

SUPER BOWL XLVIII TOUCHDOWN FOR TSMO

By: New Jersey Department of Transportation

IN THIS CASE STUDY YOU WILL LEARN:

1. This was the first “mass transit” Super Bowl with very few parking spots and no tailgating or drop-offs allowed.
2. That with NJDOT and NJSP as co-leaders, a core team of stakeholders including police, consultants, the Super Bowl host committee and partner agencies began planning over a year in advance.
3. Tabletop exercises were held to model scenarios and document response actions or preparation, as well as design contingencies.



- This event was very high-profile, drawing enhanced media attention due to the potential for a weather event occurring. The majority of the fans would be “out-of-towners” and unfamiliar with the complex roadway and transit system located in the bi-state major metropolitan region.

BACKGROUND

The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) and its partners were charged with traffic management responsibility for Super Bowl XLVIII (February 02, 2014). This level of traffic management required more planning and greater focus than the typical Planned Special Events (PSE). The Super Bowl is much more than just a football game on a Sunday; it is an entire week of events and transportation challenges that agencies must plan for in order to operate an efficient transportation system. Many things made this event unique, including the following:

- The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for security designated this event at the MetLife Sports Complex as a Special Event Assessment Rating 1 (SEAR 1), which is the highest rating other than that of a National Special Security Event (NSSE).
- Planners needed to remain cognizant of the importance of the “fan experience” in everything that was done with heavy emphasis on fans using mass transit and bus transportation to the venue.
- The challenges of operating in winter weather in a non-dome stadium.
- As the first “mass transit Super Bowl,” the event offered very few parking spots to ticket holders and no tailgating or drop-offs were allowed.

PLANNING FOR OPERATIONS

With NJDOT and NJSP as co-leaders, a core team of stakeholders, police, consultants, Super Bowl host committee and partner agencies began planning over a year in advance. Timely, careful, and detailed planning for Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSMO) was required, calling for effective interagency coordination, cooperation, and interoperability. Subcommittees and outside agencies were involved. Traffic Incident Management (TIM) and Winter Operations were the focus for planning, along with providing exceptional traveler information for the ingress and egress of cars and buses.

THE TSMO PLAYBOOK

Tabletop exercises were held to model scenarios and document response actions or preparation, as well as design contingencies. All response plans were documented in the Playbook. With each planning exercise, the teams assessed the likelihood that an event would occur and its potential severity. Key players conducted drive through exercises to assess every angle of a potential event. Some operations strategies that were considered during planning include the following:

- Tasking Safety Service Patrols (SSP) and TIM response teams to patrol the highways around the stadium;

CASE STUDY: SUPER BOWL XLVIII TOUCHDOWN FOR TSMO



- Renting snow melters in case there was a heavy snowfall so that plowing would not be the only solution;
 - Adding snow removal contractors to provide additional assistance in case of heavy snowfall;
 - Keeping resources (e.g., staff, ITS devices) in reserve to manage unexpected contingencies;
 - Planning to retrieve field resources sooner, as in New Jersey, the snow event happened the day after the Super Bowl and many resources were out in the field;
 - Restricting lane closures and then banning them well prior to the event;
 - Planning for the obvious even if it was eliminated as a possibility, in recognition that one cannot plan for the unknown unknowns;
 - Documenting all of the details for the planning of transportation management in the Playbook, an indispensable overall go-to guide for the planning and response efforts;
 - For parts of Super Bowl week, having all stakeholders sit together in the New Jersey Statewide Traffic Management Center (STMC) with access to ITS tools and resources;
 - Specifying staffing levels for all agencies supporting transportation management and limiting time off and vacations during the week; and
 - Keeping key vendors, such as radio system specialists, video management staff, DMS software specialists, ITS staff, bridge inspectors, structural engineers, and IT staff on stand-by during the event.
- Lack of visual surveillance on the major East-West roadway required installation of additional permanent CCTVs, while some other stretches of roadway were enhanced with portable CCTV. Bluetooth readers were added to enhance analytics and to provide travel times;
 - The Public Safety Compound (PSC) was an amazing temporary state-of-the-art facility located within the stadium complex. The PSC was led by NJSP, but all key stakeholders used it. NJDOT/ NJTA patched in ITS resources, including camera feeds, for display on a video wall, and transportation agencies, as well as NJSP, used an incident database located in the PSC; and
 - All partners used a common radio channel across NJDOT, NJTA, and NJSP that was specifically designated for Super Bowl week activities. Additional agencies also had access to the channel for use as a back up to other communication types such as cell phones.

LEARNING OUTCOME AND PUBLIC BENEFIT

The lessons learned and collaborative networking will benefit the region's transportation operations for years to come, in connection with not only planned special events but also daily operations, communication with travelers, and incident management. Specific lessons learned by this team include the following:

- Co-locate decision-makers from multiple agencies allowed real-time informed decisions;
- Have a running punch list of things that needed attention, with timelines and assignments of responsibilities, provided transparency regarding open items and team accomplishments;
- Hold multiagency conference calls or briefings to discuss overall status and remaining punch list items beginning a few days prior to Super Bowl Week helped ensure team readiness;
- Document everything to memorialize and show transparency, for instance by creating a Playbook and having a post-event debrief. Conduct training sessions with front-line staff on the plans contained in the Playbook; and
- Minimize overemphasizing or over-resourcing any one technology. Also, do not introduce a new technology (or software) unless there is adequate time to properly train staff on its use.

TECHNOLOGIES

Special technological solutions were incorporated into Super Bowl transportation management, including the following:

- New color portable DMS were very effective in providing traveler information and routing information in full-color to complement colored parking areas;

FURTHER INFORMATION

NOCoe Knowledge Center: <https://transportationops.org/knowledge-center>