

EXECUTIVE DIGEST

TRAFFIC AND SAFETY DIVISION

INTRODUCTION

This report, issued in March 1999, contains the results of our performance audit* of the Traffic and Safety Division, Bureau of Highway Technical Services, Michigan Department of Transportation.

AUDIT PURPOSE

This performance audit was conducted as part of the constitutional responsibility of the Office of the Auditor General. Performance audits are conducted on a priority basis related to the potential for improving effectiveness* and efficiency.*

BACKGROUND

The Department was organized under Sections 16.450 - 16.458 of the *Michigan Compiled Laws* (Sections 350 - 358, Act 380, P.A. 1965). The Department was established to provide the people of Michigan with a safe, efficient, and environmentally sound total transportation system in the most cost-effective manner.

The Bureau of Highway Technical Services contains five divisions and is one of six operating bureaus. The Traffic and Safety Division is located within the Bureau of Highway Technical Services. The Division's mission* is to serve the public transportation needs by applying comprehensive highway traffic engineering technology; by participating in all phases of the Department's effort to

reduce traffic accidents and injuries, vehicle delay, fuel consumption, pollution, and operating costs; and by increasing the safety, efficiency, and capacity of the State trunkline system. Also, the Division is responsible for the development, coordination, and oversight of new highway system technologies, including the development and administration of the Intelligent Transportation System* (ITS) program.

During fiscal year 1997-98, the Division administered \$40.6 million for State Trunkline Safety programs and projects. Division administrative expenditures totaled approximately \$7.4 million for the fiscal year ended September 30, 1998. As of September 30, 1998, the Division had 101 full-time employees.

**AUDIT OBJECTIVES,
CONCLUSIONS, AND
NOTEWORTHY
ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Audit Objective: To evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the Division's use of traffic and safety engineering technology to identify programs and projects that reduce traffic crashes and injuries and vehicle delay.

Conclusion: We concluded that the Division's use of traffic and safety engineering technology was generally effective and efficient. However, our review disclosed reportable conditions* related to data used to identify safety programs and guardrail information (Findings 1 and 2).

Audit Objective: To evaluate the Division's effectiveness at planning, designing, implementing, and maintaining traffic and safety engineering programs and projects.

Conclusion: We concluded that the Division was generally effective at planning, designing, implementing,

and maintaining traffic and safety engineering programs and projects. However, our review disclosed reportable conditions related to high-crash location documentation, ITS goals* and objectives*, and conflict of interest disclosure (Findings 3 through 5).

Audit Objective: To evaluate the Division's efforts to coordinate with external partners to ensure maximum impact of the State's overall safety efforts.

Conclusion: We concluded that the Division made sufficient efforts to coordinate with external partners to ensure maximum impact of the State's overall safety efforts. The Department and the Office of Highway Safety Planning, Michigan Department of State Police, facilitated the development of the Michigan Traffic Safety Management System* (MTSMS) in 1997. In 1998, the Division co-chaired the third annual Traffic Safety Summit. Also, the Division serves as a focal point for traffic engineering information requests for the Department, as well as legislative, governmental, and private agencies.

Noteworthy Accomplishments: In 1997, the Second Regional Dispatch Center of the Michigan Department of State Police moved to the Michigan Intelligent Transportation System (MITS) Center* in Detroit. The relocation may improve the ability of the staff to manage incidents in southeast Michigan by providing 24-hour, seven days a week monitoring of the traffic management center.

Also, during fiscal year 1997-98, the Traffic Operations Section conducted special signal system training at the region offices* to improve employees' understanding of the

standards and regulations for signals, signs, pavement markings, and traffic control.

**AUDIT SCOPE AND
METHODOLOGY**

Our audit scope was to examine the program and other records of the Traffic and Safety Division. Our audit was conducted in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States and, accordingly, included such tests of the records and such other auditing procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances.

Our audit methodology concentrated on interviewing Division and other Departmental staff and reviewing procedures, reports, programs, program and project files, and other documentation developed for the period October 1, 1995 through September 30, 1998 to identify potential areas for improvement. We then determined which identified areas had the greatest risk to the Division or the potential to improve the operation of the Division. We established audit objectives that defined and covered these areas. We developed and performed audit methodologies that allowed us to address each audit objective.

We reviewed the Division's processes for identifying programs and projects. We also reviewed the Division's procedures for planning, designing, implementing, and maintaining traffic and engineering programs and projects. Furthermore, we reviewed the Division's procedures for coordinating traffic and safety efforts with external partners in traffic safety.

**AGENCY RESPONSES
AND PRIOR AUDIT
FOLLOW-UP**

Our report includes 5 findings and 7 recommendations. The Department's preliminary response indicated that it concurred and will comply with all of the recommendations.

The Department complied with 8 of 11 prior audit recommendations, 1 recommendation was rewritten for inclusion in this report, and 2 recommendations were no longer applicable.