system on I-5 near Redding. Once deployed, we will ground truth and make fine-tuned adjustments to improve the accuracy of the system during the project. We intend to develop this system so it will be usable with other optical fiber infrastructure



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statewide, including Broadband Middle Mile network infrastructure. We will also document this system's design, installation, integration, operation, and maintenance processes.

WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

An alternative detection system technology that can be deployed using existing infrastructure and requires little-to-no Construction resources. The optical fiber vehicle detection system data may be used for rural travel time messages, queue warning messages, and vehicle count statistics.

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT?

Climate change is not going away. As severe winter storms and ravaging wildfires continue to cripple the state highway system, having the ability to monitor and communicate incident-induced travel delay times and slow or stopped traffic on rural routes will be crucial to maintain the safety, operational efficiency, and goods movement of our roads.

WHAT IS THE PROGRESS TO DATE?

The technical advisory panel is soliciting scope of work statements from research teams. We are anticipating a start work date of April 2024.