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Research Notes

Traffic Operations

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Project Title:
Safety Service Patrol (SSP) Pooled Fund Study (PFS)

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TPF-5(489) - Safety Service Patrol Standardization and Management Practices

A research project lead by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to support the development of recognized industry standards by establishing tools and technical reports that identify best practices and aligns those best practices to assist organizations in addressing issues that are common among agencies that manage and operate SSPs.

WHAT IS THE NEED?

The SSP PFS will provide an opportunity to facilitate information sharing and documentation of the successful practices of established SSP programs. The SSP Industry Association (SSPIA) will partner with the PFS to establish a repository of information for all existing and future agency members of the SSPIA.

Many jurisdictions throughout the country operate full-function SSPs that are equipped to provide a wide range of complex, on-scene assistance to help mitigate an incident. SSP Operators are often first on the scene of an incident and provide immediate and invaluable assistance to law enforcement, involved parties, and other first responders. In many programs, SSP Operators remain on the scene throughout its duration, which increases their exposure to traffic and threatens their personal safety.

The collective experience gained from agencies managing these programs will provide invaluable knowledge to improve the safety of SSP Operators, first responders, and the public. The PFS is intended to expand upon the FHWA-led 2017 study entitled, "Safety Service Patrol Priorities and Best Practices" (FHWA-HOP-16-047) that largely focused on which agencies currently have SSP programs, the programs' overall objectives, items for new program managers to consider, and performance metrics used by those programs. The PFS is looking to further identify best practices that can support standards in the application of emergency traffic control; safety protocols for SSP vehicles and associated equipment; and guidelines for staffing, training, and certification of SSP staff. Agencies providing SSP services prioritize the safety of their operators, first responders, and the public. The results of this PFS will support those agencies with that top priority by providing guidance for SSP program management; documentation of standard for emergency traffic control and

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SSP support activities; and best practices in staffing and training initiatives employed by existing SSP programs.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

The primary objective of this PFS study will be to gain technical information related to SSP program management, standards associated with SSP response protocol and the implementation of traffic control, and references and guidance related to staffing, training, and resource allocations within SSP programs.

WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

The goals of this project are:
1. Assemble best practices and lessons learned from existing programs
2. Develop guidance documents based on lessons learned from existing programs
3. Reference or create tools that will help agencies make informed program decisions such as route selection, staffing levels, and resource allocation.

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT?

The State would benefit from the collective experience gained from all the agencies managing the SSP programs as it will provide invaluable knowledge to improve the safety of SSP Operators, first responders, and the public.

WHAT IS THE PROGRESS TO DATE?

Quarterly meeting was held on October 24, 2022. File sharing structure overview was discussed and updated. FHWA Volpe center is working with Information Technology team to add additional features to the SharePoint site. Work with state agencies have started regarding how to collect and categorize information that goes into the RSPB Website. The end product is being defined by answering questions like what the end product should look like and what contents will benefit everyone in this study. The 2017 Transportation Management Center (TMC) PFS needs to be published on the FHWA website so that it can be accessed by everyone. The new SSP PFS report will pull some references and information from the 2017 report and update them. This new report is intended to be a stepping stone guidance document for all Department of Transportations (DOTs) looking to improve their SSP program. These are recommended practices and not mandatory practices. A draft content of sections document was released to make everyone aware of the document design. There are three main sections:

1. Overview of safety service control programs which includes how things are funded, business models, and dynamics.
2. Common incidents and response strategies.
3. SSP Vehicles pertaining to common vehicles, tools, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE); and using common configurations like synthetizing vehicle information.

Some of the topics that were discussed are: guidance on time frame for emergency traffic control setup, devices used, MUTCD defense, multiple lane closures, number of minimum responders, managed lanes, authority for SSP (General statues, MOUs). More details can be found at:

https://www.pooledfund.org/Details/Study/719.