

KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
AMBER ALERT DEPLOYMENT PLAN
FINAL REPORT

PREPARED FOR:



PREPARED BY: *TRANSCORE*®

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Kansas Department of Transportation AMBER Alert Deployment Plan

July 2005

Introduction

The AMBER Deployment Plan is intended to present recommendations for integrating AMBER Alert program activities between the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) and law enforcement and for advancing the program within KDOT. AMBER Alert information is sent to KDOT from the Kansas Bureau of Investigations (KBI), which is the lead organization for the Kansas AMBER Alert Program. This document presents integration and expansion recommendations, costs, and deployment schedules for KDOT to implement a statewide AMBER program. Background and supporting material for this work is provided in the “KDOT AMBER Alert Deployment Plan Background and Recommendations” Report dated May 2005.

Background

The KDOT statewide AMBER Alert plan brings together input from KDOT departments and districts and external agencies in order to provide a set of recommendations and direction for a statewide AMBER Alert program in Kansas. The planning process began with visits to the six KDOT district offices in an effort to provide outreach on the AMBER program and solicit input from the involved personnel. District personnel participated in a three hour workshop that covered the basics of the AMBER program, discussed KDOT’s role, and encouraged discussion from the participants on the future of the program within KDOT. Discussion of KDOT resources, such as the changeable message signs and the 511 traveler information system helped generate recommendations from the district personnel. Meetings were also held with KBI and the KDOT Advanced Traveler Information System (ATIS) coordinator to gather additional information on the integration needs of the different systems involved during an AMBER Alert. The process also included interviewing various bureau personnel within KDOT to define integration issues with using KDOT infrastructure and resources.

This planning effort investigated integration issues associated with AMBER Alerts within the context of KDOT’s current resources and improvements that would better utilize KDOT’s traveler information systems during AMBER Alerts. KDOT’s traveler information systems include Changeable Message Signs (CMS), the 511 traveler information telephone system and web page, and future kiosks. Internal resources used to notify KDOT personnel may include email notifications, telephones, cell phones, text messages, and the 800 MHz radio system.

This deployment plan provides recommendations for advancing the AMBER Alert program within KDOT along with costs and deployment timelines. The need for an AMBER Alert Policy was reviewed and a draft policy statement is included in Appendix A-1.

Recommendations

The recommendations presented are based on information and suggestions obtained during the AMBER Alert Workshops in the district offices, discussions with the KDOT ATIS coordinator, ITS Unit, and KBI representatives. Each recommendation has an associated action item as a next step in completing the recommendation.

1. The ITS Unit should work with KDOT management to adopt an AMBER Alert Policy statement.

Action: Present the draft policy shown in Appendix A-1 to management.

2. The ITS Unit should work with each district to develop a communications plan for that district detailing action items and communication paths used during an AMBER Alert situation. The ideas that were brought up during the district workshops will provide a basis for development of the communication plans. Several areas to consider are:

- ◆ An outreach program for the district detailing the KDOT AMBER Alert program and the need for statewide alerts.
- ◆ Enabling text messaging functions for KDOT cell phone users at the district level so that AMBER Alerts can be broadcast as text messages to district staff.
- ◆ Adding a portable CMS in front of KDOT district offices during AMBER Alert situations. These signs would broadcast AMBER Alerts to target district personnel and the public traveling near the district office.
- ◆ Developing pre-programmed AMBER Alert messages for CMS signs to minimize time to deploy messages on the signs.
- ◆ Procedures to notify work zone flaggers of an AMBER Alert to include the detailed description of individuals and vehicles involved. These procedures should address reporting procedures if a flagger should need to report information to authorities

Action: Develop District AMBER Alert Communication Plans

3. The ITS Unit should remain an active participant of the Kansas AMBER Alert Task Force.

Action: KDOT should continue on-going involvement as a task force member.

4. The ITS Unit should communicate with KTA, as a fellow transportation stakeholder, to coordinate resources and traveler information on the statewide AMBER Alert program and task force.
Action: KDOT should continue on-going coordination with KTA.
5. The ITS Unit should communicate with municipal and county transportation stakeholders to coordinate resources and encourage local municipalities to participate with KBI in the statewide AMBER Alert Program.
Action: KDOT will continue outreach activities.
6. Develop an internal KDOT email alert procedure to disseminate AMBER Alert messages to all KDOT staff via email during normal KDOT business hours.
Action: Develop an email dissemination procedure.
7. Install kiosks to display AMBER Alerts. Purchase and install additional kiosks in key locations to provide better coverage. Once the kiosks are installed, develop an interface for AMBER Alert notifications to be displayed automatically on the kiosk screen.
Action: Apply for funding to move this project forward.
8. Install CMS throughout the state to specifically assist with the dissemination of AMBER Alert messages. CMSs would be located at key locations, allowing for AMBER Alerts to reach the maximum amount of travelers and provide statewide coverage. A consultant would be hired to perform preliminary design, site selection, final design and construction management.
Action: Apply for funding and hire project manager.
9. Work with KBI and the AMBER Alert Task Force to automate the sending of messages to the 511 system. Currently KDOT receives an email from the KBI when an AMBER Alert occurs. Upon receipt of the message, the ATIS coordinator manually records the AMBER Alert message on the 511 IVR (Interactive Voice Response) system. There is no after-hours coverage and AMBER Alerts are either not put on 511, or may be delayed in being recorded to 511 if they occur after normal working hours.
Action: Assess equipment needs, costs and deployment plan. To automate putting this message on 511, an Emergency Alert System (EAS) system would need to be purchased and located at the KBI headquarters. An interface would then need to be developed which would allow the audio file created by the KBI to be automatically transferred to KDOT's 511 system during the initial radio and TV broadcast.
10. Purchase an EAS system for the KC Scout Traffic Operations Center. Currently, Scout receives both a fax and email notification when an Amber Alert is issued. An EAS system will allow for timely posting of Amber Alert Messages on CMS.

Action: Secure funding for purchase of EAS equipment for Scout.

11. Upgrade the interactive traveler information website that provides notification during an active Amber Alert. KDOT has Intranet and Internet websites that employees and travelers can access to find the latest weather, road conditions, and construction updates. A link to the Kansas Attorney General's Amber Alert web site, which displays all pertinent information during an Amber Alert, is on each site. However, the link does not indicate if there is an active Amber Alert. The plan is to upgrade this link so that a notification would appear during an active Amber Alert when the page refreshes. This notification would not be present when there was no active Amber Alert.

Action: Secure funding to begin this project.

Coordination Priorities

There are two categories of priorities for coordinating and implementing the statewide deployment of AMBER Alerts for KDOT. There are priorities tied to funding that would be required and available to purchase or procure the necessary services or products to integrate certain aspects of the recommendations. Beyond those priorities that require direct funding, there are priorities that require an internal KDOT work product or documentation of material. Below is a summary of the high priority recommendations to implement in Kansas in the short term:

Priorities Requiring Funding:

- 511 Automation (including an EAS for KBI)
- Interactive Traveler Information Websites
- KC Scout EAS equipment
- Kiosk Purchase & Integration
- Changeable Message Signs (CMS)

Priorities Requiring KDOT Work Product or Documentation

- Develop District AMBER Alert Communication Plans for each of the six KDOT districts
- KDOT should continue on-going coordination with the KBI, KTA, and local municipalities and counties to promote statewide AMBER Alert notifications
- Develop an internal KDOT email dissemination procedure
- Present the draft AMBER Alert policy to KDOT management

Coordination activities mainly involve integration between KDOT and KBI. KDOT will use its available resources and funding to assist the KBI in providing AMBER Alert information to the public. Through a collaborative effort statewide integration of AMBER Alerts can happen in the near term.

Integration Requirements

Two aspects of integration are needed to ensure a successful AMBER Alert Program in Kansas: institutional and technological. The institutional integration includes KDOT

working with stakeholders such as the KBI, Kansas Turnpike Authority (KTA), local municipalities and others. In addition there is institutional integration that must occur within the agency, between the ITS Unit and the District Offices and KDOT bureaus. Successful institutional integration will result in agencies working together for an agreed upon objective and in this case that would be a Statewide AMBER Alert Program.

Technical integration will also need to be addressed whenever new technology or software is acquired that will support the AMBER program. Software and technology elements should be compatible with existing systems and expandable for future growth of the system. Technical integration is a key issue when disparate agencies share systems and information. KDOT will need to work with KBI to ensure integration of all new and existing systems that interface with KDOT resources.

Costs & Funding

The estimated costs associated with the deployment plan recommendations that will require funding are shown in the table below. Part of the funding will be provided by the remaining funds from the 2003 FHWA AMBER Plan Program Support Assistance grant, with KDOT providing matching funds. KDOT is currently applying for the Amber Plan Implementation Assistance Program to fund the deployment of kiosks and changeable message signs directly benefiting the Statewide AMBER Alert Program. The cost and matching funding for each of the recommendations is shown below.

AMBER Plan Program Support Assistance - (Received August 2003)			
	Total	20% KDOT	80% FHWA
511 Automation - Programming & KBI EAS	\$10,000	\$2,000	\$8,000
Interactive Web Site	\$5,000	\$1,000	\$4,000
KC Scout EAS Equipment	\$10,000	\$2,000	\$8,000
CMS Preliminary Design & Site Selection	\$40,000	\$8,000	\$32,000
Total	\$65,000	\$13,000	\$52,000
AMBER Plan Implementation Assistance Program (Funding Pending)			
	Total	KDOT	FHWA
Kiosks	\$30,000	\$6,000	\$24,000
CMS Final Design & Construction Mgt.	\$30,000	\$6,000	\$24,000
CMS Signs & Labor*	\$440,000	\$88,000	\$352,000
Total	\$500,000	\$100,000	\$400,000

* assumes a CMS sign cost of \$45k to \$70k depending on location and communication system.

Deployment schedules

Recommendations in this deployment plan will be implemented given the constraints of funding and schedules. There are certain elements that are more labor intensive, such as working with the districts on their communication plans, and others that depend on funding and procurement timelines, such as construction of CMS. The schedule shown below details an estimated timeline for implementing the priority recommendations.

Project/ Task Description	2005				2006								2007											
	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	
511 Automation (MP3 file transfer)																								
EAS Equipment at KBI																								
Interactive Traveler Information Websites																								
KC Scout EAS equipment																								
Kiosk integration																								
CMS Project **																								
AMBER Alert Communication Plans - D1																								
AMBER Alert Communication Plans - D2																								
AMBER Alert Communication Plans - D3																								
AMBER Alert Communication Plans - D4																								
AMBER Alert Communication Plans - D5																								
AMBER Alert Communication Plans - D6																								

** Includes preliminary engineering, site selection, final design, construction management, and installation

Summary

Statewide aspects of the AMBER Alert program are led by the KDOT ITS Unit within the Bureau of Transportation Planning. The ITS Unit is coordinating with the KDOT bureaus and districts, KBI, the Kansas Turnpike Authority (KTA), municipalities and others for a comprehensive statewide program. The ITS Unit has led the AMBER Alert program to date by submitting grant applications to FHWA for AMBER Alert funding, by being an active member of the KBI AMBER Alert Task Force, and by attending two national conferences on the topic. As the AMBER Alert program moves forward, the ITS Unit will lead outreach, procedure and policy issues related to AMBER Alerts.

Appendix A-1

Draft KDOT AMBER Alert Policy

1. KDOT will assist the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI) by using its available resources to help provide AMBER Alert messages to the public and its employees. KDOT will only respond to AMBER Alerts issued by the KBI. The KBI is responsible for notifying KDOT when an AMBER Alert is issued, using mutually agreed upon communication protocols.
2. When providing AMBER Alert messages to the public and its employees, KDOT may use a variety of methods, including:
 - a) KDOT's 511 traveler information system and web page
 - b) Changeable Message Signs (CMS) or message boards
 - c) Email notifications
 - d) 800 MHz radio
 - e) Kiosks
 - f) Telephone/ Cell Phones
 - g) Text messages
 - h) Other
3. If providing an AMBER Alert message causes a conflict with a KDOT job function (such as road construction or accident-ahead messages on DMS), KDOT job functions will take priority.
4. AMBER Alert messages received from the KBI may be abbreviated where necessary (such as on DMS) based on guidance from KDOT's ITS Unit.
5. KDOT will distribute AMBER Alert messages on a state-wide basis when possible per KBI policy.
6. AMBER Alert messages may be provided for up to four hours using available resources. If the KBI updates an AMBER Alert, KDOT may update and rebroadcast messages four additional hours. Messages may be discontinued in less than four hours upon notification from the KBI that an AMBER Alert has been cancelled.
7. Any KDOT employee who identifies an AMBER Alert suspect, or has information related to an AMBER Alert should call 911 or notify local law authorities.