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.

The purpose of a TMC operations manual is to formalize and document the policies, plans, procedures, and other support activities that are performed to achieve a TMC’s mission, goals, and objectives.

For More Information
Visit the TMC Pooled-Fund Study website at http://tmcpf.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/
Call the FHWA Help Line toll-free (866) 367-7487
Why an 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.

Who’s the Audience?

The audience for this Handbook includes the following types of agencies and personnel.

- Traffic management and transit management centers concerned with traffic signal control systems, freeway management systems, or multi-modal systems.
- Operators and dispatchers who work in a TMC.
- Managers and technical staff who interface with a TMC and need to know its scope, resources, and procedures.

Key Aspects of a TMC Manual

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 interagency cooperation.

Other sections of the manual 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 can identify daily operational practices so that staffing can be planned, citizen service requests can be handled, and building security can be maintained.

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

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.

Case Studies and References

The Handbook provides two case studies from real-world transportation management centers and also supplies links to other references.

How Do I Get the Handbook?

The Handbook is available at the TMC Pooled-Fund Study website at http://tmcpfs.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/. Other resources include a PowerPoint presentation of key Handbook topics, a fact sheet, and a primer describing the Handbook.