

# MAKING WORK ZONES WORK BETTER

Facts & Statistics

Summer 2004

## Facts & Statistics

- **Work zone activity is significant** – About 20 percent of the National Highway System (NHS) is under construction during the peak summer road work season. (*A Snapshot of Work Zone Activity Reported on State Road Closure and Construction Websites, Summer 2002- draft, December 2002, by Karl Wunderlich and Dawn Hardesty, Mitretek*)
- **Work zones cause delay** – Work zones are estimated to account for nearly 24 percent of non-recurring delay. Fifty percent of all highway congestion is attributed to non-recurring conditions, such as traffic incidents, weather and special events. (*Temporary Losses of Highway Capacity and Impacts on Performance, Oak Ridge National Laboratory*)
- **There are more work zones in the summer** – The total number of highway work zones in the summer is estimated to be more than 6,400 with a corresponding loss of capacity of 6,157 lane miles. Work zones in the winter are about one-half of those in the summer. (*A Snapshot of Work Zone Activity Reported on State Road Closure and Construction Websites, Summer 2002- draft, December 2002, by Karl Wunderlich and Dawn Hardesty, Mitretek*)
- **Motorists are growing more frustrated** – The American public cited work zones as second only to poor traffic flow in causing dissatisfaction (2000 traveler survey). (*Moving Ahead: The American Public Speaks on Roadways and Transportation in Communities, Federal Highway Administration. FHWA-OP-01-017*)
- **Vehicle miles of travel grew at a greater rate than miles of roadway** – Between 1982 and 2002, vehicle miles traveled increased by 79 percent, while highway lane miles only increased 3.0 percent during the same period. (*Highway Statistics, Federal Highway Administration.*)
- **More work is being done on existing roads already carrying heavy traffic** – The share of capital funds used for system preservation rose from 47.6 percent in 1997 to 54.0 percent in 2000. (*2002 Status of the Nation's*



Highways, Bridges, and Transit: Conditions & Performance, U.S. DOT, FHWA-PL-03-004

- **Night work is increasing as agencies try to manage work zone delay** – A review of project information available on selected states' web sites showed that approximately 53 percent of work zones are designated as day work, 22 percent as night work, and 18 percent are active all day or nearly all day (18 or more hours). (*A Snapshot of Summer 2002 Work Zone Activity Based on Information Reported on State Road Closure and Construction Websites, Final Report, by Karl Wunderlich and Dawn Hardesty, Mitretek. Prepared for Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, February 2003.*)
- **Work zone mobility and safety are linked** – As congestion builds in and approaching work zones, crash rates increase.
  - The most frequent type of crashes in work zones are rear-end crashes.
  - In 2003, 1,028 fatalities resulted from motor vehicle crashes in work zones.
  - More than 41,000 people were injured in 2003 as a result of motor vehicle crashes in work zones. (*Fatal crashes and fatalities – Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS); Injuries – General Estimates System (GES)*)

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