# PROJECT REPORT 

## Measuring Travel Time Reliability of Transportation Systems

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# Measuring Travel Time Reliability of Transportation Systems 

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#### Abstract

When traveling people want to be on time and avoid any traveling delays. We worked to determine travel time reliability along the I-71 corridor. This study will provide a buffer time index that will determine specific travel times along different segments of I-71. We analyzed the stability of the quality of service of this particular transportation system is supposed to provide to its users was analyzed. An advanced GPS data collection method was used to provide travel times along specific segments of I-71 along with volume data from ARTIMIS surveillance video. We expect to find travel time reliability and average delay times using the $85^{\text {th }}$ percentile travel speed, and the $95^{\text {th }}$ percentile of travel times. Furthermore, we determined the critical segments of the trips and calculated how this affects the travel time, buffer time, and the planning time. Finally, to predict within $95 \%$ probability the travel time along I-71. As an example, the buffer time of 12 min and 17 sec is needed to achieve a $95 \%$ on time arrival rate on the southbound I-71 section.


## KEY WORDS

Travel Time, Freeway Reliability, Level of Service, Buffer Index, Planning Time Index, Delay

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Transportation Engineers work in a field where they must collect and analyze data and compare it to some of the data that has been collected by various organizations, such as ODOT and ARTIMIS in the state of Ohio. After collecting the data and analyzing it, engineers think about hypothetical situations of ways to improve traffic and keep congestion to a minimum.

Tools used:

- GPS data loggers
- Jamar traffic counters
- Manual traffic counters
- VISSIM simulation software
- Petra Pro software
- Microsoft Excel
- Highway Capacity software (HCS)


## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

We began our investigation of transportation literature by looking at Traffic Engineering: Third Edition textbook. The authors of the textbook are professors at Polytechnic University. In the opening chapters basic terminology and concepts are introduced, as well as basic responsibilities of a traffic engineer. Chapter 9 examined speed, travel time, and delay studies, which covered our basic concepts of study. This assisted our understanding of field study techniques and data calculations, and graphical representation. Chapter 12 was particularly helpful in explaining level of service, capacity, free-flow speed and heavy vehicle factor.

Next, we examined the 2007 Urban Mobility Report . The authors David Schrank and Tim Lomax are research scientists and engineers who research for the Texas Transportation Institute. This resource was helpful in explaining unreliable travel times which are caused by congestion problems. It introduced planning time index, travel time index, and buffer index in a graphical format.


Figure 1 Illustration of travel time index/buffer time index and planning time index
Next we looked at the Manual Of Traffic Engineering Studies. The authors Paul Box and Joseph Oppenlander are from the Institute of Transportation Engineers in Virginia. This is a handbook of how to conduct traffic studies. This manual was useful in understanding the floating car method for measuring travel time and delays. The floating car method was the basic principle for how we should drive with the traffic flow. We also used this manual to determine the sample size for our traffic study.

We then look at Transportation Infrastructure Engineering: A Multimodal Integration. The authors Nicholas Garber, Lester Hoel, and Adel Sadek, are from the University of Virginia and the University of Vermont. This resourced helped clarify the capacity concept and the level of
service concept. The level of service concept is something that is crucial to our analysis of the roadways in our software analysis using Highway Capacity Software (HCS). This resource defined the traffic flow parameters which include flow (q), speed (u), density (k), headway (h), and spacing (d). The three basic parameters of a traffic stream are flow, speed, and density. They are related by the equation $\mathrm{q}=\mathrm{uk}$.

We also looked at United States a brochure from the Federal Highway Administration entitled Travel Time Reliability: Making It There On Time, All The Time. This article defined Travel Time Reliability and explained why it is important to the field of transportation engineering. It gave formulas and examples of how to calculate TTR, calculate a Buffer Index and Planning Time Index, which are key parts to the Transportation Project.


Figure 2 Comparison of cumulated and real travel time
Next, we looked at Traffic Science. This book examined some of the traffic flow theories. Specifically, it defined the ranges of traffic intensity. It divided the traffic intensity into three categories: light traffic, moderate traffic, and heavy traffic. This resource also defined the capacity of a roadway, bottlenecks, and gave several approaches to traffic flow theory.

## 3. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Find travel time reliability measures along the I-71 corridor from exit 19 to exit 1 .

Use GPS Data Loggers to acquire travel time data.
Use Excel spreadsheet to calculate travel time reliabilities.
2. Use ARTIMIS video to determine traffic volume on I-71 and the highways level of service.

Count cars and heavy vehicles along segments of I-71.
Use HCS software to determine specific levels of service.
3. Utilize traffic simulation software to validate field data.

Build three segments of I-71 in VISSIM software.

Validate simulation models

## 4. RESEARCH STUDY DETAILS



The I-71 corridor from Exit 19, Mason Montgomery Road, to Exit 1, at the Ohio River, was selected for study. Data collection began on June 30,2009 and continued through July 7, 2009. A GPS Data Logger was used to collect position, speed and altitude data in one second intervals. The position data was recorded in latitude and longitude coordinates. Researchers selected the middle lane for travel and drove consistent with traffic. Every effort was made to model the traffic flow on each trip. This is known as the floating car method of study. Collection times varied throughout the peak hours between 7am and 9am. Data collected consisted from twenty four trips southbound and fourteen trips northbound. In order to collect the data we used GPS data loggers. The GPS data logger needed to be turned on at the start of the trip and it would record the geographic coordinates, timestamps, and altitude.

Using Google Earth, I-71 was then divided into sixteen segments southbound and fourteen segments northbound. The segments were divided in a manner such that an interchange fell in the middle of each segment. This method was chosen as to model the effect each interchange had on vehicle travel time and delay. The geographic latitude and longitude coordinates of the end points of the segments were recorded for further use.

In order to view the data, the GPS needed to be plugged into a computer and uploaded to Travel Navigation software. After the data collection period was complete, the GPS data was then downloaded into the Travel Recorder software and exported as Microsoft Excel files. The data was then sorted by the day of the trip, as well as the direction of the trip. The data was segmented using the latitude and longitude coordinates of the segments. Once segmented the travel times for each segment were calculated and cataloged. Segment times were then organized as to calculate various traffic indicators outlined below.

Volume data was obtained from the ARTIMIS cameras located along the I-71 corridor. The number of cars was counted in both north and southbound sections at the Fields Ertel Road and Kenwood Road interchanges. This volume data including heavy vehicle percentages was loaded in the HCS software to determine that segment's level of service.

Lastly, we inputted the ARTIMIS volume data into HCS and VISSIM traffic simulation software in order to evaluate the level of service and to validate GPS travel times.

Table 1 Volume counts at Fields Ertel exit from ARTIMIS video

|  | Volume Data for Fields Ertel Exit (5 minute intervals) <br> north <br> cars | trucks | south <br> cars | trucks |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| $7: 00$ | 103 | 23 | 406 | 28 |
|  | 150 | 19 | 266 | 45 |


|  |  | 432 | 26 |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| $7: 30$ | 137 | 26 | 323 | 26 |
| $8: 00$ | 151 | 25 | 356.75 | 31.25 |
| Average | 135.25 | 23.25 | 4281 | 375 |
| Avg per hour | 1623 | 279 |  | 0.087596 |
| Percent Trucks |  | 0.171904 |  |  |

Table 2 Volume counts at Kenwood exit from ARTIMIS video

|  | Kenwood Road (6 minute intervals) |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| north | cars | trucks | south |  |
| cars | trucks |  |  |  |
| 447 | 34 | 347 | 28 |  |
| Avg | 509 | 40 | 454 | 52 |
| Avg per hour | 478 | 37 | 400.5 | 40 |
| Percent trucks | 4780 | 370 | 4005 | 400 |

By using a traffic counter, we were able to watch ARTIMIS recordings of Fields Ertel Road and Kenwood Road. We counted the number of cars in five minute intervals for a series of videos recorded at different times on the same day. We then found the average number of cars to pass in various minute intervals, and then converted them into hour intervals. We repeated this process for trucks

## 5. ANALYSIS: RESEARCH RESULTS

The analysis of the data began when the segments were profiled to determine which segments had the highest variation from the median travel time. The graphs showed the frequency of trips and the travel time in seconds. The x axis of the graph was the median travel time. Section 4 at the Ronald Regan interchange and Section 7 at the Norwood Lateral interchange were determined to have the most variation in travel time on the south bound section of I71. On the northbound section of I71, Section 9 the Red Bank Rd interchange showed a high variation in travel time. All section profiles can be found in Appendix II.


Figure 3 Travel Time distribution for Seg. 4 SB
This graph shows critical segment number 4 going southbound. The travel time seemed to be more unreliable than the other graphs and that is evident by looking at the peaks on the graph and noticing the varying distances of the peaks from the median line.

Using Excel the following Travel Time Reliability Measures were found:

- Buffer Time - The time that is added to the Average Travel Time to ensure $95 \%$ on Time arrival. This time is calculated by: $95^{\text {th }}$ percentile time - Average travel time
- Buffer Time Index - Buffer Time / Average travel time
- Travel Time Index - Average travel time / Free Flow time
- Planning Index $-95^{\text {th }}$ percentile time / Free Flow time

The study results show that a Buffer Time of 12 minutes 17 seconds needs to be added to the southbound section of travel to ensure $95 \%$ on time arrival. Therefore, the Planning time for the south bound section of I71 is: Average time + Buffer time = 34 minutes

The northbound Buffer Time is 2 minutes 21 seconds so using the above method the northbound Planning is 21 min 26 sec .

In Appendix II a spreadsheet is provided that lists the above measures for each segment.


Figure 4 Planning Time, Travel Time and Buffer Time for SB I-71
Travel time reliability was determined by calculating the travel time index, planning time index and the buffer time index. This relationship is demonstrated in the graphs above and below.


Figure 5 Planning Time, Travel Time and Buffer Time for NB I-71
HCS software was used to determine each segments LOS both north and southbound. The results of this analysis are shown in the table below.

Table 3 Level of Service for each segments SB I-71

| Southbound | Distance (miles) | Description | Level of Service |
| :---: | :---: | :--- | :---: |
| segment 1 | 0.82 | Exit 19 to Snider | D |
| segment 2 | 2.02 | 275 Interchange | D |
| segment 3 | 1.57 | Pfeiffer Road | D |
| segment 4 | 1.68 | Reagan, SR 126 | D |
| segment 5 | 1.27 | Montgomery Rd | D |
| segment 6 | 0.87 | Kenwood Rd | D |
| segment 7 | 0.96 | Stewart Rd | D |
| segment 8 | 1 | Red Bank Rd | D |
| segment 9 | 1.91 | SR 562 | C |
| segment 10 | 0.97 | Smith Edwards | C |
| segment 11 | 0.74 | Dana Ave | C |
| segment 12 | 1.65 | Montgomery Rd | B |
| segment 13 | 1.87 | Taft | C |
| segment 14 | 0.6 | Liberty | C |
| segment 15 | 0.49 | $71 / 50$ split | C |
| segment 16 | 0.45 | to finish | C |

Table 4 Level of Service for each segments NB I-71

| Northbound | Distance (miles) | Description | Level of Service |
| ---: | :---: | :--- | :--- |
| segment 1 | 0.98 | Columbia | C |
| segment 2 | 0.61 | Liberty | C |
| segment 3 | 0.53 | Reading Rd | C |
| segment 4 | 0.93 | Taft | C |
| segment 5 | 2.8 | Montgomery Rd | C |
| segment 6 | 0.93 | Smith Edwards | C |
| segment 7 | 0.97 | SR 562 | C |
| segment 8 | 0.58 | Kennedy | D |
| segment 9 | 1.39 | Red Bank Rd | D |
| segment 10 | 2.52 | Stewart/Kenwood | A |
| segment 11 | 1.53 | Reagan SR 126 | A |
| segment 12 | 1.83 | Pfeiffer Rd | A |
| segment 13 | 2.15 | 275 Interchange | A |
| segment 14 | 1.26 | to Exit 19 | A |

The results of the LOS analysis confirm our segment reliability study using GPS data. The north bound section segment 9 rated a LOS D. The southbound section LOS is C and D over nearly
every segment and validates the segment analysis of the GPS data. This justifies the directional buffer time differential.

The volume data was inputted into VISSIM traffic simulation software, which validated our GPS travel times. The results of this simulation may be found in Appendix II.

Table 5 VISSIM Simulation Travel Times Output

| Time | Trav | \#Veh | Trav | \#Veh |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| VehC | All | All | All | All |
| No.: | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Name | sb | sb | nb | nb |
| 3600 | 97.9 | 4101 | 93.2 | 1446 |

No. 1 (sb) from link 2 at 382.2 ft to link 2 at 8492.6 ft Distance 8110.4 ft
No. 2 (nb) from link 1 at 232.6 ft to link 1 at 8318.7 ft Distance 8086.1 ft

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The HCS analysis of the level of service yielded overall results stating that at the present time the level of service of I-71 between Exit 19 and the Ohio-Kentucky border is acceptable. However, some of the segments are the lowest acceptable rating for the level of service. Due to the level of service rating of C and D on various southbound sections of $\mathrm{I}-71$, it is apparent that further study of segments 4 and 7 should be conducted to minimize the effects of current volume levels and improve the LOS rating. Future increase in volume along this section will result in a LOS rating falling below the acceptable rating of D. If I-71 experiences a substantial increase in volume the level of service would see the negative externalities.

When the level of service of a highway is worsened, the buffer time needed for commuters to arrive on time will experience an increase. This amounts to people having to plan extra time in their commutes, which would be an unfavorable condition for the commuters and residents of the affected areas. Further study of the level of service would be critical to determine some of the factors in the I-71 region that could have caused a change in the level of service. It is also critical to extrapolate the population growth for the area surrounding I-71 in order to try and predict any volume increases in the number of cars that will be using I-71 as their primary route of travel. Subsequently, it could reach the point where some sort of change would be necessary in order to continue to provide commuters with an acceptable level of service.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The data collection for this study took place from June 29, 2009 - July 9. The data was collected during the peak hours of 7am-9am. Because this study took place during the summer, we would believe that traffic would be heavier during the school year when teachers, students, and other professionals were also present on the highways. Also, non-peak hours were not recorded for this study, but would have been a useful comparison for the data recorded. The non-peak hours would have served as a base idea for the volume and correlating level of service. With more videotaping or volume counting with hand held Jamar traffic counters, more volume data could have been collected. More volume data would have allowed for more analysis of the videotapes and this would have allowed for a more precise calculate of the average volume of the highway.

Further recommended research would include study during other months of the year, and nonpeak hours. It would also be recommended to continue the study over a longer period of time than several weeks. It would also be recommended to obtain data regarding a highway within close proximity, such as I-75. This would serve as a useful comparison for various highways in the region. This would also allow for some comparisons of the volume data for the two highways and some analysis of several qualities and characteristics of the roadways.

## 8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## 10. APPENDIX I: RESEARCH SCHEDULE

June 23: Introduction and fundamental of HCS software
June 24: Lecture on travel time reliability
June 25: HCS software orientation
June 29: Field data collection
June 30: Field data collection
July 1: Filed data collection, development of presentation
July 2: Data extraction and analysis
July 6: Field data collection, VISSIM training
July 8: Field data collection
July 9: Field data collection
July 10: Data extraction and analysis
July 13: Data analysis
July 14: Data analysis
July 15: Data analysis, VISSIM training
July 16: Data analysis, development of presentation
July 17: Data analysis
July 20: Data analysis, and development of research poster
July 21: Data analysis
July 22: Development of research report and NSF report, Analysis using HCS software
July 23: Development of NSF report, research report, VISSIM simulation
July 24: VISSIM simulation, development of research report
July 27: Development of research report, posters
July 28: Finalization of research report, posters, presentation

July 29: Finalization of presentation
11. APPENDIX II


Figure 6-1 Travel Time Ranges for Southbound Sections

| SECTION 7 | SECTION 8 |
| :---: | :---: |
| SECTION 9 | SECTION 10 |
| Section 11 | Section 12 |

Figure 6-2 Travel Time Ranges for Southbound Sections


Figure 6-3 Travel Time Ranges for Southbound Sections


Figure 7-1 Travel Time Ranges for Northbound Sections

| Section7NB | Section8NB |
| :---: | :---: |
| Section9NB | Section10NB |
| Section11NB | Section12NB |



Figure 7-3 Travel Time Ranges for Northbound Sections

Table 6 Calculation spread sheet for Southbound I-75 segments


Table 7 Calculation spread sheet for Northbound I-75 segments

12. APPENDIX III: HCS Reports
13. APPENDIX IV: MAPs

