What are the objectives of the Handbook?

- Clarify the need and benefits for an operations manual.
- Provide a resource for those developing, maintaining, and using an operations manual.

Six step summary of process to develop a TMC operations manual

1. Select a TMC operations manual leader.
2. Educate the leader.
3. Form the TMC manual team that will write the operations manual.
4. Educate the team.
5. Identify manual components.
6. Write the TMC operations manual throughout the life cycle of the system.

Handbook for Developing a Transportation Management Center Operations Manual

Operations affect outcomes. With more effective operations, there is more effective system performance. An operations manual is a key tool in leveraging effective operations.

You wouldn’t buy a high performance car or a stereo system without a manual. So why operate a sophisticated transportation management system (TMS) without an up-to-date operations manual? But since every transportation management system is unique and infrastructure changes are a routine occurrence, the challenge of developing an up-to-date manual can be imposing.

Fortunately a number of TMS agencies banded together and wrote a handbook for developing a transportation management center (TMC) operations manual. Based on this extensive practitioner knowledge base the document has become a resource suggesting best practices.

How Does the Handbook Work?

The Handbook leverages existing products that have been developed for TMCs. These resources include a TMC Business Planning and Plans Handbook and a guide for Developing and Using Concept of Operations in Transportation Management Systems. The Handbook stresses key strategies such as using a team approach, educating the TMC manual team, developing a TMC manual throughout the system life cycle, and documenting the transportation management center’s concept of operations prior to writing the TMC manual.

The Handbook then guides a user in the development of a TMC operations manual using a sample outline linked to key resources. The Handbook leverages existing products that have been developed for TMCs including those sponsored by the TMC Pooled-Fund Study Team.
Key Aspects of the Handbook

A successful operations manual must satisfy a number of needs. In some cases the requirement is for quick response to pressing activities. Therefore, it is important to include sections that contain emergency contact numbers and control room emergency procedures.

In other cases the need is to communicate policies and concepts of operations to the operations staff. These topics provide the framework for effective management of the system and identify the roles of inter-agency cooperation.

Other sections of the manual should describe the physical characteristics of the system and field infrastructure so that TMC operators and field staff are able to work cooperatively to repair system outages.

Another portion should identify daily operational practices so that staffing can be planned, citizen service requests can be handled, and building security can be maintained.

Other sections should describe procedures for operating the systems and equipment to effectively respond to incidents and congestion. Details should be provided for displaying messages on dynamic message signs, exchanging data with information service providers, posting information to the Internet and much more.

Many partners in the Pooled-Fund network contributed their experience to direct the development of this Handbook. Their best practices can be guideposts for future TMC manuals.

Additional Resources


The Pooled Fund Study web site also contains TMC manuals that have been contributed by a number of public agencies including: Arizona, Tennessee, Texas and Washington State.

For More Information

Visit the TMC Pooled-Fund Study website at http://tmcpfs.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/

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