

Ministry Leadership in Animal Collision Data Collection Systems

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On July 10, 2006, I represented the Ministry as a member of the United States Transportation Research Board (TRB) expert panel organized by the National Academies to oversee a National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) study on animal collisions.

The NCHRP study, Synthesis Study, 37-12, Animal-Vehicle Collision Data Collection, was initiated in 2005 because animal-related motor vehicle collisions, primarily involving wildlife, are becoming a serious issue for motorists in the United States. According to reports to the United States Congress, these collisions cause over 200 human fatalities, 29,000 human injuries, and \$1US billion in property damage each year. As a division of the United States National Research Council, the TRB serves as an independent adviser to the United States Federal Government on transportation-related matters. The expert panel overseeing the NCHRP study included professionals and academics invited from the US Federal Highway Administration, US State Departments of Transportation, and leading US universities.

My participation on the panel is recognition of the Ministry's position as a leader in wildlife collision reporting



Len Sielecki at the Whitehouse

among transportation agencies in North America. Since the late 1970's, when Mike Kent, the Ministry's Chief Environmental Officer, first conceived the Wildlife Accident Reporting System (WARS), the Ministry has been systematically collecting wildlife collision data. WARS is regarded in the US and abroad as an example of a very successful system and a valuable model for others wanting to monitor wildlife mortality on highways. The success of WARS can be directly attributed to its comprehensive initial design and setup, and the ongoing, collective efforts of District and Headquarters Staff and the Maintenance Contractors.

Although it was 31°C and the humidity was 93%, Washington, DC was a spectacular capital to visit. The city is filled with stately embassies from every conceivable country on earth, colossal monuments, immense museums, and massive government buildings. Crisscrossed with grand boulevards teeming with traffic, Washington, DC, is not for meek drivers, especially at rush hour. The Metro, the city's subway

system, is fast, efficient, clean and safe and serves locals and visitors well. As a government and business centre, most of the stores and offices in the downtown are closed on weekends so shopping is very limited. Fortunately, most of the major tourist sections of the city, especially the areas in close proximity to the national monuments and the historic Capitol Hill, remain relatively safe parts of the city. Staying in a hotel near the Whitehouse has definite advantages. Within two blocks of the Whitehouse, the Secret Service has a continuous presence, and its officers, on foot, bicycles, and motorcycles, and in cars and vans, respond immediately to all suspicious activities. Notwithstanding all this security, as I left Washington, DC, on July 11th, the Metropolitan Police Chief declared a "crime emergency" in response to a rising homicide rate as the city had recorded 13 murders in the preceding 10 days.

Overall, it was an exciting and worthwhile trip both for my own professional development and for the Ministry's profile.



Metro in Washington DC