

**TEC Rail Topic Group, TRAGIS Subgroup Conference Call
DRAFT**

Tuesday, April 11, 2006
12 p.m. to 12:40 p.m. CST

Group Co-Chairs: Sarah Wochos (CSG), Paul Johnson (ORNL).

Participants: Ralph Best (DOE), Doug Osborn (Sandia), Scott Field (WIEB).

DOE Support contractors also participated on the call.

Action Items:

Responsible Party

Action to be Taken

Sarah Wochos

Read through TRAGIS manual

Ralph Best

Provide list of factors from route identification studies

Paul Johnson

Perform sensitivity analysis and explain the factors that can affect chosen routing practices.

Send Sarah the list of factors

Doug Osborn

Assist Paul with sensitivity analysis

All

Submit elements to be included in the workplan

Summary:

The purpose of this call was to discuss the status of the TRAGIS system update. Additionally, the participants discussed the conditions affecting the route identification process.

General Comments

Paul Johnson established that the following changes would be made to the next version of the TRAGIS system. First, FRA files indicating accident locations would be integrated into the program. Second, more effort will be placed into GIS enhancements. Once this occurs, a display can be projected that identifies various point data on the rail line of interest. He went on to say that the rail portion of TRAGIS could be utilized as a GIS tool by the rail inspectors in order to check for problems. A participant asked Paul how far into the past one could retrieve data. He indicated that the system contains ten years

worth of data, broken down on an annual basis. Sarah then asked if he had a specific deadline for entering the information. Paul replied that he intended to have this done within the next few months. One of the participants noted that the Rail Information Update would be finished by the end of the summer.

Sarah highlighted the fact that portion 2A of the agenda represents an extensive undertaking. She asked the participants how they would recommend proceeding in regard to the various constraints and assumptions that have the potential to affect route identification. Scott Field observed that Paul should provide a basic model outlining the assumptions made prior to running a route. Paul stressed that when one considers the method by which TRAGIS configures routes, it is the rail that is the primary focus. TRAGIS currently calculates a route by obtaining the desired distance and then weighing it by traffic density. There are currently 4 density levels: 1) A-mainline, 2) B-mainline, 3) A-branchline, and 4) B-branchline. The top 3 groupings combine to form the highest of 4 classes, which can then be differentiated further.

If one were to access the routing parameters screen in TRAGIS, he or she could create a sample route. First, he or she would choose between the default manifest freight and the dedicated train route types. When choosing the former, the originating railroad will receive preference. In contrast, when choosing the latter, the originating railroad factor is removed and the interchange penalty is reduced by a factor of 10. As a result, this reduction in the interchange penalty allows individuals more freedom to select a direct route between their desired beginning and ending points. Ralph Best asked Paul whether or not the railroads had reached the conclusion that it would be best to keep the interchange penalty the same across all route types. He indicated that they had. Furthermore, he stressed that they do not support a reduction in the value of the transfer penalty but rather they would like to see its default value equal 1. In response, Sarah highlighted the fact that these factor values have been used for 30 years and have not been changed because they continue to produce reasonable results. Scott added that the group should be considering “change” in regard to the variable factors that one is presented with when in the process of route calculation. He added that it was not Paul’s intent to recommend an overall change in the numeric values and calculations within the TRAGIS function.

Ralph suggested that it would be best to view TRAGIS as a tool. This tool is influenced by various factors that affect the way it operates in regard to routing. Such factors that must be considered in this example include the tool’s proposed function(s) and its resultant policy implications. A participant indicated that the group may very well conclude that the way in which DOE currently utilizes TRAGIS is most appropriate. In the meantime, Sarah expressed the desire to have someone take each of these factors, as outlined in the TRAGIS manual, and have him or her explain the function of each in more simplistic terms. She also wondered whether there have been changes made to the rail routing parameters screen. If so, she wanted to know what they were and how they have been altered. These questions would be addressed by the participants via this month’s action items.

Lastly, Sarah asked the participants to submit their ideas so that she could create a workplan and send out a corresponding timeline.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:40 p.m. CST. A follow-up call has yet to be scheduled.