

Proposal to Expand Major Incident Tow Program (MIT) Coverage Executive Summary

The legislature provided \$346,000 to fund a two year pilot program to implement an incentive program to expedite the clearance of heavy-truck collisions. Based upon a similar program in Florida, the original proposal limited the scope of the program to King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties.

The program is designed to target the most challenging heavy-truck collisions, and it is funded for approximately 40 activations a year. Based upon historical data, it was anticipated that about 20 activations a year would occur in King County, with another 10 activations each in Pierce and Snohomish Counties.

During the first 10 months of the program, there have been 11 activations or an average of 1.1 activations per month. This is below the projected activation level of 3.3 activations per month, or 40 per year. However, 81 percent of activations have met the 90 minute clearance requirement, so we believe the program is working as intended.

There are two primary reasons for the lower than anticipated utilization.

1. We are experiencing a learning curve. We have had 11 activations in the first 10 months of the program. Florida experienced a similar slow start with 19 activations in their first year of the program.
2. Troopers are not experts in heavy truck recovery. Activating MIT requires a judgment call as to whether or not this collision could be cleared in a timely manner with a standard class C tow. If unsure, they err on the side of not activating the program.

In the past two years, WSP has been providing training in heavy recovery to their Tow Truck Troopers/Inspectors, and they have implemented the policy of requiring them to respond heavy truck involved collisions. These efforts should increase the number of activations and ensure that the program is activated only when needed.

In the meantime, this presents an opportunity to expand the coverage area of this program at no additional cost. We propose to extend the coverage area from King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties to the entire length of I-5, and to I-90 in Spokane County. This would include the major truck routes to the US-Canada border crossing points and other key state routes in Whatcom, Skagit, Thurston, Lewis, Cowlitz, Clark, and Spokane Counties. State patrol commanders would be authorized to activate the program for heavy-truck collisions on routes adjacent to I-5 when necessary to reduce incident related congestion. This expanded MIT program coverage can be implemented on July 1, 2008 without an increase in funding.

The MIT program was funded as a two year pilot program in the 07-07 biennium. The 81 percent success rate is meeting expectations and WSDOT plans to request continued funding 09-11 biennial budget.