



**NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION OF MPOs
MODELING WORKING GROUP
September 24, 2021**

**Conference Call
9:30 AM – 10:30 AM**

MEETING NOTES

Participating

- SMTC, Jason Deshaies (Chair)
- CDTC, Chris Bauer (Co-chair)
- AVAIL, Erika Corsi
- AVAIL, Eric Krans
- AVAIL, Catherine Lawson
- AVAIL, Adam Tobey
- BMTS, Leigh McCullen
- BMTS, Ashley Seyfreid
- CDTC, Andrew Tracy
- CS, Rich Denbow
- DCTC, Emily Dozier
- FHWA, Sarah Sun
- GBNRTC, Matt Grabau
- NYMTC, Michael Chiume
- NYSDOT, Richard Batchelder
- NYSDOT, Jim Davis
- NYSDOT, Nathen Harp
- NYSDOT, Alan Warde
- OCTC, Zach Coleman
- SMTC, Mike Alexander
- UCTC, David Staas

1. Update on NPMRDS Software Development

The AVAIL team discussed recent updates to the NPMRDS tool.

- In the Macro tool, you can now see a graph for each network level showing the trend of the currently displayed performance measure from 2016 to 2021. This adds context to the map data and allows users to explore performance across time to understand variations.
- This currently only works for the TMC network. There are a few challenges to expanding it to the RIS and OSM networks that the team is working on.
- The ability to compare the performance measures across various networks is a valuable internal tool for conflation QA, and also for understanding how the

designation of link starts and ends and link length impacts the outcome of performance measures.

- The team previewed the Total Excessive Delay measure and compared current status with previous years.
- The team discussed the Incidents tool. Incidents are currently mapped to the TMC network. AVAIL discussed the available incident information and showed a comparison of incidents in 2019 and 2020.
 - You can view a map of incidents for a selected year and show a summary of an incident by category, with number and total delay.
 - You can filter categories, and hover over an incident for more information.
 - AVAIL showed an example from CDTC; vehicle hours of delay in 2020 (during Covid) for the accidents category was about 500,000. In pre-Covid years it was closer to two million.
- The tool includes incidents from 2016 to 2020 for the whole state. AVAIL will pull in 2021 Transcom data when it is available.
- Alan added a caveat that the incident data reported through Transcom is in the research phase. The data are not necessarily comprehensive and are taken from incident forms. Some incidents may not be in the system. There is more work to be done to validate the incident data.
 - Eric added that the Working Group should discuss the methodology at a future meeting. AVAIL did a lot of research into methodologies before selecting a method for the tool. He does not recommend using the incident data in public facing communications at this time.
- Eric discussed isochrone maps and showed examples. This is a new tool currently in development.
 - AVAIL looked at InfoUSA data to determine jobs within 15 minutes. The tool can also be used to look at other measures (hospitals, supermarkets, demographics, modal differences, etc.).
 - Some maps are based on actual travel times, others on posted speed limits.
 - Eric asked if others are using isochrone maps. Alan said NYSDOT is using them for some purposes, for example, looking at EV charger availability within particular service areas.
 - Alan suggested future research could look at the use of isochrone maps for different modes of travel.
- Next steps for the AVAIL team:
 - Move isochrone mapping into the Macro tool.
 - Continue to work on bottleneck grouping.
 - Continue to update documentation. For example, how the tool is being used for the Congestion Management Plan.
 - AVAIL will also work on produce public facing pages for specific topics with limited functionality, such as transit and bottlenecks.
 - AVAIL is interested in the types of information MPOs use during public meetings. This will help with creating infographics.

2. Travel Impacts Related to the Pandemic

The Working Group discussed activities and approaches to assessing travel impacts during the pandemic and related issues. Rich provided questions to the Working Group prior to the

meeting to guide the discussion: what work has your organization done in this area, have you delayed data collection during the pandemic, are you adjusting travel forecasts, and what research topics would you suggest to address these planning issues.

CDTC: Andrew said CDTC provides updates on the impact of Covid-19 on transportation in the region on a regular basis. They monitor data from a range of available sources that includes ridership data from the local transit provider, parking utilization data, traffic volumes on NYSDOT permanent count stations, Google mobility reports, Apple, and others. On some roadways in the region traffic seems to have returned to normal but on others it is still below pre-pandemic levels. He developed a set of slides and charts and provides updates to various committees frequently. The data has been pretty steady in recent months. (See attached CDTC slides. Note that many of the slides are hidden – some of the hidden slides have older data or were not relevant for the meeting at which they were presented. Slides 3 through 13 have national data from the TRB annual meeting.)

CDTC postponed some studies and data collection. For example, they were planning to undertake a regional signal timing study but have put the data collection phase on hold for now. Tentatively this will resume in 2022. One concern is that if signals are retimed to next year's conditions they may need to be retimed later as travel patterns shift. CDTC has also put a hold on studies that require traffic counts. Some of these will begin soon, which will allow comparison with pre-pandemic data. Next year they intend to do a refresh of CMP data.

Generally, there is uncertainty about whether the CDTC region has fallen into a long-term equilibrium or if further changes in travel patterns will take place. For research topics, Andrew suggested looking at whether pre-Covid planning assumptions are still valid for transportation planning (e.g., can peak hour travel still be used for AADT travel?).

DCTC: Emily Dozier said they have been looking at data for a local project. Future conditions are uncertain so they are monitoring travel data regularly, for example commuting travel and peak hours, and may make slight adjustments. They have traffic count data mapped but have not done a thorough analysis of it. She added that transit ridership (Dutchess County Public Transit) is still down about 50% vs pre-Covid.

Emily provided the following information from a current study underway in her region:

- Traffic volume data collected along the Arterials and Route 9 and corroborated by data provided by the New York State Bridge Authority allowed us to compare 2019 to 2020 traffic volumes. The data show an initial drop in March/April 2020 (at the beginning of the pandemic) of approximately 40%, which then recovered to an approximate 15 to 20% decrease throughout the summer and fall months. More recently, traffic volumes appear to be returning closer to pre-pandemic level.
- Beyond the immediate and ongoing impacts due to the Covid-19 pandemic, lasting impacts to mobility trends are also anticipated, although the extent of those changes are less clear. Information presented by the Transportation Research Board indicate that in general, commuting trips as well as some retail and medical trips may decrease due to a rise in teleworking, telemedicine, and e-commerce. However,

while many of these trips may be eliminated, some may be offset by an increase in delivery trips.

- Based upon the above analysis of future travel trends, it is feasible that future traffic volumes may be largely similar to the 2019 (pre-Covid) Existing Traffic Volumes. As such, the Concepts were reassessed using the existing (pre-Covid) volumes as being representative of future conditions.

SMTC: Jason said they are also thinking about how commuting patterns have shifted and may shift going forward. Many workers have flexibility regarding when they go to the office. It is uncertain how this will play out over time, and if we will be able to identify patterns in future traffic count data. SMTC hasn't done a lot of analysis yet of travel behavior changes. He is also curious about travel on Interstates. They have some StreetLight data related to a specific project but it is not reflective of the entire region. Staff have looked at and are aware of recent national data and trends. For example, fatalities have increased even while volumes have decreased.

Mike Alexander shared information about national trends. Freight home deliveries have increased, which is a big factor in the freight world and may have long term impacts on locating distribution centers. For transit ridership, anecdotally there are local driver shortages, which is leading to cutbacks in service. SMTC is very interested in tools that will help planners better understand these issues.

Eric added that it would be interesting to look in free flow speeds across the network using the AVAIL tool. He will look into this.

BMTS: Ashley discussed an info-graphic handout she developed in April to present to their planning & policy committees regarding Covid-19 impacts on mobility in Broome & Tioga counties. This was done using the Google Trend tool. (See attached info-graphic.)

GTC: Chris said GTC had planned to update its base model from the current 2015 base year to a 2020 base year, but a true 2020 calibration wouldn't make sense. They have been considering utilizing 2019 traffic counts for the calibration, and perhaps 5-year ACS data (2016-2020) for households by size and number of vehicles when it becomes available. They would then monitor future Census releases and check them against their assumptions. They have also been considering a new Household Travel Survey, however they do not intend to collect this information while pandemic-related travel shifts are still playing out.

3. Next Meeting

The next MWG meeting will take place on October 29, 2021.