SPR RESEARCH PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PROJECT NUMBER
06411

PROJECT TITLE
Feasibility Pilot Car Program

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PROJECT OBJECTIVE:
This project is a feasibility/implementation study to develop an Alabama-specific escort car training program to be administered by the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT). The project will also address the feasibility of expanding the program to facilitate reciprocity with neighboring states. In addition to developing a pilot car program for Alabama, the project will facilitate an update of the Overweight & Overdimensional Permits Office Rules & Regulations, § 32-9-29, Code of Alabama (1975).

PROJECT ABSTRACT:
The movement of goods and freight across roadways and highways is an essential component of the national, state and local economies. In many cases, freight exceeds the physical dimensions associated with standard truck types and is thus designated “oversize” or “overweight.” In such cases, a pilot car (or law enforcement officer) is required to serve as an escort to ensure that the freight does not unduly or unsafely interfere with normal traffic operations. In 2004, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in conjunction with the Special Carriers and Rigging Association (SC&RA), developed and published several documents related to the operation of pilot car programs. These national materials will serve as the basis of the Alabama program. It will be necessary, however, to inventory and review relevant ALDOT and Alabama Department of Public Safety (DPS) guidance, rules and regulations, and to incorporate the relevant Alabama-
specific information into new training materials that will be reviewed and accepted by ALDOT and any other appropriate agencies.

TASK DESCRIPTIONS:
The proposed project will be accomplished via the following tasks:
Task 1 – Assemble and review all national level material developed by the FHWA and SC&RA.
Task 2 – Identify and review relevant ALDOT and DPS guidance, rules and regulations.
Task 3 – Conduct an inventory of pilot car operators based in Alabama and those based elsewhere and regularly operating in the State.
Task 4 – Conduct a cursory review of pilot car training and certification materials to identify any unique or potentially beneficial provision worth consideration in Alabama.
Task 5 – Develop draft training materials (handbook, lectures, tests, etc.) and submit to ALDOT for review and approval.
Task 6 – Conduct a test offering of the program and collect feedback from participants.
Task 7 – Assess whether to outside or in-State staff for a "train-the-trainer" phase.
Task 8 – Review pilot car training and certification materials from neighboring states for possible reciprocity.
Task 9 – Modify Alabama materials to include relevant information from neighboring states.
Task 10 – Establish a steering committee for Pilot Car Certification Reciprocity in the Southeast.
Task 11 – Develop an implementation plan and budget.
Task 12 – Produce a final report that documents the review and synthesis of relevant materials from other states, the reciprocity steering committee input, and a plan (including estimated annual budget) to continue the program in future years.
Task 13 – Conduct a national review of rules and regulations governing the transport of overweight and oversized freight. The results will be summarized in a technical memorandum to ALDOT. A meeting will be held between the research team, ALDOT and any other parties they deem appropriate (DPS, political officials, etc.) to review the technical memorandum and identify changes to the current Overweight & Overdimensional Permits Office Rules & Regulations.
Task 14 – Work with ALDOT to promote the project throughout the country via presentations at meetings and conferences as well as submission to trade and technical periodicals.

MILESTONES:
It is intended that the project will begin in October 2006 and run through September 2007.

- Task 1: October 2006 – December 2006
- Task 2: October 2006 – December 2006
- Task 3: October 2006 – December 2006
- Task 7: April 2007 – October 2007
- Task 11: June 2007 – September 2007
- Task 12: July 2007 – September 2007
Task 14: March 2007 – September 2007

BUDGET: This is a one-year project that will encumber a total of $108,034 in SPR funds.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT:
A graduate student will assist in the literature review and survey development.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER RESEARCH PROJECTS: The project is not related to any current UTCA projects.

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER:
This project will develop training materials for implementation. The team will also seek appropriate presentations and publications from the work performed herein.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT:
Successful completion of the proposed project will result in better qualified and, therefore, safer pilot car operations on Alabama’s roadways and highways. The education and certification of the pilot car drivers will directly improve the safety of oversize/overweight truck operations. The project will at least establish a working relationship among agencies in Alabama and neighboring states to better coordination of oversize/overweight operations in the southeast. If negotiations are successful, the project may well lay the foundation for a regional pilot car certification program. The project will establish Alabama a strong program for the State and showcase ALDOT’s efforts and commitment as a national leader in promoting truck safety. In addition, the project will result in an updated set of *Overweight & Overdimensional Permits Office Rules & Regulations* consistent with the needs of that State of Alabama and the apprised of the practice of governing such transport in other states.