



UNIVERSITY TRANSPORTATION CENTER

RESEARCH BRIEF

Cost Comparison of Washington Safety Rest Area Operations with Other States

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Background

In the United States, safety rest areas (SRAs) were constructed as part of the interstate highway system. The SRAs were envisioned such that highway users could take not only a restroom break, but also opportunity to get rest especially for tired and weary drivers before

continuing their journey safely. A full-size SRA may provide several services including but limited to rest room facility, parking, drinking water, picnic tables, free coffee, tourist information, etc. A study conducted in Minnesota shows that when the spacing of highway safety rest areas are thirty miles or below, it reduced crashes due to fatigue driving (MnDOT, 2007). States operate their SRAs using three basic methods.

When using the in-house workforce method, transportation agencies use their own resources to operate SRAs. As they use their own resources, states plan in their own way to operate the SRAs. Many states are using this method. When states outsource the SRAs operating to contractors, they commonly use traditional contracting method. The another outsourcing method is the Performance-based Contracting. It uses performance-based specification, and basically focuses on the outcome or quality delivered by the PBC contractor rather than input from the contractor.



Research Project

The main objective of this study is to compute the unit operating costs of Washington SRAs and compare them with other states. With this comparison, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) may have an opportunity to know if they are operating the safety rest area cost effectively. The findings of this study may also provide opportunity to WSDOT in seeking a cost-effective method. Ultimately, adopting the cost-effective method may avoid closing the safety rest areas in Washington that will support reducing highway fatality and injuries due to fatigued drivers on the highways. The project team will conduct a national survey with in all states. This survey will collect detailed information regarding operating SRAs' cost. With this survey, SRA operational cost data, annual number of safety rest area visitors, and other safety rest area information will be collected. For each of the states, SRA data will be collected from 2010 to 2019. The team will also document previous studies on the area of cost comparison of unit operation cost in other states if they have any.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The research team consisted of Kishor Shrestha of Washington State University.

ABOUT THE FUNDERS

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EXPECTED DATE OF COMPLETION

August 2022

FOR MORE INFORMATION

<http://depts.washington.edu/pactrans/research/projects/cost-comparison-of-washington-safety-rest-area-operations-with-other-states/>