

Testimony of Eric W. Gjede
Assistant Counsel, CBIA
Before the Transportation Committee
Hartford, CT
February 11, 2015

**Testifying in support of PHB 5949 AA Requiring A Priority System For Transportation Infrastructure
Projects**

Good morning Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrero, Senator Boucher, Representative O'Dea, and members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Eric Gjede and I am assistant counsel at the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA), which represents more than 10,000 large and small companies throughout the state of Connecticut.

CBIA supports PHB 5949.

In a 2013 survey of Connecticut businesses, the number one transportation related concern was highway traffic congestion. Connecticut is home to some of the most heavily congested highways in the country - in particular the I-95, I-84 and I-91 corridors. Respondents noted that congestion plays a role in planning work schedules, limits their markets, prevents meetings with customers, holds up delivery times, and disrupts logistics.

A means of prioritizing transportation projects is critical, particularly if priority is given to ensuring safety and alleviating highway traffic congestion. Transportation funding is limited and becoming more unreliable. It should be imperative that we spend the funds we do have ensuring that our highways and most highly utilized commuter mass transit systems are running as safely and efficiently as possible. Transportation systems should be economic pipelines, not economic inhibitors.

We encourage the committee to support PHB 5949 in order to prioritize transportation projects that will help alleviate the state's congested highway system.

Testimony of Eric W. Gjede
Assistant Counsel, CBIA
Before the Transportation Committee
Hartford, CT
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Testifying in support of PSB 481 AAC The Development Of An Enhanced Accident Response Plan

Good morning Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrero, Senator Boucher, Representative O'Dea, and members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Eric Gjede and I am assistant counsel at the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA), which represents more than 10,000 large and small companies throughout the state of Connecticut.

CBIA supports PSB 481.

In a 2013 survey of Connecticut businesses, the number one transportation related concern was highway traffic congestion. Connecticut is home to some of the most heavily congested highways in the country - in particular the I-95, I-84 and I-91 corridors. Respondents noted that congestion plays a role in planning work schedules, limits their markets, prevents meetings with customers, holds up delivery times, and disrupts logistics. On any given day, one accident can mean the difference between getting to work on time or being hours late.

We can't completely prevent accidents from happening, but we can take the steps other states have to minimize their impact on traffic. PSB 481 asks the Commissioner of Transportation and the Commissioner of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (although I would suggest the Commissioner of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection is more appropriate) to look to see what other states and cities are doing to alleviate traffic congestion caused by accidents.

There are some excellent models that can be used for guidance - for example:

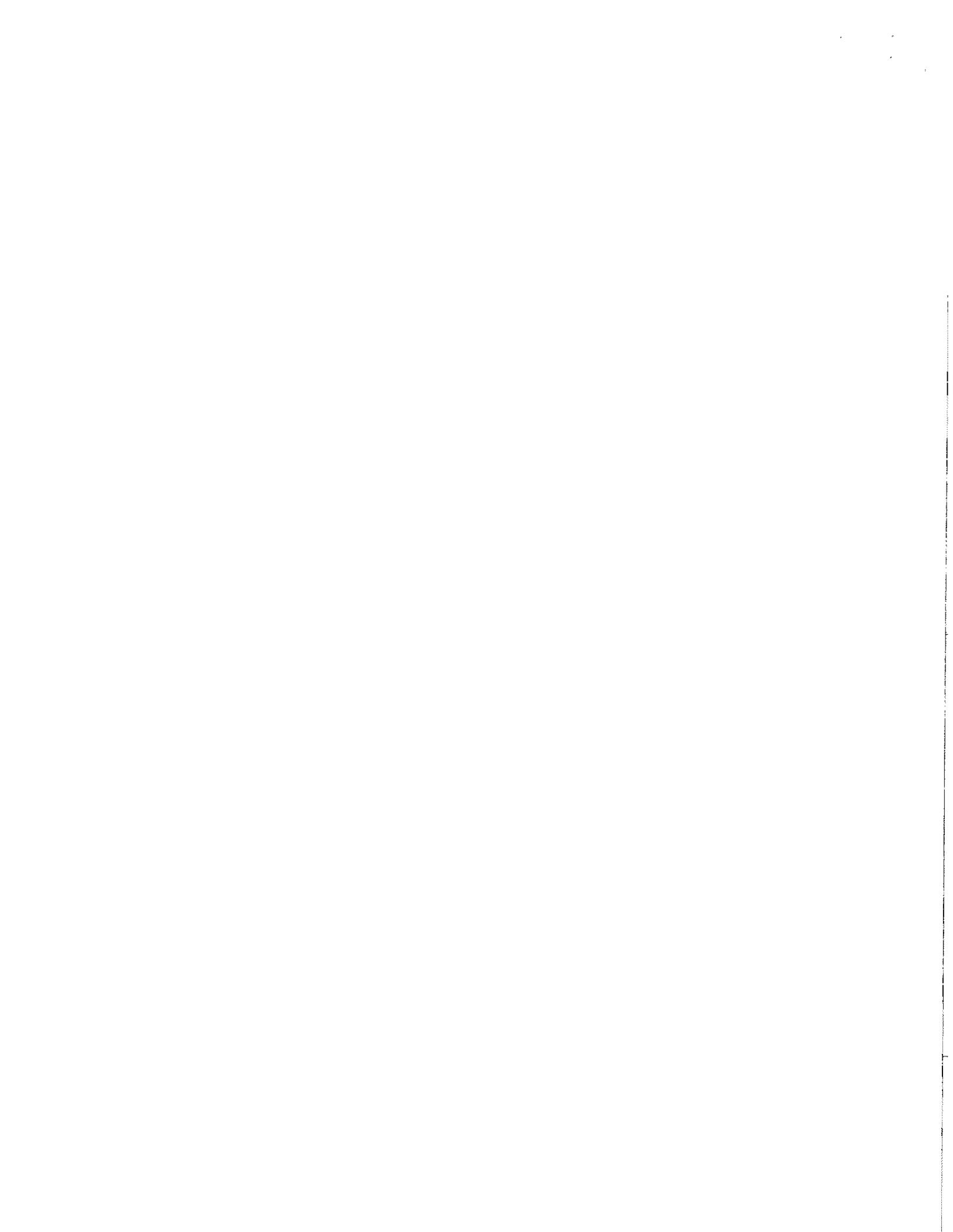
- The SafeClear program in Houston, Texas was enacted in 2005 and tows disabled or abandoned vehicles off the highway to the nearest exit at no cost to the driver. Although there was some cost, the city has calculated it has had a 10:1 benefit-cost ratio.
- The Incident Response Program in Washington state, during the first quarter of 2012 alone, cleared over 10,000 accidents and saved \$10.7 million in wasted time and fuel. Accidents were cleared from the highway in an average of 14 minutes, and showed a 9:1 benefit-cost ratio.

- The Rapid Incident Scene Clearance Program in Florida provides a clearance time incentives for responders to tractor trailer accidents. The heavy duty towers are given a \$2,500 bonus if the accident is cleared within 90 minutes of their arrival. If the accident hasn't been cleared within 3 hours, \$10 is deducted for each additional minute needed to clear the highway.

There may be other methods that can be utilized as well, including more cameras on highways, and police responding to accidents with total surveying equipment or photogrammetric technology. PSB 481 allows the Commissioner of Transportation the flexibility to develop a program that works best for Connecticut.

I have attached proposed language for future drafts of PSB 481, as well as articles on the virtues of rapid response programs in other states.

We encourage the committee to support PSB 481.



Suggested Title:

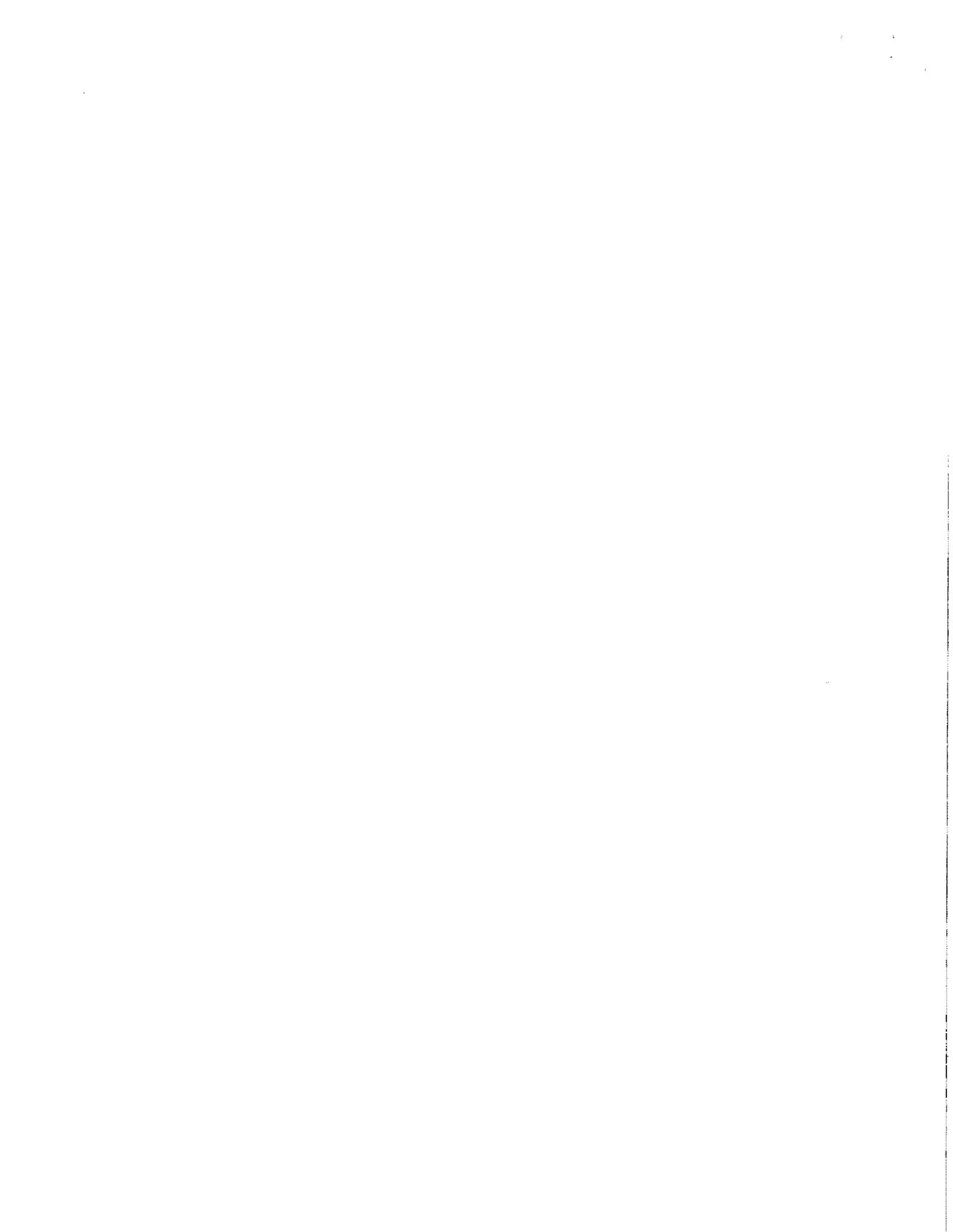
An Act Requiring the Department of Transportation to Establish An Enhanced Traffic Incident Management Plan

Section 1. (NEW) (Effective upon passage) (a) The Commissioner of Transportation, in consultation with the Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection, shall develop and, to the extent possible, implement an enhanced incident response plan. Such plan (1) shall be designed to efficiently alleviate traffic congestion caused by traffic accidents on Interstate Route 84, Interstate Route 91, and Interstate Route 95, and (2) may be based on incident response programs used in other states to reduce traffic accident-related congestion, provided such programs have demonstrated a positive benefit-to-cost ratio.

(b) Not later than January 1, 2016, the commissioners shall report, in accordance with section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to transportation on the progress in developing the enhanced incident response plan. Such report may also contain recommendations for proposed legislation required to fully implement the plan created pursuant to this section.

Statement of Purpose:

To develop and implement an enhanced incident response plan to more efficiently clear accidents on interstates 84, 91 and 95 in order to reduce traffic congestion.

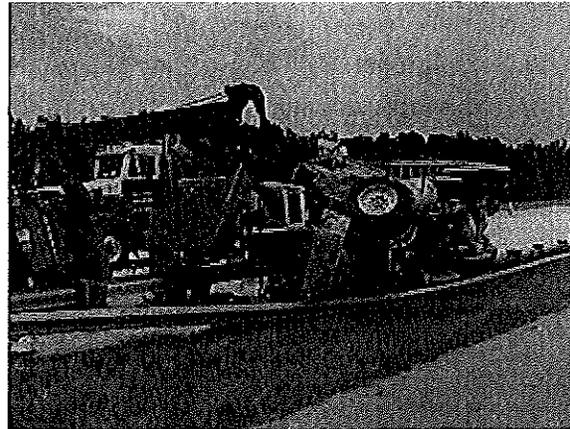




Rapid Incident Scene Clearance Program

In 2004, Florida's Turnpike Enterprise (FTE) implemented the nation's first Rapid Incident Scene Clearance (RISC) program in an effort to meet Florida's **Open Roads Policy** of clearing major incidents from roadways in 90 minutes or less.

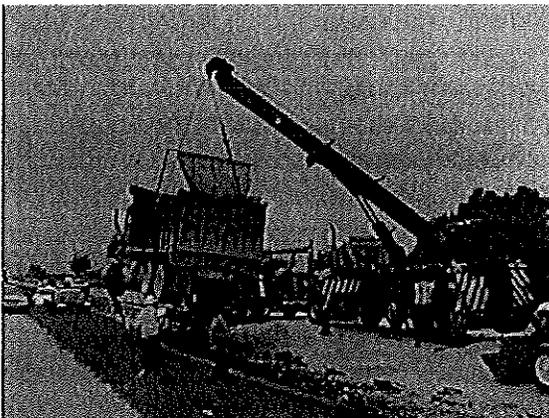
FTE's RISC program is incentive leveraged, providing qualified tow and clearance contractors the opportunity to earn bonuses for clearing major lane blockages within specific time limits.



The FTE has contracted with seven towing organizations that presently provide coverage on over 90 percent of the FTE's statewide roadway system. The contractors respond to major incidents involving tractor trailers or other large vehicles on Florida's Turnpike mainline, the Sawgrass Expressway (Toll 869), the Southern Connector Extension and the Seminole Expressway (Toll 417), the BeachLine Expressway West (Toll 528), and the Veterans Expressway/Suncoast Parkway (Toll 589).

RISC contractors are required to respond to major incidents with two certified 50-ton plus heavy duty wreckers, one of which must be a rotator, plus a support vehicle carrying clean-up and maintenance of traffic equipment. Contractors earn a \$2,500 bonus if they respond to the incident site within 45 minutes with one heavy duty wrecker, 60 minutes with all equipment, and clear the roadway to traffic within 90 minutes of the Florida Highway Patrol's (FHP) notice to proceed for clearance work. If the contractor fails to open the roadway within 150 minutes, they are penalized \$10 for each minute over.

The FTE's RISC program has been activated almost 500 times in the first 7 years of the program.



When the RISC program has been activated, the tow contractors have successfully re-opened the roadway to Turnpike customers within 90 minutes of FHP's notice to begin work more than 95 percent of the time. In the most recent two years, RISC tow contractors have averaged 48 minutes to respond to the incident scene with all forms of equipment and they have averaged 50 minutes to clear the roadway. It is important to note that these incidents primarily involved large size (DOT Class 8) trucks, sometimes overturned with debris/cargo spilled across the roadway.



“The RISC program is the single most important thing which can be done to prevent and relieve traffic backups due to crashes or other incidents,” said retired FHP Troop K Commander Chief Jim Lee. “While some delays are inevitable, having a mechanism in place to rapidly respond and remove obstacles to free traffic flow yields benefits to the public which is far beyond its cost. Major incidents are being resolved quicker and reducing delays on our roads.”

Prior to the RISC program, the FTE did not have a standardized procedure for responding quickly to major traffic incidents of this nature. Often incident responders were dispatched to an accident without the proper equipment to clear the roads in a timely manner, resulting in lengthy delays to Turnpike customers. As a result of the RISC program, major incidents are cleared more quickly, resulting in less delay to our customers.

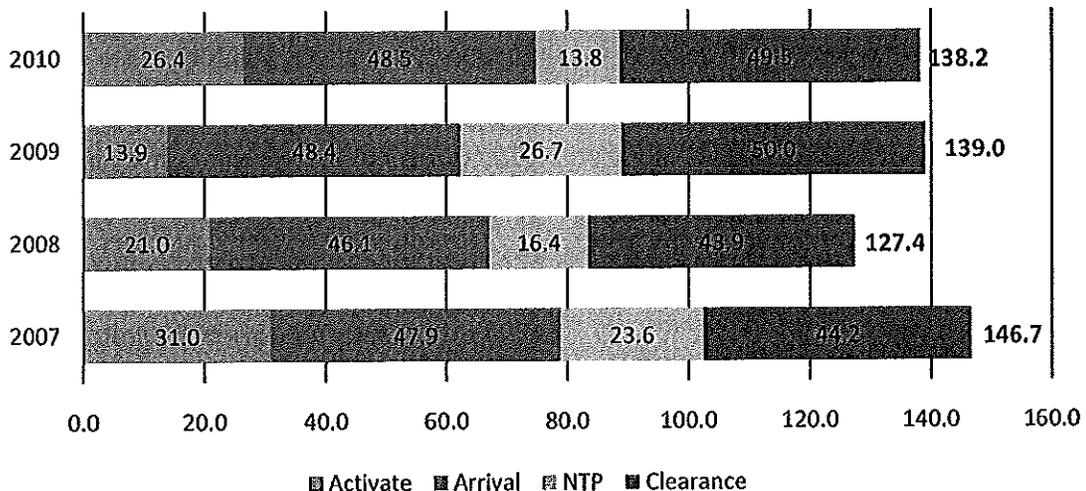
An integral part of the RISC program is the post-incident debriefing process. Following each RISC activation, the FTE reviews, debriefs, and prepares a detailed incident report. All of the parties involved in responding to the incident are brought together to openly discuss the incident details, what went well and where improvement could be gained. The incident report describes the incident, the actions of the involved parties, and the lessons learned from the incident.

“Through our debriefings, we continue to learn about the program’s strengths and weaknesses,” Lee said. “We will build upon our strengths and work to minimize our weaknesses. The Turnpike Enterprise is an innovator and we are constantly trying to improve our services to our customers.”



This material was provided by John Easterling, District Traffic Operations Engineer, Florida’s Turnpike Enterprise. For information, please contact Mr. Easterling at (954) 975-4855, or by email at John.Easterling@dot.state.fl.us

RISC Results CY 2007-2010 (Total Duration)





WSDOT's quarterly performance report shows Incident Response program making a difference

Date: Monday, June 04, 2012

Contact: Daniela Bremmer, WSDOT Director of Strategic Assessment, 360-705-7953 (Olympia)
Yvette Wixson, WSDOT Gray Notebook Production Manager, 360-705-7970 (Olympia)

WSDOT's quarterly performance report shows Incident Response program making a difference *Crews respond to 10,000+ incidents in three months*

OLYMPIA – Timely response to highway collisions by Washington State Department of Transportation crews, State Patrol and emergency personnel translated into an estimated \$10.7 million in savings for highway travelers so far this year. This is just one of the topics covered in the latest edition of the *Gray Notebook* – WSDOT's quarterly performance report.

In the first quarter of 2012 alone, the Incident Response program (pdf 5.2 mb) saved travelers and businesses money by reducing the time and gas they would have wasted stuck in traffic, while at the same time increasing highway safety. WSDOT's Incident Response Teams (IRT) cost an estimated \$1.2 million to operate per quarter, reporting a benefit-to-cost ratio of approximately 9-to-1 for the first quarter of the year.

"Already this year the benefits for drivers are excellent signs that the program is working well," said John Nisbet, WSDOT traffic operations director. "Winter had its challenges but really underscored the importance of our IRT crews. Incident response plays a vital role in ensuring our agency's commitment of safely moving people, goods and services is met daily."

IRT responded to 10,588 incidents between Jan. 1 and March 31 with an average clearing time of fewer than 14 minutes. Due to severe winter weather in early 2012, the number of over-90-minute incidents increased by 41 statewide compared to the previous quarter with a total of 153 incidents. The average clearing time on these incidents was 187 minutes.

WSDOT, the Washington State Patrol and other emergency responders collaborate to reduce the duration of traffic incidents. When collisions occur, IRTs are dispatched by WSP to assist with traffic control, scene management, and clearing vehicles and debris to reduce the risk of secondary collisions and incident-related congestion. Incidents may include disabled or abandoned vehicles, debris in the roadway or vehicle collisions.

WSDOT has 47 IRT positions and 62 dedicated IRT vehicles operating throughout the state, with 43 vehicles focused on keeping traffic flowing in the Puget Sound region.

In addition to IRT benefits, the *Gray Notebook* also features sections on the performance of construction projects funded by the Nickel and Transportation Policy Act gas tax increases. The report also highlights schedule and budget performance, and includes annual reports on highway system safety, state-owned rest areas, ferries vessel and terminal preservation, travel information, wetlands protection, water quality and freight mobility. This 45th edition of the performance report also includes worker safety and mega projects reports.

To find out more about WSDOT accountability and view the *Gray Notebook 45*, or the condensed "Lite" version, visit www.wsdot.wa.gov/Accountability/Graynotebook.

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