

Safety Performance Guidance: TPF-5(255)

Minutes of the Kickoff Conference Call

The call was held at 1:30 pm EST, July 23, 2012.

Esther Strawder (FHWA) started the meeting by asking the participants to introduce themselves. The participants included representatives from the pooled fund States, staff from the Federal Highway Administration, Dr. Geni Bahar (NAVIGATS), Lee Biernbaum (Volpe Center), and the contractor (UNC Highway Safety Research Center with MRIGlobal).

Raghavan Srinivasan (contractor) used powerpoint slides to provide a brief overview of the draft outline of the work plan that was submitted to FHWA on July 13, 2012. The first part of Srinivasan's presentation focused on the relationship of this project with the other two projects dealing with Safety Performance Functions (SPFs): one is the project being led by the Volpe Center dealing with the needs and feasibility of a SPF clearinghouse; the second is an NCHRP 20-07 project that will develop a guide for estimating calibration factors (this is being led by Dr. Geni Bahar). The second part of the presentation gave an overview of the 3 Tasks in the SPF guidance project. Finally, the presentation listed the scoping questions that were mentioned in the draft outline of the work plan. Most of the further discussion focused on those scoping questions, which are shown below along with a summary of the discussion:

Question: Who is the audience for each report, Tasks 2 and 3? Is it State DOT personnel, Statisticians, University Researchers, or all of the above?

Discussion: Many of the States felt that the States are the primary audience, including safety engineers, planners, district engineers, statisticians with the States, and MPO/RPO. Some States felt that the development of SPFs (discussed in the Task 3 report) would likely not be done by State DOT personnel, but by Universities or consultants, hence they would be the primary audience for the Task 3 report. Even if the States do not develop SPFs on their own, they will need to know what to ask the Universities and consultants. Hence, the Task 3 report needs to discuss the requirements and the framework regarding these SPFs.

Question: How standalone does each report need to be (Task 2 versus 3)? Is FHWA planning to publish the outcomes of Tasks 2 and 3, separately, or as one report?

Discussion: FHWA is planning to publish two separate reports. The two reports need to be complimentary. They should cite each other as appropriate.

Question: Should the reports discuss EB evaluations and the ways in which SPFs are developed and used in those evaluations? If so, in what manner should they be addressed?

Discussion: The discussion of the use of SPFs in EB is necessary and appropriate, as long as there is a discussion of other methods apart from EB.

Question: SPF model form and error terms: considering that the focus is on implementing the HSM, should the guidebook focus only on the traditional log-linear negative binomial SPFs?

Discussion: The primary focus should be on the traditional log-linear negative binomial SPFs. However, there should be discussion on other models forms and modeling issues, including the use of multivariate models, and logit/probit models that model proportion of crashes. There should also be some discussion of the pros and cons of different modeling approaches.

Question: FHWA has suggested that examples of Statements of Work that States have used for calibrating/developing SPFs could be used as Appendices. Will these be useful?

Discussion: The States agreed that these would be useful.

Esther indicated that FHWA has assembled working groups of selected States for the two tasks. The contractor needs to work with the members of this working group while developing the reports from the tasks.

Esther and Priscilla Tobias from Illinois DOT wanted to know if it will be worthwhile for the contractor to attend AASHTO's SCOHTS meeting in Baltimore at the end of August. Srinivasan indicated that he has a conflict and hence, will not be able to attend that meeting. Srinivasan will talk further with FHWA to see if it will be useful for others from the project team (e.g., Daniel Carter or Karin Bauer) to attend this meeting.

Lee Biernbaum gave an overview of Volpe's effort to assess the needs and requirements of a SPF clearinghouse. Lee indicated that Volpe's effort will involve conversations with different States to get an understanding of their needs regarding the development and application of SPFs. He also mentioned that the kickoff meeting for that project has been scheduled for 2:30 pm ET on Tuesday, July 24, 2012.

Ray Krammes indicated that Ezra Hauer has developed a workshop on "how to develop SPFs" that he would like to offer 2 to 3 times in the United States (earlier versions of the workshop have been offered in Canada). This workshop is expected to last 2 days. Ray wanted to know whether the pooled fund States would be interested in such a workshop. Almost all the States indicated that they would be interested, but were concerned about the fact that travel is almost impossible for most State DOT staff. Many of the States indicated that they would be very interested if such a course is offered through distance learning. There was further discussion about the pros and cons of offering this workshop during the TRB Annual Meeting versus offering it another time. Ray indicated that he will talk to Ezra further about the possibility of using distance learning for this workshop and the possibility of offering the workshop in two or three different locations in the country to facilitate attendance from State DOT staff.