

Project title

Improving Freight Crash Incident Management

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Project description

Excessive delay, cost, and adverse public safety result from major incidents that occur along critical segments of the Interstate system. There is a high likelihood these types of incidents involve a commercial vehicle. Several recent crashes that have occurred in the Baton Rouge, Louisiana area have brought attention to the significant cost to the public, not only in terms of delay and safety, but in economic impact and personal frustration. Given a crash that blocks critical travel lanes or an entire direction for multiple hours, the cost could be enormous. Additionally, the vehicles involved in these crashes were often not transporting hazardous materials or no significant injuries were incurred, raising the question whether the degree of delay incurred was justified.

Using Louisiana as the case study, the main objective of this research is to determine the most effective way for a state to mitigate such major incidents that occur on the Interstate, thus minimizing their impact on the public. Applying a lane rental fee to the owner of the affected freight, similar to the way lane rental charges are levied against a road contractor, is one possibility. Properly equipping state Departments of Transportation and/or the State Police with appropriate resources and hold harmless legislation necessary to execute quick clearance is another possibility. Developing a solution, in terms of benefit/cost to the state, including a framework for implementation is the focus of this research.

The project will be executed as follows: (1) Identify and review freight incident management studies conducted elsewhere and survey other state Departments of Transportation to establish the state of the practice; (2) Identify Louisiana laws and processes for managing freight incidents; (3) Establish a three year inventory of Louisiana's freight incidents on the Interstate system; (4) Identify laws/processes needed to support quick clearance; (5) Evaluate laws/processes for support of quick clearance; (6) Identify methodologies to calculate the cost of delay; (7) Develop benefit cost analysis for laws/processes; and (8) Recommended laws/processes for support of quick clearance.

The outcome of this research will result in recommendations on laws and processes to support quick clearance of major freight crash incidents. These recommendations could assist policymakers and agencies in their efforts to mitigate the impacts of these events on the motoring public.