

Project Title

Developing a Prototype System for Establishing Passing and No-Passing Zones of Two-Lane Highways

University

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Research Needs

The Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) implements the two-vehicle method to measure passing sight distances on Wyoming's two-lane roads comprising thousands of miles in

order to establish passing and no-passing zones. The method involves a lead vehicle and a following vehicle equipped with an apparatus to measure the passing site distance while traveling along the two-lane road. The apparatus used to conduct the method is no longer functional. Therefore, WYDOT and local jurisdictions in Wyoming are in dire need of a functional, advanced, accurate, cost-effective, easy-to-use, durable, upgradable system to conduct the method. It is essential that the system be accurate because WYDOT is continuously establishing the zones statewide and establishing the zones is costly. With the advanced system, WYDOT will also be able to evaluate existing zone designs. WYDOT is not only establishing zones statewide but also re-establishing the zones due to changes in speed limits, construction or placement of sight obstructions near horizontal curves, roadway re-alignment, crashes, complaints from citizens and other reasons.

Research Objective

The objective is to provide the Wyoming DOT with two state-of-the-art prototypes of the two-vehicle method that has advanced intelligent transportation system (ITS) features.

Research Methods

The design standards of passing and no-passing zones of two-lane highways described in design manuals will be strictly followed. The manuals are the WYDOT Pavement Marking Manual, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' (AASHTO) Green Book and the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). The advanced components of the two-vehicle method's prototypes to be developed include vehicle-to-vehicle (V2V) wireless access in-vehicle environments (WAVE) communication devices, GPS data collection devices and a graphical user interface (GUI) to present the data collected in real-time. In addition, the following vehicle will be equipped with a camera having software with computer vision and neural network algorithms. The software enables autonomous detection of the lead vehicle and the track. The advanced two-vehicle method's prototypes will also include redundant lidar devices to measure the distances between both vehicles. Field testing of the prototypes will be conducted in multiple locations of two-lane highways based on a statistical experimental design. Passing and no-passing zone plans established as a result of the field tests will be evaluated to ensure that the zone design standards are not violated.

Expected Outcomes

The outcome of the project is a set of two cutting-edge prototypes of the two-vehicle method to be provided to WYDOT. User manuals of the prototypes will be provided as well. WYDOT will be able to continuously implement and re-implement accurate plans of passing and no-passing zones statewide. Furthermore, the two-vehicle method typically requires a three-person team. The third person assists the driver of the following vehicle in the data collection process. Yet, the advanced prototypes to be offered will eliminate the need for the third person. Also, WYDOT can address local governments in Wyoming requesting help in establishing or re-establishing the zones by providing them at least one of the advanced two-vehicle method's prototypes.

Relevance to Strategic Goals

This project is anticipated to enhance the safety of motorists on two-lane highways in Wyoming. Therefore, the project is classified under the safety strategic intent area of the US Department of

Transportation. Since the outcome of the project is a set of advanced prototypes of the two-vehicle method to replace the existing non-operational apparatus of WYDOT, the aim is to accurately implement passing and no-passing zone plans. This contributes to cutting the frequency of passing related crashes which are typically head-on and opposite-direction sideswipe crashes. With the accurate establishment of the zones, passing related crashes and therefore WYDOT's liability in cases of crashes are minimized.

Educational Benefits

The project will require the contributions of a transportation engineering faculty member, a transportation engineering research postdoctoral fellow, comprising the transportation engineering team, an electrical engineering faculty member and an electrical engineer, comprising the electrical engineering team. Input from the transportation engineering team include passing and no-passing zone research. On the other hand, the technicalities of the state-of-the-art prototypes to be offered to WYDOT are addressed by the electrical engineering team. Both teams will contribute to the field testing of the prototypes. The transportation engineering team will contribute by conducting an experimental design to select the appropriate testing locations and run the tests. The electrical engineering team will assist in calibrating and operating the equipment when running the tests. Both teams will also contribute in the drafting of the prototype manuals and the final report.

Technology Transfer

The cutting-edge prototypes and their manuals will be provided to WYDOT. Also, WYDOT will be able to assist local governments in Wyoming in establishing passing and no-passing zones. Furthermore, research findings will be documented in scientific journals such as the American Society of Civil Engineers: Journal of Transportation Engineering and presented in conferences such as the Annual Meeting of the Transportation Research Board. Technology transfer activities will be reported to the Program Progress Performance Reports.

Work Plan

It is assumed that the project is to start by January 2019. The initial step is to develop both prototypes, Prototype 1 and Prototype 2. That includes both hardware and software development.

By July 2020, Prototype 1 will be developed and tested in the field. It will not have all the state-of-the-art ITS features. Instead, it should be accurate and reliable. Prototype 1 and its manual will be provided to WYDOT while Prototype 2, which has the latest ITS features, is under development.

By July 2021, Prototype 2 will be fully developed and tested in the field. It will have all the cutting-edge ITS features. Prototype 2 and its manual will be provided to WYDOT.

Once Prototype 2 is delivered to WYDOT, Prototype 1 will be retrieved from WYDOT, upgraded to include all the state-of-the-art ITS features and tested in the field again. Prototype 1's manual will be updated as well. By January 2022, Prototype 1 upgraded and its manual will be provided to WYDOT once more. Also, the project's final report and implementation plan will be provided to WYDOT.

Project Cost

Total Project Costs: \$281,371
MPC Funds Requested: \$109,472
Matching Funds: \$171,899
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