

# Research Spotlight

## Project Information

**REPORT NAME:** Further Assessments of Safe, Quick Clearance Strategies—Phase II

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**COST SHARING:** 20% MDOT, 80% FHWA through the SPR, Part II, Program

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## Michigan's Traffic Incident Management Effort: Progress and future vision

Michigan's Traffic Incident Management (TIM) Action Team, a part of Michigan's Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP), established statewide goals in 2012 that address TIM education and training, and public awareness of safety laws concerning driver responsibilities in traffic incidents. In this research project, researchers assessed progress made toward reaching Michigan's Traffic Incident Management Effort (Mi-TIME) goals and assisted in clarifying needed investments and a future vision for the program.

### Problem

MDOT wanted to evaluate statewide progress toward the TIM Action Team's goals since 2012. Those goals included:

- Education for all who work on or near the roadway and increased compliance with wearing high-visibility apparel, which is legally required.
- Increased public awareness of the requirement that drivers move a crashed vehicle off the roadway if it is drivable (the "Steer It, Clear It" law).
- Implementation of programs to empower responders to deliver training in their communities.
- Training for the completion of secondary crash fields in the police crash form.

In addition, MDOT wanted to learn about responders' attitudes toward wearing



The goals of Mi-TIME are to connect first responders to improve communication, training and other aspects of response to highway incidents across the state.

high-visibility apparel, responders' training progress, and the general public's awareness of the "Steer It, Clear It" law – issues that are not easily measured.

Investigators were asked to develop focused strategies to promote the safety laws, as well as recommendations for effective program investment.

*“This project shows how far Mi-TIME has come in addressing safety on Michigan roadways for traffic incident responders and all drivers, plus what must be done to support and empower emergency response teams statewide.”*

**Angie Kremer, P.E.**

Project Manager

## Research

To address MDOT’s needs, researchers first performed an extensive literature search, examining the TIM structure and protocols of other agencies for insights on effective ways to address responsibilities and challenges.

Next, they assessed the current TIM organization and efforts in Michigan. To gather information for this phase of the project, researchers set up eight facilitated regional TIM workshops for practitioners from the diverse disciplines that respond to traffic incidents. Three-hour workshops were conducted between Sept. 12 and Oct. 24, 2016, in Marquette, St. Ignace, Gaylord, Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, Saginaw, Lansing, and Detroit.

Researchers also conducted an executive visioning session for representatives of the statewide agencies and other partners from the diverse TIM groups to develop a focus for future efforts in Michigan.

A survey of 1,200 Michigan motorists examined drivers’ awareness of “Steer It, Clear It” and other laws. Researchers developed strategies to encourage TIM responders to wear high-visibility apparel and to communicate the “Steer It, Clear It” law to motorists.

Finally, researchers developed an investment plan that would support and empower Mi-TIME in the future.

## Results

The literature review of relevant research identified reports, strategic plans, communication materials and publications from other states and organizations that could be helpful in advancing Mi-TIME goals. These documents assisted researchers as they addressed the objectives of the project.

Participants in the eight regional workshops considered the strengths of their TIM teams, opportunities for improvement and needs in each region. For example, the St. Ignace workshop participants proposed including TIM topics in firefighting/ EMT classes, while Gaylord participants discussed ways to improve dispatch communications. Partnerships among first responders, education and training, and outreach to the public were highlighted as crucial needs, as well as funding for equipment and ongoing support to build on progress to date. The workshops helped emergency responders have a voice in the future of TIM.

At the executive workshop, participants learned that overall use of high-visibility apparel among practitioners had increased to 62.6 percent since 2012. Transportation personnel usage, however, climbed to 96.8 percent. Training program goals were reached: Michigan has 159 trainers and, as of October 2016, 4,518 first responders had been trained. The survey of 1,200 Michigan motorists revealed that while 90.1 percent of drivers would steer their vehicle out of the roadway after a crash, only 47 percent were aware it was the law. Researchers developed toolkits of multi-media materials to address these issues: one for TIM responders that promotes wearing high-visibility apparel, and another for motorists that communicates the “Steer It, Clear It” law.

Workshop participants created a vision for the future that acknowledged many TIM responders’ needs, including formalization of TIM teams, greater interagency communication, leveraging of technology, continued education and training, and

program funding that makes realistic delivery of services possible.

With these future goals in mind, researchers developed an investment plan that addresses the needs and goals of Mi-TIME, including more full-time personnel, regional funding, training, outreach and equipment.

## Value

This project shows the significant progress that Mi-TIME has made reaching and often exceeding its 2012 SHSP goals. Further, the project lays out what MDOT and other agencies can do to more effectively integrate the traffic incident efforts of all categories of practitioners, including towing and recovery, fire and rescue, law enforcement, emergency medical services, transportation, public works and public safety communications.

## Research Administration

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**The final report is available online at**

[www.michigan.gov/documents/mdot/SPR-1655\\_-\\_Further\\_Assessments\\_of\\_Safe\\_Quick\\_Clearance\\_Strategies\\_626862\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdot/SPR-1655_-_Further_Assessments_of_Safe_Quick_Clearance_Strategies_626862_7.pdf)

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