

# **NOC CoE**

# **Best Practices:**

# **Communicating**

# **TSMO**

**Report #8**

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# Concepts

## INTRODUCTION

There are many benefits to a strong Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSMO) program: improved travel time and reliability; multimodal system efficiency; cost-effectiveness; environmental benefits; and improved agency efficiency. These outcomes benefit transportation agencies and the traveling public. Communicating TSMO strategies and benefits is a core component of a successful program; both by communicating externally with the media, the public, and other stakeholders, and by communicating internally with other agency divisions and decisionmakers.

The Transportation Operations Manual (TOM) includes several chapters on communicating TSMO. These range across both external and internal communications. This report focuses primarily on communicating the benefits of a TSMO program. More information on specific tactics for communicating TSMO strategies and operational information (for example, Traveler Information Systems) are available elsewhere in the TOM and on NOCoE's website.

Communicating TSMO according to the TOM can be found in:

- Chapter 4: Agency Readiness to Advance TSMO
  - 4.4: The Business Case for TSMO
- Chapter 7: TSMO Performance Management
  - 7.5: Performance Reporting
- Chapter 10: Collaboration and Outreach
  - 10.3: Outreach
- Chapter 19: Fundamental Elements of Situational Awareness, Communication, Decision Support, and Control.

# External Communication

## AUDIENCE

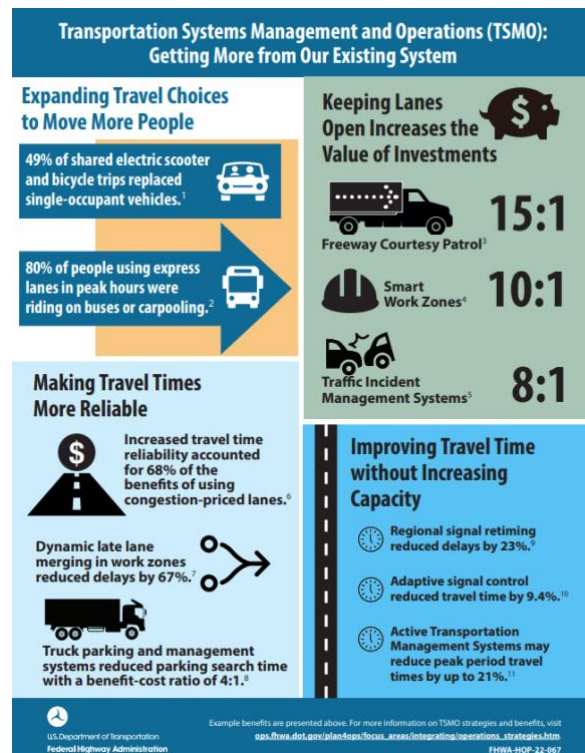
Many TSMO strategies rely heavily on effective communication with the traveling public. External audiences can include the traveling public, the media, and external stakeholders and decision-makers.

### Traveling Public

The traveling public is a key audience of TSMO strategies. This can include information about routine maintenance work for commuters or parking and carpooling opportunities for attendees of planned special events. Effective communication with the public ensures greater situational awareness for travelers, resulting in a smooth and safe travel experience. In addition to more specific communication strategies (i.e., Traveler Information Systems), promoting a general understanding of operations needs and considerations can be useful to the public to understanding funding needs and constraints and overall system performance. Information like FHWA's infographic *Getting More from Our Existing System* can aid in communicating overall travel choices and their impact on travel times and capacity constraints.

### Media

Coordinating directly with the media can be a useful tool in expanding information outreach to the broader public. Many agencies host informational media summits to communicate current and upcoming transportation projects. Press releases on topics such as construction work zone planning, planned special event traffic management, or other operational initiatives can help the media better understand agency goals and activities. Short brochures or pamphlets for public distribution can be an easily digestible way to communicate complicated information without technical jargon, such as Michigan DOT's [Transportation Systems Management and Operations \(TSMO\) Program](#) flyer. Providing these materials to media outlets can offer valuable background and context to support accurate reporting and article development.



Source: FHWA, *TSMO: Getting More from Our Existing System*, 2022.

### Sample Infographic for Traveling Public

## External Stakeholders

External stakeholders play a critical role in the success of TSMO programs and include both decisionmakers and partner organizations. These stakeholders may include legislators, elected officials, and leadership at funding or oversight agencies, as well as multijurisdictional partners such as state departments of transportation, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), regional councils, and neighboring local governments.

Providing clear, timely, and consistent information to these partners helps align priorities across jurisdictions and supports more coordinated regional planning and operations. Sharing updates on new and ongoing TSMO initiatives, performance outcomes, and planned investments can reduce duplicative efforts, improve resource sharing, and encourage complementary strategies across agencies. Effective communication with external stakeholders also builds awareness of the value of TSMO, supports informed decision-making, and strengthens collaboration needed to address congestion, safety, and reliability challenges that cross jurisdictional boundaries.

## STRATEGIES

External communication can take many forms, such as coordinated press releases; 511 information via websites, hotlines, or apps; publicly available website dashboards; or social media.

**Important Tip:** Work with your agency's Public Information Officer. They are your best resource! PIOs can assist with a range of strategic communications efforts, including project information rollouts, media engagement, and user-friendly materials development.

### Press Releases

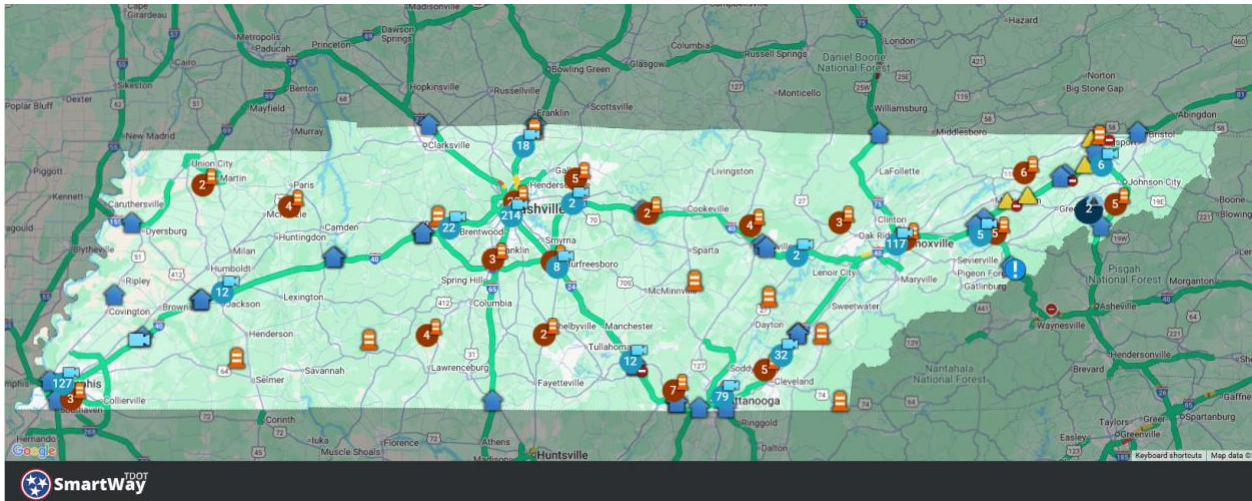
Press releases are an effective tool for communicating TSMO initiatives and operational successes to a broad audience in a clear and timely manner. Well-crafted messages can highlight how transportation operations strategies improve safety, reduce congestion, and enhance travel reliability, helping the public and decisionmakers understand the value of these investments. By focusing on measurable benefits, real-world impacts, and plain language rather than technical details, press releases support accurate media coverage and increase awareness of agency goals and ongoing efforts.

### 511 Information

511 traveler information systems are a key communication tool for providing the public with timely, reliable information about roadway conditions and performance. Through phone, web, and mobile platforms, 511 services communicate real-time updates on incidents, construction, weather impacts, travel times, and planned events, helping travelers make informed decisions before and during their trips. By integrating data from traffic management centers, partner agencies, and connected technologies, 511 supports safer, more efficient travel while reinforcing the value of TSMO investments through visible, everyday benefits to system users.

### Dashboards

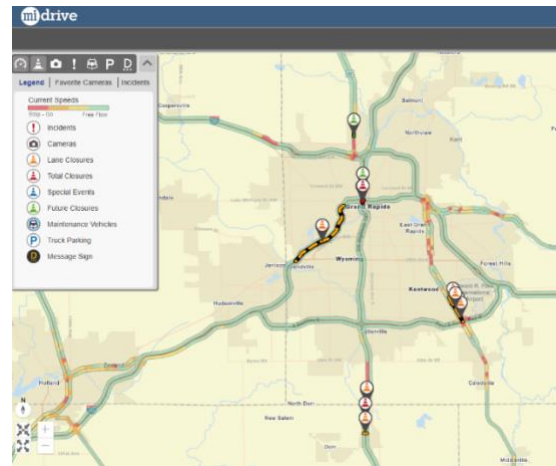
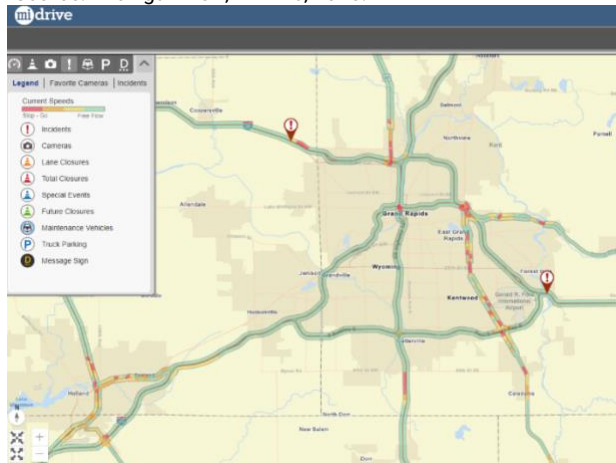
Many agencies develop visual dashboards to communicate directly with system users through computers and mobile devices, providing status updates on roadway conditions or for more general program reporting, like performance metric displays. Two examples of real-time information are Tennessee DOT's SmartWay Map that highlights areas of construction, road closures, and incidents. Similarly, Michigan DOT's MiDrive Map provides an option to filter by incident, snowplow activity, construction, incident, camera, special events, and more.



Source: Tennessee DOT, SmartWay, 2025.

### [Tennessee DOT's SmartWay Map](#)

Source: Michigan DOT, MiDrive, 2025.



### [Michigan DOT MiDrive Map](#)

Agencies may also use dashboards to indicate overall system outcomes based on other performance measures. MnDOT has a variety of Performance Measure Dashboards ranging from aviation and bicycle and pedestrian topics to public perception and equity, e.g., under the Roads, Cars, and Trucks dashboards, users can view the Snow and Ice Removal chart to see the frequency of meeting bare lane targets and statewide public opinion survey results.

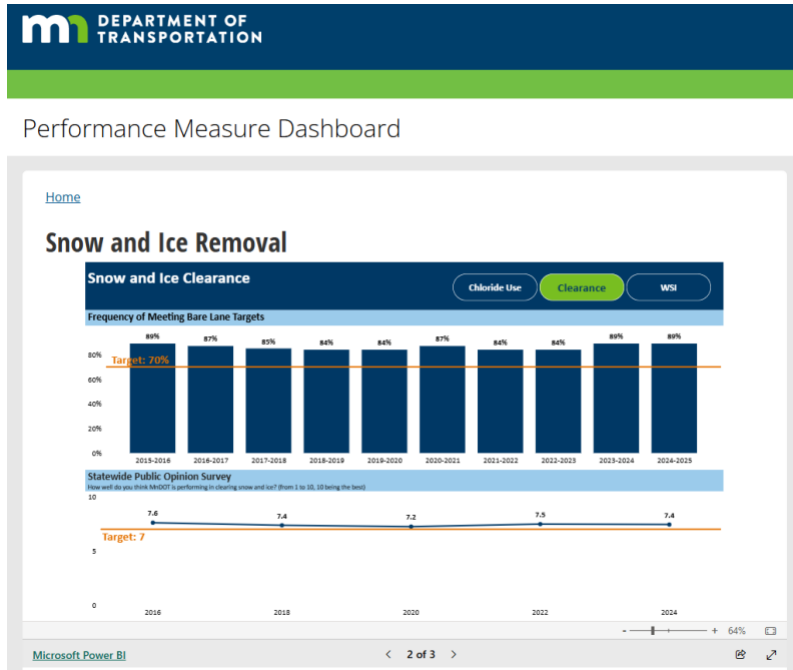
Dashboards that display performance metrics and progress toward target goals help build public trust by increasing transparency around how agency funding is used and how well the agency is meeting community priorities.

### Social Media

Social media can be a quick way to disseminate real-time information, provided there is a clear strategy and approach to communicate information. Social channels can include: X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and NextDoor. Agencies should develop an understanding of the audience for each channel and the expectations of users for real-time versus more strategic and planned outreach. For example, residents may turn to X/Twitter for up-to-date information about traffic or transit delays and NextDoor to provide public comments on an upcoming development or long-term construction zone. Social media can also be an important tool for ongoing campaigns, such as National Work Zone Awareness Week or “Buckle Up Phone Down.”

### Benefits

Communicating TSMO effectively can improve the overall efficacy of implemented strategies. Because TSMO relies on coordinated efforts and public response to be successful, clear communication is critical. Effective communication helps ensure that stakeholders understand not only what strategies are being implemented, but why they are necessary and how they



Source: Minnesota DOT, *Performance Measure Dashboard*, 2025.

### [MnDOT Snow and Ice Removal Performance Measure Dashboard](#)

contribute to broader transportation goals such as safety, reliability, and efficiency (AASHTO *Regional Operations Forum Training Program*, 2019).

- Generates support from key stakeholders
- Demonstrates efficiency and effectiveness of TSMO strategies
- Impacts need to be demonstrated and explained to gain support and acceptance
- Presents agency as a good steward of public resources
- Choosing solutions that best address problems within constraints

Communicating performance outcomes, such as reduced delay, improved travel time reliability, or enhanced safety, helps translate technical results into meaningful benefits. This transparency allows stakeholders to see the value of operational investments and understand how TSMO strategies deliver outcomes to meet agency goals.

### **Example: Caltrans “News Flash” Videos**

Caltrans uses short “News Flash” videos to communicate new projects, roadway improvements, or implementation of new technologies. The 2 to 5 minute videos are posted on social media and sometimes featured on local news broadcasts. Topics range from safety improvements like [Reflective Sign Posts Improve Safety](#) and [Preventing Wrong-Way Collisions](#) to major project overviews, such as [US 101 Alemany Deck Replacement Project](#) and [Rat Creek Slide Repair](#) (NOCoE, [Communicating TSMO Peer Exchange](#), 2017).

# Internal Communication

## PURPOSE

Strong internal communication is essential to the success of a TSMO program. Clearly conveying the needs, goals, and outcomes of TSMO helps build shared understanding across business units, improves coordination among programs, and strengthens the case for sustained funding and institutional support for operational activities. Effective internal communication ensures that staff understand how TSMO strategies contribute to broader agency objectives such as safety, mobility, and system reliability and how TSMO strategies can translate to enhanced system performance across disciplines.

## AUDIENCE

Primary internal audiences include agency decisionmakers as well as staff from other business units or divisions within the agency's jurisdiction. Providing decisionmakers with clear, concise, and outcome-focused information supports informed leadership, prioritization, and resource allocation. By nature, TSMO is a cross-cutting discipline that depends on collaboration with planners, engineers, designers, information technology staff, and other agency departments. By establishing a shared understanding of the purpose and value of TSMO strategies, agencies can foster buy-in, encourage collaboration, and more effectively integrate operations into planning, design, and delivery processes.


## BENEFITS

By using a combination of communications strategies internally, agency staff across a range of disciplines can build an understanding of the importance and relevance of TSMO in their own areas, roles, and responsibilities. Strengthening agency awareness of TSMO can assist in building a stronger business case and unifying message for the goals of the agency to serve the traveling public. Additionally, leadership-level buy-in reinforced through effective communication can improve long-term program stability and increase the sustainability of TSMO funding and resources.

## STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES

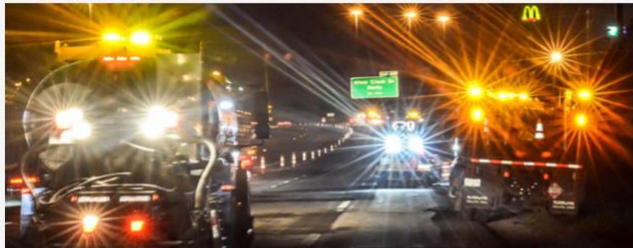
FHWA outlines several communications strategies that can be helpful for mainstreaming TSMO within an agency to support recognition of TSMO, build acceptance, and integrate TSMO across agency functions (FHWA, *Communication Strategies for Mainstreaming TSMO*, March 2023). Internal communication approaches can range from videos, training, case studies, performance reporting, and cross-functional committees to introduce and educate staff from various areas to TSMO concepts. An agency's specific methods may depend on organizational structure, the familiarity of staff with general TSMO concepts, and the overall maturity of their TSMO program.

An official State of Ohio site [Here's how you know](#) Language Translation


WHAT IS ODOT?
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## Lake County I-90 Major Rehab

📍 Lake
Project ID: 116955
Work Category: Roadway Major Rehab
Est. Const. Cost: \$92,240,000
Begin Construction: Summer 2027
End Construction: Fall 2032



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**Contact**

[District 12 Public Information](#)  
(216) 984-2005


**Project Status**

Proposed
 In Development
 Pre-construction
 Construction
 Completion

**About this Project**

This project will replace the existing pavement along I-90 between Kirtland Rd. and Morey Rd. in the cities of Willoughby, Mentor, Kirtland Hills, and Concord Township. Work will also include new drainage infrastructure and lighting upgrades. The interchange ramps at SR 306 and SR 615 will also undergo pavement replacement.

**Project Map**



**Project News**

**ODOT Seeking Public Input for Major Rehabilitation of Interstate 90 in Lake County**

Aug. 28, 2025 - ODOT Seeking Public Input for Major Rehabilitation of Interstate 90 in Lake County

[VIEW MORE NEWS >](#)

Lake County: Construction Update

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### Videos and Training

- In 2018, Tennessee DOT (TDOT) held Regional Operations Forums within TDOT's four regions to roll out the Traffic Operations Plan.
- A 2-minute video was released to the public explaining TSMO and the benefits of TSMO activities.

### Case Studies

- Ohio DOT developed short case studies highlight specific roadway projects.
- Case studies can be an effective tool for communicating internally and externally.
- For example: Project: I-90 Lake County I-90 Major Rehab. (*view image above*)

### Performance Reporting

- TxDOT requires districts to track and report on four traffic management system metrics:
  - TMS Asset Operational Uptime
  - Incident Clearance Times
  - Level of Travel Time Reliability
  - TMS System Coverage
- Arizona DOT's TSMO Division tracks 30 performance metrics using a TSMO scorecard.

### Cross-Functional Committee

- Washington State convened a TSMO Program Plan Council comprised of staff from multiple divisions including design, construction, maintenance, planning, freight, asset management, performance management and safety.
- The Council guides the TSMO program plan to meet wide-ranging agency goals and needs.

FHWA has also developed a [Capability Maturity Model \(CMM\) for TSMO programs](#). This tool can be helpful for agencies to identify organizational structures and processes to most effectively deliver on operational priorities. In addition to organizational guidance, the CMM can inform agencies about noteworthy practices for increasing internal communications capabilities across disciplines.

# Resources

## RESOURCE LIST

### AASHTO Transportation Operations Manual (TOM)

- Chapter 4: Agency Readiness to Advance TSMO | 4.4: The Business Case for TSMO
- Chapter 7: TSMO Performance Management | 7.5: Performance Reporting
- Chapter 10: Collaboration and Outreach | 10.3: Outreach
- Chapter 19: Fundamental Elements of Situational Awareness, Communication, Decision Support, and Control.

### Federal Highway Administration

[Communication Strategies for Mainstreaming TSMO](#) (March 2023)

[Mainstreaming TSMO through Agency Culture](#) (March 2023)

[Transportation Systems Management and Operations \(TSMO\): Getting More from our Existing System](#) (2022)

[Advancing TSMO: Making the Business Case for Institutional, Organizational, and Procedural Changes](#) (December 2018)

[Communicating TSMO](#) (FHWA webpage)

[Capability Maturity Frameworks for Transportation Systems Management and Operations \(TSM&O\) Program Areas](#) (February 2016)

### National Operations Center of Excellence (NOCoE)

[Communicating TSMO Internally: Change Management Strategies for the TSMO Agency](#) (May 2018)

[Public Communications and TSMO Peer Exchange](#) (October 2023)

### National Cooperative Highway Research Program

Project 08-182: [Playbook for Communicating Benefits of Transportation Systems Management and Operations Strategies Using System Performance Data](#) (research in progress)

### Agency Video Examples

Tennessee DOT

- [TSMO and TDOT ITS](#) (December 2018):
- [TDOT TSMO Overview](#) (August 2022):

Ohio DOT

- [What is TSMO?](#) (October 2018):