

Closing Address

Thank you for staying to the end of the 2014 ITS Maryland Annual Conference and Regional Signal Forum. This forum has presented two large trends in transportation. First, highway operations are becoming increasingly multimodal. Even at a freeway and arterial dominated agency like SHA, multimodal operations are impacting our decisions.

The second trend is Technology and Data. New technology and the data that it supplies are altering how we plan, design and operate our highways.

As arterials have become more urban in nature the importance of safely and efficiently mixing multiple transportation modes will continue to increase. The transition to multimodal signal operations has been underway for sometime at SHA and is continuing to evolve. SHA was early to integrate accessible and countdown pedestrian signals as design standards. More recently bicycle lanes have become a requirement in new designs. The Traffic Operations Division is currently testing bicycle detection and signal head equipment.

An emphasis on pedestrian operations has changed the way many SHA signals operate. Walk times have increased at many locations and pedestrian clearance times have been increased across the state. Cycle lengths have been reduced to decrease pedestrian delay. In some corridors progression has been adjusted to reduce vehicle speeds.

Transit Signal Priority will soon return to SHA. Only a few people may recall that SHA operated some TSP systems in the 1990s. SHA has worked with Montgomery County, WMATA, and MTA to develop guidelines for TSP. There are currently three large transit projects in various states of progress in Maryland. The Purple Line, Red Line and Corridor Cities Transitway will have enormous impacts on signal operations and maintenance along their routes.

We are currently testing the next generation of ATMS for SHA signals. The CENTRACS system will communicate with signals from a central server (instead of a field master).

Communications will be through cellular modems and some T1 lines. The improvements in communications will speed response times to malfunctions and allow us to gather data that was previously unavailable. The data that becomes available from thousands of vehicle and pedestrian detectors will have far-reaching impacts on planning, operations and reporting. This system will also allow us to begin implementing adaptive control on appropriate corridors. We anticipate the gradual transition to the CENTRACS will begin in 2015.

The Office of Chart is also making upgrades. A reconfiguration of the Statewide Operations Center is underway. Chart has added new field personnel to increase the area and hours of coverage. Planning is underway to install up to 100 new cameras at critical intersections across the state.

The trends presented in this forum present great opportunities and great challenges. Well balanced multimodal roadways can increase transportation opportunities for underserved populations, increase person through-put, and improve safety and quality of life. We are also constantly challenged to balance the needs of competing modes on increasingly congested roadways.

As technology has increased at a rapid pace we have gained access to vast quantities of data which were unavailable just a few years ago. This data is allowing us to make smarter, faster decisions and to better utilize our roadway systems. New technology is also creating increasingly complex maintenance and design tasks.

I hope that you will bring back some of the ideas, best practices, and new technologies that have been presented today and use them to help create a better transportation system tomorrow.

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