Leon Walden retired from the Federal Highway Administration in 1992 after 31 years. He currently serves as Project Manager for Advantage I-75 at the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet. Prior to working for FHWA, Mr. Walden was employed by the Alabama Highway Department and the Etowah, County, AL, Engineering Department.

He earned a Civil Engineering degree from Auburn University and an MCE from North Carolina State University. He has received several awards from FHWA including the Region 4 Administrators Award for Excellence (1992); the Superior Achievement Award (1992); and the Kentucky Division Office Outstanding Performance Award (1985 and 1990).

CONGESTION MANAGEMENT AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

I am going to concentrate on one management system, Congestion Management, which is tied to other systems, particularly safety and public transportation. There are also air quality and goods movement benefits. My focus will be on the Lexington, Louisville, and Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky areas.

Lexington got the jump on congestion management long before ISTEA. Right now they have a central control facility that is perhaps the envy of cities that are much larger. I know their space is small and not fancy, however, you would be welcome to visit their facilities. If so, you could watch 16 monitors connected to 20 remote CCTV cameras and observe real-time traffic conditions at major points throughout the area. Also, you could get an up-to-the-minute check on expected weather and observe the status of traffic signals. During rush hours, you could observe traffic updates going out to three TV stations and 15 radio stations covering a 43-county area on 20-minute intervals.

You would not be their first visitors as FHWA has sent delegations from Washington and Atlanta. Other visitors have come from Boston, Louisville, Cincinnati, Chicago, and Fairfax County, Virginia. The largest group included about a dozen traffic operations and planning personnel from the Ohio Department of Transportation. Video tapes on control center operations have been sent to several other cities.

Lexington has much more than equipment and, in some people’s minds, gadgetry. Police, fire, EMS, haz-mat, traffic, planning, and public works personnel, to name a few, are working together to improve the...
handling of incidents. This cooperation is probably the strength of Lexington’s Congestion Management Program. The Division of Planning and Bob Kennedy deserve credit for an important role, although it may not be as glamorous as some of the Division of Traffic’s hardware.

A major cause of traffic congestion is “incidents”--wrecks, breakdowns, construction and maintenance activities, designs based on what are now out-dated standards, and just plain GAWKING. Every one here has his favorite tale of being caught in a traffic backup and the police taking their own sweet time in making their investigation and getting the vehicles out of the way. I won't repeat mine but I will just say that a Chattanooga policeman caused several thousands of dollars in road-user costs by taking his time in clearing an accident scene on I-75 on a Friday afternoon before Christmas. Damages to the two cars couldn't have exceeded $2,500 and both appeared driveable. The Transportation Cabinet is taking action to help speed up accident investigations by reducing the time required by police to document the accident scene. We have funded the purchase of five sets of electronic “Total Stations” Surveying Equipment, along with associated investigation software. Two sets have been provided to the Lexington Police Department and one set each to the state police posts at Dry Ridge, Richmond, and Elizabethtown. Officers have been trained in their use and are currently using the equipment. It is estimated (and we should have actual numbers soon) that half the number of officers can do twice as much work in half the time as required by current procedures.

The Transportation Cabinet currently has a consultant contract for the preliminary design of a Freeway Incident Management Program for I-65 from I-265 in Indiana to the Snyder Freeway in Kentucky, with emphasis also on the Watterson near the airport and the fairgrounds. The Program will be tied to an existing IVHS activity that the Transit Authority, TARC, has almost operational. FHWA has provided IVHS early deployment funds for this activity. We expect eventual expansion into a regional traffic management system.

The big ticket item in which the Transportation Cabinet is involved is the OKI Regional Traffic Management System for the Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky area. We are currently selecting a consultant to perform final design, construction inspection, and operate (yes, I said operate) this system for a two-year period. At that time, a decision will be made on who will operate the system beyond that period. The system will cover about 85 miles of interstate and expressways in the Cincinnati area. About one-fourth of the mileage is in Kentucky. (I have to be very careful about what I say as I am on the consultant selection committee and we, as yet, haven't completed the review process.) The Transportation Cabinet has the lead in procurement for three reasons: (1) our process, as slow as it may seem, requires about a fourth of the time that ODOT's requires; (2) our process is much more flexible; and (3) our ADVANTAGE I-75 experience. This system will include both congestion management and incident management. Features will likely include
changeable message signs, magnetic loop detectors, CCTV surveillance, cellular phones in vanpools and carpools for detection, media status reports, telephone and computer information call-ups, a control center, freeway patrols, and highway advisory radio. This list is not inclusive.

I mentioned earlier that the consultant will operate the system for a two-year period. We may be on the “bleeding edge” instead of on the cutting edge. This will not be the first private-sector operated system in the United States, but it is one of the first and, definitely, it is the first in Ohio and Kentucky. ODOT has stated that they plan to model systems for Cleveland and Columbus after this system. We also will model Louisville after this system. When I say model, I don't necessarily mean copy. You copy things that work and do differently those that don't work. We already have learned from this system even though we haven’t selected our consultant yet. Next year, hopefully, I or someone else can stand here and give you a detailed presentation on system design; in two years, on equipment installation; and in three years, on early operations.

The Transportation Cabinet is funding two excellent ridesharing programs in Lexington and Northern Kentucky, and it is about to fund a third in Louisville. The Lexington program is operated by LEXTRAN, the transit authority, and started as a multi-modal operation long before ISTEA. The vanpool portion has its capital costs funded by FTA (Federal Transit Authority) and FHWA; operating costs by user fees and FTA; administrative costs by FHWA; and matching funds from user fees. In addition to ridesharing matching, 17 vanpools are operated between Lexington and five central Kentucky cities and Louisville. The Northern Kentucky program is operated by OKI (the municipal planning organization for the Cincinnati area) with seven vans operating in the Kentucky portion of the area. Both Lexington and OKI have a vanpool to the Toyota plant with one-way distances exceeding 65 miles. Both programs should soon have three vans coming to Toyota.

The Transportation Cabinet will soon fund its first freeway service patrol vehicle. Samaritania, Inc., is about ready to sign a contract with OKI to operate a service patrol on I-75 from the Ohio state line to Donaldson Road, south of the I-275 interchange. This includes the Death Hill construction area. The 20-percent match to FHWA funds is being provided by HOOK-SUPERX, Inc., a private firm. A similar vehicle is currently operating on the Ohio side of the river.

I have discussed several congestion management activities in three urbanized areas and a small portion of the rural Interstate System just outside these areas. I did not mention any statewide activity although the “Total Station” accident investigation effort could easily expand to a statewide activity. I also haven’t mentioned anything for Ashland which is moderate non-attainment for ozone. We have a lot of work ahead of us for the next few months in developing a statewide congestion management plan.
The theme of this forum is “Transportation Partnerships for Quality.” I haven’t used the word partner anywhere in my presentation. If you will recall, however, there are a lot of partners in all the activities that I mentioned. With all our partners, we can operate on the cutting edge and, I feel rather confident, not on the bleeding edge.