

Session Eight

Overcoming Institutional Barriers to ITMS

W. Scott Wainwright, Montgomery County, Maryland — presiding

Coordination of Governments

*Leslie N. Jacobson
Washington State
Department of Transportation*

Mr. Jacobson presented an overview of the approaches used in the Seattle area to encourage interjurisdictional cooperation on ITMS. Many of his comments focused on the FAME project. Mr. Jacobson highlighted the following points concerning the institutional issues and approaches in the Seattle area.

- The scale and scope of jurisdictions in the Seattle area is not of the same magnitude as in Southern California or many other parts of the country. Thus, with fewer agencies and jurisdictions, the institutional issues associated with ITMS may be more manageable. However, there are still institutional barriers and trust issues between agencies that must be overcome.
- Instilling ownership and building consensus through the different activities is a major focus of the approach taken in the Seattle area. Jurisdictional cooperation needs to be addressed on both the political and technical level. Often the political level may be the more difficult of the two. The technical and institutional issues include both the equipment and technology aspects of the project and the people responsible for planning, designing, and operating the systems.
- Many of the institutional issues are associated with making changes in the traditional roles and responsibilities of the different groups or implementing new approaches. The Seattle approach started with the attempt to understand the needs of the agencies involved and to show that the different objectives of these agencies can be accommodated within an integrated system.
- The problems associated with an integrated approach were identified and different ways of overcoming them were discussed. All groups—traffic engineering agencies, transit agencies, planning agencies, and other organizations—were involved in the process.
- The first step was to meet with staff from all these agencies and discuss their needs and concerns. This started the process of building a consensus for an integrated traffic management system. Six options for integration were developed and presented as part of a research project. The Seattle area was divided into three subareas and the options were presented and discussed in each. The level of interest differed among the areas, and the area expressing the most interest became the focus for the next steps.
- The approach of taking small, incremental steps to develop and implement the integrated system was followed. This included starting with a demonstration project, which focused on the I-5 corridor to the north of downtown Seattle.
- It is important to realize that not all agencies and organizations have to agree on all of the system objectives. Integrated systems can be developed to meet the different needs and objectives of the different agencies. However, it is important that a consensus exists on the general approach and the general objectives of the system.
- Funding is also important. All groups must feel that they are providing an equal and equitable amount of funding. Further, they must feel the benefits they receive are worth their commitment of funds.