



PARSONS



VDOT T.R.I.P. PILOT 18 MONTH SUMMARY

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Introduction

TRIP is a recovery incentive program that pays heavy-duty towing and recovery companies a monetary bonus for quickly clearing crashes involving commercial vehicles. The specific objective of TRIP is to reduce the impact of major commercial vehicle incidents while achieving the aggressive lane clearance goal of 90 minutes or less.



Figure 1

The goal for TRIP is to standardize the towing response and facilitate safe and quick clearance of commercial vehicle crashes by improving towing procedures and on scene cooperation and coordination among first responders. The TRIP program potentially reduces the number of secondary crashes by reducing lane clearance times and restoring normal traffic flow.

The most important aspect of a successful TRIP program is ensuring companies maintain the minimum established level of equipment, training and certified staff who are engaged in the program. This required a team of Parsons' staff in partnership with VDOT staff and various stakeholders to be engaged in developing, monitoring progress, coordinating meetings, participating in after action reviews and updating policies and procedures as needed. This document will serve to summarize the activity that occurred during program development and the first 18 months of TRIP program deployment and operation.

1) Program Development

The first step towards implementation was early program development. The process included multiple meetings between Parsons and VDOT staff to discuss, identify and determine the pathway to defining what the eventual TRIP program would look like. Additionally, meetings with the Virginia State Police (VSP) were held to secure their feedback and support for implementation of TRIP. The Richmond Regional TIM Committee and the Virginia Association of Towing and Recovery Operators (VATRO) were also early stakeholders and were solicited for their feedback.

Parsons staff also spent the first few months prior to implementation collecting and reviewing commercial motor vehicle (CMV) crash data statistics for the entire Richmond/Petersburg interstate system and used that historical data to provide a predictive model of how many TRIP crashes may occur in the future. Initially, a seven-year historical review was conducted, but ultimately a three-year crash average was established, after it was noted that the CMV crash rate had risen noticeably in the last three years. This baseline was used to predict the number of TRIP activations for the Pilot Program. Comparisons with other

similar towing programs were also an important element of the early program development, as they provided many lessons already learned.

In order to ensure an objective and measurable foundation, the following areas were examined and developed:

- a) **TRIP activation criteria** - this was essential as it identified what a qualifying crash would look like and provided the direction and the basis for all stakeholder training and program communications moving forward. It also established a baseline for predicting and budgeting for incentive payments. The original intent was to activate TRIP for only those CMV crashes that were actively blocking lanes.
- b) **Specifications, Qualifications & Training** - One of the challenges of the existing heavy wrecker rotational towing process is that there was no consistent method to account for wrecker specifications, identify qualified operators or evaluate performance. TRIP sought to change that dynamic.
 - *Wrecker specifications* - These were based on industry-wide towing standards and matched up with the proposed task at hand. The goal of a standardized response from the towing community was set, and all specifications were based on the ability to relocate a casualty CMV weighing up to 80,000 pounds from the roadway and facilitating safe, quick clearance. Minimum specifications were established and implemented.
 - *Qualifications* - Each company was required to meet minimum requirements for a variety of items such as:
 - (a) Wrecker Specifications
 - (b) Support vehicle and specific list of additional tools and equipment
 - (c) Training requirements for all TRIP operators and supervisors
 - (d) Agreements with others to provide additional resources as defined by the program
 - (e) Agree to participate in and complete continuing education/ training over the life of the program
 - *Training* - Training modules were developed to specifically target all stakeholder groups and were predicated on the roles and responsibilities for each group. VDOT staff, VSP and Safety Service Patrol personnel were identified as primary stakeholders and received specific training on TRIP program language, intent, activation procedures and timekeeping duties. Local Police and Fire personnel were defined as secondary TRIP stakeholders and were supplied with awareness training that was designed to provide an overview and intent of TRIP and help educate those responders that would be on scene, but not a primary TRIP participant. Outreach to those groups has continued throughout the first 18 months of the Pilot Program.

- c) Identification of potential TRIP participants - With the assistance of VDOT and VSP, the existing rotational towing lists were examined and vetted for potentially qualified TRIP companies. In addition, regional searches were conducted to identify those towing companies not currently on a rotation list to ensure full inclusion during the outreach and application process. Approximately 20 companies were identified in the Richmond Region and the initial outreach effort focused on the identified group.



Figure 2

2) Outreach

A critical element of program development was the outreach effort to towers and other stakeholders. It cannot be understated how important this element was to the program development process and continued to be a key element during implementation and for early program success. TRIP significantly changed the approach to clearing CMV crashes and that change was felt by all responding stakeholders. Educating, explaining, illustrating benefits, and days of hand holding over many months was necessary to ensure that the impacted groups were educated enough to foster the necessary buy in for the program. Parsons and VDOT staff teamed up as the face of the program and sent out a consistent and clear message about TRIP every step of the way.

Initial outreach efforts were met with significant pushback from a majority of towing companies, although a few companies understood the benefit and became quick partners early on. Parsons and VDOT staff had to establish credibility with the towing community and that proved to be a challenging exercise. The team was faced with a group of professional tow company owners who initially took the position that they would wait us out, and not sign up for anything, thus killing the program before it started. Their position was made very clear during the kickoff meeting in May of 2017, when the group made their position about TRIP known, and it was not a positive message. Over time and with consistent effort and messaging during the development phase, the Parsons and VDOT staffs were able to establish credibility with the group as it became apparent that the specifications,

qualifications and expectations were based on real world experience and lessons learned elsewhere.

The Virginia Association of Towing and Recovery Operators (VATRO) became one of the conduits used to communicate with the towing community on a broad basis regarding the TRIP effort, and VATRO leadership proved invaluable to the process. Over the course of the outreach effort and during the first few months of TRIP program deployment, all TRIP participants became members of VATRO. Face to face meetings with the VATRO group as well as one on one meetings with towing company owners was necessary and critical to establishing TRIP credibility.

At the same time, the outreach and education for VSP, VDOT staff (including TAMS, IMC, and TOC Operations staff) along with Safety Service Patrol operators focused on educating all on the concepts of TRIP.

Additionally, the Regional TIM and Executive TIM Committees in Richmond were used to educate the greater TIM community and bring all impacted stakeholders into the TRIP conversation. This step proved critical as it established awareness and support for the program from the larger TIM community.

The overall outreach effort was predicated on identifying and successfully illustrating the problem that we were trying to solve. Some CMV crashes over the past few years had resulted in extensive, hours-long periods of lane blockage or complete interstate closures, thus exposing responders to greater danger. Once the entire stakeholder group understood the goals, and started to buy in to this unique approach to clearing CMV crashes, the effort to implement was underway.

3) Application Process

The application process began during the outreach effort in the summer of 2017 and included the fully completed program document. By this time, outreach efforts had been ongoing for months and individual towing company owners were beginning to buy into the TRIP philosophy. Parsons staff used the application process to continue the outreach effort and the team worked one on one with individual towing companies to be as inclusive as possible and provide every interested towing company the same opportunity to apply for TRIP service.

VDOT required that all TRIP application criteria be met at the time of submission, and this included all employee training. Since this was a brand-new program, and the development phase was on an extremely tight schedule, some considerations for securing equipment were given and a grace period beyond the application due date was implemented to give companies more time to comply. These exceptions were specifically called out in the program language, and further allowed for companies to meet the program goals.

The applications were designed to solicit as much objective information as possible so side by side comparisons could be made when evaluating each one. Some of the criteria for approval included the following:

- a) Meeting wrecker and equipment specifications
- b) Listing the required list of tools
- c) Meeting training requirements for all employees submitted
- d) Proximity to the interstate
- e) Successful site and wrecker inspections

All applying companies were required to meet the minimum level of qualifications to be considered for TRIP duty. Parsons accepted and reviewed fifteen applications. Parsons staff worked with each submitting company to ensure completeness and accuracy of their application. One application was rejected and considered non-responsive (incomplete). Three applications were rejected for not fully meeting the minimum requirements. Eleven companies were ultimately approved for participation in TRIP. Parsons and VDOT staff met with each company that did not qualify to discuss in detail the exact reasons why their application was not approved.

Once the eleven companies received conditional approval (pending final site inspections) Parsons staff, with input from VDOT, began the process of designating each of the recovery response zones. The recovery zone designation was predicated on several factors:

- f) Proximity to the interstate or limited access on ramp
- g) Ability to achieve the 45- 60-minute response requirement
- h) Crash data history/areas of concern
- i) Free flow response from a single direction
- j) Areas of recurring congestion
- k) Ability to meet the operational needs of VDOT

Once these recovery zones had been designated and final inspections had been conducted and approved, Parsons and VDOT met with each of the approved towing companies to discuss the details and thoughts behind each of the recovery zones. Feedback was solicited from each and TRIP assignments were made.

Each of the designated recovery zones was captured in a document that was distributed to all stakeholders but primarily to the VDOT Richmond TOC staff. This document serves as the primary tool for dispatching the appropriate TRIP company to a crash.

4) Training

The training for those connected with the TRIP Pilot program included all stakeholders and required a variety of approaches and classes to effectively train multiple large groups from various disciplines. Most of this training was performed directly by both Parsons and VDOT staff to ensure consistency of message leading up to program deployment.

- l) Towing community- Parsons and VDOT identified specific areas of training that would be critical to the success of the program and to be concluded at the time of application. This required a significant commitment from the towing community. Parsons partnered with WreckMaster, a nationwide tow industry training company, to provide two levels of wrecker training for all towing company employees. VDOT provided a 50% cost participation for the WreckMaster training to help facilitate and encourage participation. This process resulted in the entire TRIP wrecker community receiving formal wrecker training. Before TRIP, less than a dozen wrecker operators in the region had received formal wrecker training. Once TRIP deployed, every responding wrecker operator and supervisor from every participating tow company had received formal wrecker training. Additionally, TRIP required the towing community to receive NIMS ICS training, Basic Work Zone, Haz-Mat awareness, and SHRP2 TIM training. This package of training was designed to elevate the TRIP wrecker operators to a much higher and consistent level of ability. This high level of training has translated into efficiency of operations, quicker lane clearance and much better communication and interaction with Incident Command staff.

- m) VDOT IMC, TAMS, SSP and VSP personnel- As primary TRIP activating Stakeholders, these groups all participated in direct TRIP program and activation training. These training classes were designed to be very detail oriented and each class participant was educated on the details of the TRIP program and the processes for success. This training was conducted jointly with Parsons and VDOT staff to ensure consistency of message. They focused in part on the following duties:
 - i) Identify and verify TRIP qualifying event
 - ii) Participate in the time stamping process
 - Arrival
 - NTP
 - Work stoppage
 - Lane clearance
 - Tactical decision making

- n) VSP Dispatch and VDOT TOC Staff- Since this was a significant change to the traditional rotational towing procedure historically handled by VSP Dispatchers, it was necessary to perform joint training now that the VDOT TOC staff would be dispatching TRIP. Both entities received similar training as the activating stakeholder group, but also received specific training for their individual and joint responsibilities. It was important to develop a TRIP procedure that simply layered into the already existing procedures, and not disrupt either operation.
 - i) Within the first few months, the VDOT TOC had shown the ability to correctly identify TRIP criteria and had been engaging the process with a high level of accuracy, especially when camera coverage was sufficient to give a clear view of

a crash. This resulted in a decision to allow the TOC Supervisors, under certain specific circumstances, to activate TRIP independent of a first responder. This change in procedure has allowed for TRIP activations in a little as three minutes for several TRIP incidents.

- o) Secondary Stakeholders- This group consists primarily of local/county law enforcement and fire personnel. It became apparent early in the program that these responders would have exposure to TRIP but not be primary activators or have a direct role on scene as TRIP is concerned. Due to lessons learned in the first few months, an awareness training program for TRIP was developed as a twenty minute, narrated in-service module. This training focused more on the overall TRIP message and what a responder could expect at a TRIP crash scene. To date, it has been distributed to all local police and fire departments for their use.
- p) TIM Committee/ Conferences- The Parsons staff used the regional TIM committee and various regional presentation opportunities to educate the greater responder community about TRIP. This effort is ongoing and will continue for the life of the program.

Parsons has also developed and released a five-minute, high level training video for continued outreach and education about TRIP. This video can be used by any stakeholder group for this purpose and is now incorporated into the original TRIP training syllabus.

It was required that all towing companies complete their training at the time of their



Figure 3

application in August of 2017. The stakeholder training for TRIP operations however, took place in the late fall of 2017. This approach, albeit on a tight schedule, was pushed back deliberately to ensure that on day one of TRIP implementation on December 15, 2017 all training would be fresh in everyone's mind.

5) Program Deployment

VDOT set the deployment date for TRIP program implementation for December 15, 2017. The final group of approved towing companies came to eleven providers assigned to just over 200 miles of Interstate in the Richmond Region. The eleven companies are:

- Anytime Towing
- Dennis Towing
- Robinson Towing
- Glen Allen Towing
- Bob Alley Towing
- Eagle Towing
- Central City Towing
- Coastal Towing
- Capital Garage
- WS Campbell Towing
- Bishops Towing

A pre-deployment kickoff meeting was scheduled for early December and was designed to bring all leadership TRIP stakeholders together to review and prepare for deployment of the program. This meeting focused on the tight coordination and clear understanding required to launch TRIP seamlessly. Attendance included:

- VDOT IMC
- VDOT TOC
- VSP
- VDOT SSP
- VDOT TAMS
- TRIP towing community



Figure 4

6) Program Management

Once the TRIP program deployed, the process of ongoing management began. During the first few months of TRIP, all stakeholders were learning a new process and it was important for the Parsons and VDOT team to account for and address any “growing pains” issues as

they arose. In turn, these issues were evaluated, solved and shared with the overall stakeholder group as they occurred.

Within the first few months of the Pilot Program a determination was made to expand the TRIP activation criteria to include those CMV crashes whose response by towing and other first responders would result in lane blockage. This expansion of TRIP activation has yielded benefits as all CMV lane impacting crashes now qualify for TRIP activation, even if the CMV has left the roadway. A key element to the program management effort is the monthly TRIP After Incident Review Meetings. These meetings were made mandatory for all TRIP towing companies and an open invitation was extended to all other stakeholders. In this meeting each month, the previous month's crashes are reviewed, discussed and evaluated for incentive approvals or denials. This open forum has proven to be highly effective at bringing in lessons learned from each crash scene provided by the towing community, incident commanders and VDOT IMC and TAMS staff. Participants in this meeting are walked through the high-level details of each crash and anyone who had a role on scene is encouraged to share their details and lessons learned. Over the first 18 months, we have been successful in building a cohesive coalition of TRIP stakeholders who are actively engaged in the TRIP effort and eagerly share their experiences with each other. The result has been a steady improvement in the performance of the program over the first 18 months.

In order to prepare for each monthly meeting, the Parsons staff works behind the scenes every day to ensure that all elements of the TRIP program are being met by all of the stakeholder groups. As a result, Parsons staff have daily, weekly and monthly interactions depending on the topic, but are also available as needed for any TRIP program participant. This 24/7 focus and open line of communication across all disciplines is a key factor in the success of the program.

Over the course of each month, Parsons staff process and/or participate in the following:

- i) Synopsis reports- these are provided by all TRIP activating stakeholders, TRIP companies and the VDOT TOC. This redundant reporting tool ensures that all details and all timestamps are captured accurately for each TRIP event
- ii) Invoicing- Supplied by each TRIP towing company and processed for incentive payments
- iii) Photos- received from various sources and become part of the official record for each TRIP call and used in the monthly review meeting
- iv) PPT development - A new power point is generated each month to highlight each TRIP event and drive the monthly meeting. Excerpts are used for TRIP relevant presentations elsewhere.
- v) Emails - Occur daily and have become the primary means of communication for Program Management amongst the TRIP group
- vi) Phone calls - Occur daily and at all hours depending on circumstance
- vii) Ongoing outreach - Continues as awareness of the program grows and new stakeholders come on board.

viii) Periodic program reviews - An ongoing process in the first 18 months, this is a collaborative effort and has recently led to program language changes as we prepare for the second two-year cycle for TRIP

7) Record Keeping

Once the application process began, Parsons began designing the record keeping system that would track and document the entire program. This development continued through the entire first year of the pilot program as the process was refined based on real world activity and lessons learned along the way. Ultimately, each TRIP company is assigned a cradle to grave file that captures all current activity, cycles out employees and equipment no longer in use, and tracks towing employee training and certifications to ensure program compliance.

A TRIP reporting process was created for all primary TRIP stakeholders, and each use this reporting tool to document each TRIP incident and log all timestamps. The TRIP towing community also uses this system to self-report and all documentation is compared to the Richmond TOC reporting. The TOC serves as the formal record keeper for TRIP and this redundant reporting method has proven to be nearly 100% accurate. During the first 18 months of the TRIP Pilot program, only one reporting discrepancy was noted.

Furthermore, Parsons developed an invoicing mechanism to process incentive payments for successful TRIP performance. This process did take some time to refine as there was no clear path for VDOT to pay the incentives directly. As a result, Parsons processes all invoices through VDOT and pays the incentives directly to the towing companies.

8) Lessons learned

Beginning with the early stages of outreach and through the first 18 months, there were many lessons learned that allowed the Parsons and VDOT staff to identify challenges and solve the issues that materialized. Several examples are listed below to illustrate:

- a) **Consistency of message** - early on during the outreach phase of TRIP, it became apparent that the initial reaction to TRIP was not always positive. As we spread the word and met with stakeholders, there was a significant number of questions flowing back through both Parsons and VDOT staff members. Often, the towing community would “shop” for the answer they were looking for and would attempt to circumvent previous answers and direction. The Parsons/ VDOT team anticipated this dynamic and took measures to ensure that the TRIP message was consistent regardless of who the messenger was. As a result, these types of issues became short lived and have not been an issue since program deployment.
- b) **Stakeholder identification/involvement** - Early during the process of identifying potential TRIP activating stakeholders, the Parsons team had meetings with

representatives from the Virginia State Police. Those meetings centered around VSP involvement and addressed other law enforcement entities that may handle CMV crashes on the interstate. At that time, VSP indicated that no other law enforcement agency was a primary responder or investigator at CMV crashes. Shortly after program implementation, a County law enforcement officer found himself as the Incident Commander at a rollover CMV crash that qualified for TRIP activation. Because he was not familiar with TRIP, no activation was made, and the crash was handled by the normal rotational towing procedure. It will be important for any future TRIP implementations in the Commonwealth to ensure that a complete list of stakeholders is developed as early as possible.

- c) **TRIP activation education** - In addition to the example above, during the first 12 months of TRIP, several potential TRIP activations were not activated. In the first year, program managers identified at least 14 crashes, that in hindsight, may or should have been activated for TRIP but were not. This was attributed to the “growing pains” element referenced earlier as many first responders either did not identify the crash as TRIP qualifying or were concerned about making a bad decision. As a result of a few months of this growing trend, the Parsons and VDOT team met directly with VSP Division 1 leadership staff and presented a consolidated TRIP message designed to educate and encourage the use of the TRIP standardized response tool. Furthermore, an online training module was developed and distributed for those agencies not normally assigned as primary TRIP stakeholders but may have occasional exposure. This training was distributed regionwide and will be used for any future TRIP implementations.
- d) **Tactical Decision Making** - Prior to July 2017, Virginia statutes did not contain a “hold harmless” law for the towing community. Because of this lack of statutory support, the towing community practiced “damage free towing” and the idea of quick lane clearance strategies was not the normal path to clearing CMV crashes. HB 2022 was passed in July 2017 and coincided perfectly with the WreckMaster training that was required for the program. TRIP is a quick clearance program first, and a towing and recovery program second. This statutory change coupled with the philosophy of TRIP changed the mindset within the entire stakeholder group, but most notably with the towing community. During outreach and continuing through the life of the program, the message continues to be about tactical decision making. Can we move it? Relocate to a safer area? Or, do we have to work the crash where it is? These are the tactical decisions that must be presented by the towing professional to the incident commander at each TRIP crash. This was new to the entire stakeholder group and this type of decision-making approach remains a constant topic as the TRIP group learns and evolves.
- e) **TOC TRIP Activation** - During the first few months of the TRIP Pilot Program, it became apparent that the VDOT TOC Supervisory Staff were doing an incredible job during TRIP activations. They became very adept at disseminating crash information from the field and imparting good Q&A in their effort to assist with the TRIP process. On a number of occasions, staff opined about a particular crash qualifying for TRIP, only to be told that TRIP was not going to be activated. This generated much discussion,

and it was recommended and approved for the TOC staff to activate TRIP under very specific circumstances. To date, this change has paid huge dividends as the TOC Supervisors have activated TRIP in as little as 2 or 3 minutes from the time of the crash, thus expediting the towing response. It is recommended that TOC Supervisor activation authority be part of the Concept of Operations consideration for any future expansion of TRIP in the Commonwealth.

- f) **Towing Community Credibility** – The TRIP program is also about relationships between all responding stakeholders. Prior to TRIP, some towing companies did not enjoy a healthy and respectful relationship with other responding entities. Lack of training, communication and lack of awareness of the ICS process were identified as the most likely causes. The level of TRIP training, a change in professional behavior on scene, and monthly interactions in the formal review meetings have paved the way for the building of good relationships. In the first 18 months, representatives from all the stakeholder groups, including senior levels of Division 1 VSP have complimented the TRIP program and the TRIP towing partners for their high level of professional performance at the scene of CMV crashes, and their acknowledgement on the value of TRIP.
- g) **Monthly After Incident Review meeting**- The recurring monthly review meetings have proven to be an excellent tool in evaluating each TRIP crash to determine program performance. It has also served to bring the greater towing community and responding stakeholders together to share experiences and provide lessons learned. This sharing of experiences is invaluable and has brought the entire TIM stakeholder community together.

9) Performance measures

After the conclusion of the first twelve months of TRIP, and in partnership with Virginia Transportation Research Council staff, the Parsons and VDOT team participated in a detailed performance data review of TRIP. This review compared TRIP to historical crash data to illustrate the benefits of TRIP as compared to historical rotational towing practices. The details contained within that report are available for further review and will not be duplicated here.

In addition to the data collection, comparison and reporting that the Research Council staff engaged in, the Parsons and VDOT team kept every detail of each TRIP crash. This summary will serve to provide a brief overview of the data collection specific to the TRIP program.

- a) TRIP Activations- December 15, 2017 through June 30, 2019
 - i) 130 TRIP activations
 - ii) 94 qualified for incentive bonus payment
 - iii) 30 did not meet TRIP performance goals and did not qualify for incentive bonus payment'
 - iv) 6 TRIP calls were cancelled and received a \$600 mobilization incentive

In the first 18 and a half months of TRIP, the towing companies achieved an incentive bonus by meeting performance goals 75% of the time. During a review of just the last six months it has been noted that the percentage has risen to just over 83% of TRIP crashes resulting in an incentive bonus being paid. This is an internal trend that the Parsons team has been tracking and is indicative of the level of performance steadily rising as stakeholders become more accustomed to the program, and as the TRIP towing community refines their skill set.

The Research Council report highlights the entire life of each crash, and within those details lies activities by others that have nothing to do with the TRIP effort and performance but still impact overall clearance times.

Another factor that the Parsons team has monitored in the first 18 months was individual, overall performance of each of the towing companies participating in TRIP. Their individual success rate for achieving incentive payments are as follows:

- Anytime Towing 94% success rating
- Bishops Towing 71% success rating
- Bob Alley Towing 80% success rating
- Central City Towing 60% success rating
- Capital Garage 78% success rating
- Coastal Towing 38% success rating
- Dennis Towing 73% success rating
- Eagle Towing 80% success rating
- Glen Allen Towing 80% success rating
- Robinson Towing 81% success rating
- WS Campbell Towing 88% success rating

Overall success rating 75%

As illustrated above, all but one TRIP provider is performing at a very high level and most of the reasons a TRIP company did not meet program goals was primarily for lane clearance issues due to the circumstance of the crash. There were several late arrivals and failure to wear the required safety vest, but those numbers are low when compared to the overall number of TRIP activations.

Performance reviews are part of the ongoing evaluation of the TRIP program and as we collect enough data and number of TRIP crashes, we will be performing formal reviews of each company’s performance and will work with each one to identify:

- Base reason for missed incentive
- Details of the crash scene
- Time of day
- Weather conditions
- Cooperation with Incident Command
- Activities outside of their control
- Comparisons to similar crash circumstances

Any company that falls below 70% has been monitored, and a full performance review will be triggered should improvements not materialize.

