



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Highway
Administration**

Memorandum

SP-97-008-CE

Subject Cost Eligibility for Integrated Data Systems and Stand Alone Inspection Modules Date June 20, 1997 (stamped)

From Director, Office of Motor Carrier Safety & Technology Reply to Attn of HSA-30

To Regional Directors Office of Motor Carriers, Regions 1-10
THRU: Mr. Clinton O. Magby, II
Director, Office of Motor Carrier Field Operations (HFO-1)

Background

OMC has recently had inquiries as to its policy regarding the development or procurement of integrated police field data reporting systems. These are mobile police computer and communication systems that contain several integrated reporting modules, such as, accident, citation, crime reports, CMV inspections and others in one system.

Such integrated systems process reports for both automobiles and commercial vehicles, speeding up data input and producing more accurate results. An integrated system is the way to go for a police agency that has responsibility for high volumes of varied reports. The FHWA fully supports the adoption of such systems as this will accelerate reporting of accident, citation and inspection data vital to our safety systems.

The market for these systems is very large since nearly all police forces in the country will be interested in electronic police reporting systems over the next few years. Private vendors are competing to provide these comprehensive police reporting systems. While the FHWA/OMC fully supports the concept of integrated software packages, for example as demonstrated in Iowa with the MARS software, the FHWA/OMC does not endorse any particular privately provided system.

OMC Support of ASPEN and Integrated Systems

OMC has made it a top priority to develop the ASPEN inspection system so that it can be smoothly integrated into these systems. To this end, the ASPEN system operates in the Windows environment

and has functions that enable the transfer of data to and from other OMC systems, as well as other modules within any integrated system. OMC will offer the ASPEN module and technical advice to any commercial software vendor that wishes to integrate ASPEN into their suite. However, some vendors of these commercial packages may not wish to integrate ASPEN because it may have a different "look and feel" than the other modules. OMC feels that this is not a major barrier to the use of ASPEN in integrated packages given the potential burden to the State and vendor of supporting a separate inspection module, but OMC recognizes that others may not agree.

OMC is committed to continue to improve ASPEN in support of the rapidly changing requirements of the Federal/State motor carrier safety programs. OMC has developed robust national data collection and information delivery systems to ensure national software meets these needs. OMC also provides and participates in user and other forums to ensure user needs are met and to provide ongoing tuning of these systems. National systems are also designed for maximum customization to accommodate a wide range of State needs. ASPEN, in particular, can be integrated with other applications and using AspenScript can pass data fields between applications to provide an "integrated police suite."

OMC routinely publishes data dictionaries, edit dictionaries, transfer protocols, and feature lists for each information system and data item, such as inspections and accident data. However, OMC does not have the resources to give integrated-systems developers technical assistance or testing capability to insure their systems are compatible with OMC information systems standards.

States choosing to use commercial data collection systems should be aware that the vendor must be self-reliant and committed to their commercial vehicle data needs. They should insure representation on various information systems steering committees to keep aware of changing commercial vehicle system requirements. States should also be aware that the required annual software changes entail hundreds of programmer hours per year.

MCSAP POLICY:

STAND-ALONE INSPECTION MODULES: Current policy prohibits MCSAP funding of development, implementation or support of any inspection module other than ASPEN. This policy remains in effect for stand-alone inspection modules.

INTEGRATED SYSTEMS: OMC fully endorses the concept of using technology to speed up the capture and upload of quality data, including accidents, inspections and citations, and will fund only that portion used for MCSAP purposes.

Additional modules beyond CMV inspections, such as accidents and citations, are not primarily motor carrier data collection instruments. In fact, accidents involving commercial motor vehicles comprise only about 10% of all accidents nationally, and therefore about 10% of the national market in this area. OMC has no mandate, nor do we have the resources, to fully fund the development, implementation and support of software for other than commercial vehicle safety data collection. To be eligible for funding under the MCSAP program, integrated systems must meet the following criteria:

- A. MCSAP funding eligibility is based on the portion used for MCSAP purposes. State accident data collection systems, for example, are primarily for private auto accident data collection. Therefore, not more than 10% at procurement, maintenance and communications costs for integrated systems will be eligible for MCSAP funding. A State must be able to demonstrate clearly that accidents involving CMVs are higher than 10% of all accidents in that State if they wish to receive additional funding for integrated systems. For systems that the State can demonstrate will be dedicated 100% of the time to CMV enforcement activities only, this 10% guideline may be waived on a case by case basis.
- B. Funding will come from standard MCSAP grant sources at the 80-20 formula level of the 10% prorated costs. Procurement or development of integrated systems is not eligible for Research and Development (R&D) project money.
- C. Alternate systems must be data compatible with standard OMC systems in that they must be capable of:
 - 1) collecting the standard data items (North American Standard inspection, NGA accident data, future citation Data);
 - 2) exchanging data with other systems, such as SAFETYNET and SAFER.

It is the responsibility of States with integrated systems to manage data transfers and ensure they interface with these related systems. MCSAP funding will not be allowed for systems that are not data compatible.

- D. States are responsible for insuring continuing functional compatibility as Federal/State MCSAP program requirements change. For example, changes in the North American Standard Inspection and violations occur frequently and may require system changes. Certain national program mandates require system functions such as SAFER query capability and connectivity with systems like CDLIS.
- E. It is the responsibility of States with integrated systems operators to insure such data and functional compatibility. States using their own solutions must manage systems changes to coincide with critical changes in the MCSAP program. System updates generally occur in one year cycles and are described well in advance of release. Making integrated systems data compatible is eligible for MCSAP 80-20 funding but not eligible for R&D funds.
- F. Training and technical support for integrated systems is the responsibility of the State.

States will be required to obtain from the integrated systems vendor, preferably as a part of the contract, a certification that assures compliance of data compatibility and functional compatibility as outlined in this memorandum. Should States fail to obtain this certification, MCSAP funding will not be available. States should also be aware that if the vendor fails to honor its certification in future years, federal funding for support and maintenance of integrated systems is not guaranteed.

Please contact Linda Taylor at 202-366-6308 with questions regarding this policy.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rose A. McMurray". The signature is written in dark ink and has a long, sweeping tail that curves to the right.

Rose A. McMurray