RESEARCH PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PROJECT NUMBER:
01456

PROJECT TITLE:
I-20/59 Downtown Public Relations Program

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:
Daniel S. Turner
Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering
The University of Alabama
Box 870205
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0205
(205) 348-9925
dturner@coe.eng.ua.edu

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:
The University Transportation Center for Alabama (UTCA) of the University of Alabama (UA) will develop a citizen awareness program for the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) that focuses on traffic safety during the bridge repair/modification project on Interstate highway 20/59 in Jefferson County, Alabama in the summer and fall of 2001.

PROJECT ABSTRACT:
The bridges in the Interstate highway system that serves downtown Birmingham have not had a serious rehabilitation project in the past two decades, and such work is needed to preserve their service lives. However, I-20/59 carries extremely high traffic volumes and any interruption of traffic flow can have serious congestion consequences. An additional complication is that there is not an apparent detour route that can accept these high volumes of traffic. ALDOT intends to partially offset these difficulties by performing the rehabilitation work at night, in the periods when traffic volumes are at their lowest levels.

Disruption of traffic flow can be partially offset by a public relations program that alerts motorists to the project, that explains the extent and timing of rehabilitation operations, and that offers alternative times or routes for travel. Those activities will be conducted during the proposed project.

PROJECT TASK DESCRIPTIONS:
1. Develop information and messages targeted at the specified bridge construction work zones.
2. Use multiple media modes, including print and radio news releases, television coverage, and mobile changeable-message signs to distribute the messages.
3. Focus on Interstate traffic moving through Jefferson County, but notify the traveling public prior to arrival in Jefferson Country – Tuscaloosa, Clanton, Pell City, Ashville and Cullman will be used for “early warning” of motorists.
4. Develop a plan to use ALDOT’s portable changeable-message signs as part of the project.
5. Prepare news feature articles to address key topics and key time frames during the refurbishment project.
6. Hold meetings with the leadership of major employers located in the downtown area to help them prepare their employees for the changes in traffic patterns and congestion levels.

MILESTONES AND DATES:
The campaign will take place from June 1 through September 15, with the possibility of an extension until November 15, 2001. All tasks will be conducted concurrently.

TOTAL BUDGET:
One-year project; Alabama Department of Transportation $52,924; total budget $52,924.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT:
No university students will be employed by this project.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER RESEARCH PROJECTS:
This project is not directly related to any other UTCA projects.

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER ACTIVITIES:
There will be no technology transfer activities associated with this project.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT:
This project has the potential to foster public understanding of the need for the project and the duration of the project, to reduce delay and congestion, and to improve safety. All of these effects will be indirect, but the aggregate effects will be noticed through the project period.

TRB KEYWORDS:
Construction work zone, public information program, construction alert program