ADVANTAGE I-75 PROJECT

Jerry Lentz

I'm here today to talk about Advantage I-75. It doesn't have anything to do with stress pavements, asphalt or those types of things, but it is something that will have a real impact on the transportation of tomorrow.

Advantage I-75 is an IVHS project—another "buzz word" everyone likes hearing about. It's a buzz word that started and probably gained national attention this year when President Bush adopted the recommendations of Secretary Skinner and issued the National Transportation Policy called "Moving America and Its New Directions, New Opportunities: Strategies for Action." This book talks about IVHS, which stands for Intelligent Vehicle Highway Systems. We're going to show you a film that deals with one example of an IVHS technology. It is a project that is in the formative stages, with Kentucky being the lead state and using a partnership of all six states along the I-75 corridor.

I mention that it's a new, hot "buzz word" nationally but it's an old concept, actually. In 1983, Oregon started working on what is now called an IVHS technology. They're continuing to work on utilizing some of the things you'll hear about in this presentation. As you look at the presentation, I'd like you to keep in mind one thing, and that is that we've talked a lot about the roads and how we can make the roads better as you drive to and from a conference like this or to and from work. You'll see the trucking industry, with trucks getting more and more sleek-looking, more and more modern looking; they are becoming state-of-the-art vehicles. But all the expensive state-of-the-art technology that is built into the engine and into the weight distribution of those trucks goes for naught when that truck is sitting still at a weigh station or when it's being pulled over time after time as it goes along the I-75 corridor. A project like Advantage I-75 is meant to help prevent delays like that. It's meant to try to help the trucking industry move along and prevent trucks from being stopped no more than they absolutely have to be, while still allowing a state agency the ability to inspect, to regulate, and to enforce safety regulations. So, keep that in mind as we look at this 10-minute presentation.

(IVHS VIDEO IS SHOWN)

Jerry Lentz, was appointed Deputy Secretary for the Transportation Cabinet on July 1, 1988. Prior to joining the Cabinet, he was employed by the accounting firm of Coopers & Lybrand, and was vice president and controller for M & D Mining, Ashland Materials, Inc, and Future Resources, Inc.

An experienced CPA, he earned a BS in commerce from the University of Louisville.
During that presentation, you heard the word “mobility” used quite often. Whether you’re an engineer, a consulting engineer, a contractor or whatever your role is in transportation you’re in the business of selling mobility. This is another way of doing that and I think it’s coming along fairly quickly.

Through this project, we’re in the business of selling mobility to the motor carrier industry and also to the average motorist who has to worry about trucks entering and leaving the interstates in order to move into or out of a weigh station. To the extent that we can increase mobility, we are increasing productivity. As we increase productivity, then certainly the cost of those goods that we buy every day (and depend on the motor carrier industry to get to us) is held down. Consequently, our costs are lowered.

So, for all these reasons, we believe that this advanced technology is critical to helping reduce not only the highway congestion, but also improving motorist safety. It is a project that we are beginning in an incremental fashion. We are taking small steps to make sure we are taking smart steps. We want the project to work. We know we’ll end up some day with all the technology in place and everything clicking. We have to grow to that point and we have to make sure that we do that without jeopardizing the goal.

That is another aspect of this project that we’re very proud of--how it’s been developing. The current status of the project is such that we have surveys out right now to the member states trying to address what their concerns are institutionally, what regulations they have to worry about, and what weight restrictions they have, etc. The various departments of transportation as well as the regulatory agencies are involved in our surveys. We are actively recruiting the carrier industry, who also believes in the I-75 concept, to join us, to work with us, and help mold the project so it can benefit them as well as the states.

The funding of the project is always a question. Right now we’ve got really rough numbers (and we’re working on them daily trying to refine them), but we think the initial phase of the project is going to take about $6 million. We anticipate that funding to be done jointly. We would expect the motor carrier industry as well as the state agencies to help and, also, the federal government has expressed a great deal of interest.

Operationally, we hope to have the beginning stages in operation by the summer of 1992. That’s a pretty aggressive schedule given that the western project has been worked on for 6 or 7 years. Again, that’s another reason why we believe Advantage I-75 is a more commonsense approach because we don’t want to go out and re-invent the wheel; we want to help implement the wheel that’s already made. What we’re stressing is off-the-shelf technology. We know there are transponders out there already that are working--rail carriers and motor carriers are using them. Readers are already out there. What we want to do is prove that they can be brought into a high-speed, mainline application showing that advanced technology can work and can be a savings for the states, as well as the motor carrier industry.

We don’t know yet what it’s going to take in its total scope to prove that this advanced technology really does work. We know that it will and we know that it will some day in the future. Our task is to be ready for it.
and to help lead that technology towards its ultimate goal. We think this is one small step.

As I said, we’re very excited about the possibilities and we encourage any of you who can be involved, or who have motor carrier friends who travel the I-75 corridor, to talk to them about it and have them contact me, Jerry Pigman, or Jack Deacon with questions or availability to help. We know this project will work, as I’ve said many times today and will continue to say because I believe in it. We have people in the Transportation Cabinet who are spending a lot of time making sure it works.