

4. Sobriety/Traffic Safety Checkpoints

CSAP Primary Prevention Strategies

- Information dissemination
- Community-based process
- Environmental

Strategy

Sobriety/traffic safety checkpoints are temporary roadblocks used by law enforcement to identify and intervene on drivers who are under the influence of alcohol. Sobriety checkpoints involve a systematic, consistent approach in which law enforcement officers stop vehicles in a specific pattern or sequence to evaluate drivers for signs of alcohol impairment at identified points on a roadway. The checkpoints are often set up at pre-determined dates and locations that coincide with when and where the most alcohol-related accidents occur within the community. This strategy helps to increase the visibility of law enforcement within the community and reinforces the significance of established laws related to drinking and driving.

Considerations for Planning

Sobriety checkpoints are an effective way to tackle the impaired driving problem within a community. There is substantial evidence that shows sobriety checkpoints can reduce alcohol-related accidents. Similar to other environmental strategies, sobriety checkpoints are most effective when used in conjunction with the implementation and enforcement of alcohol-related policies and restrictions. Any agency considering the use of sobriety checkpoints should integrate them with a continuing, comprehensive and assertive enforcement program that includes ongoing media support, public awareness and community education. This will maximize the deterrent effect and increase the community awareness of being detained and arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol. It is essential to collaborate with the judicial system to ensure that sanctions are administered consistently beyond the checkpoint and in the court.

Community support is also essential for conducting successful sobriety checkpoints. Utilize established partnerships to acquire support for this strategy. If necessary, begin building partnerships with advocacy and health care groups, local businesses, insurance agencies, school boards, judges, prosecutors and other elected officials.

Prior to site selection for the checkpoints, work with law enforcement to identify locations with a high incidence of alcohol-related crashes or fatalities. When implementing the checkpoints, it's important to consider the safety of all those involved and determine traffic volume. Checkpoints should be conducted with the least amount of inconvenience and intrusion to motorists. Law enforcement, along with your group or network, should be aware that it is not feasible to check every passing vehicle.

Key Terms

1. Low-staffing sobriety checkpoints:

These checkpoints are conducted with four to six officers, they are very mobile and typically they will not last as long as full-scale sobriety checkpoints. They are usually conducted by agencies that have limited resources, but still desire to make a significant impact on the impaired driving problem in their communities.

2. Full-scale sobriety checkpoints:

These checkpoints utilize additional staff and resources, employing at least 10-12 officers at each location.

Fundamental Steps

1. Review existing laws and policies on conducting sobriety checkpoints. Determine if it is legal to administer sobriety checkpoints within your state.
2. If sobriety checkpoints are legal within your state, gather the support and commitment of law enforcement and determine the extent of available staff and resources.
3. Collect and analyze local data on community-specific impaired driving rates: alcohol-related crashes, injuries and fatalities, enforcement of impaired driving laws and the consequences and/or sanctions issued when the laws are broken. Utilizing the local data, identify possible locations for high volumes of alcohol-related crashes.
4. Begin to enlist prosecutorial and judicial support for the planning, implementation and evaluation of the strategy. The expertise of a prosecuting attorney (district attorney, attorney general, etc.) should be an essential component of the sobriety checkpoint planning process. The prosecutor can advise you and your law enforcement allies on legally acceptable procedures in planning and operating sobriety checkpoints in your community. The jurisdiction's presiding judge should be informed of the proposed checkpoints and procedures to ensure their willingness to adjudicate cases.
5. Collaborate with other citizen activist groups such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) or Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) and obtain community support.
6. Increase community awareness and support by holding press conferences and issuing press releases that highlight the problems associated with drinking and driving in your community. Emphasize how conducting the sobriety checkpoints can reduce these problems.
7. Give law enforcement and prosecutors time to develop a plan to implement the sobriety checkpoints. Potential sites for the checkpoints should be included, as well as clarification on the specific sequence that will be used to determine which vehicles will be stopped. Note the method selected must appear in the administrative order authorizing the use of sobriety checkpoints, depending on your state's laws.
8. Encourage law enforcement to prepare alternative plans to deal with inclement weather, traffic congestion, road construction or other traffic safety issues.
9. Encourage experienced law enforcement staff to conduct operational briefings to inform officers of the standard procedures and protocol for conducting sobriety checkpoints.
10. Determine the immediate, intermediate and long-term outcomes of the strategy and clarify methods of evaluation.
11. Work with law enforcement in a supporting capacity to implement sobriety checkpoints at the designated dates and locations.
12. Evaluate the overall effectiveness of the strategy.

Helpful Tips and Suggestions

Establishing Support and Obtaining Partners

When establishing partnerships with your local/state law enforcement, it is essential to be flexible and accommodating. Law enforcement balance many tasks and responsibilities – and conducting sobriety checkpoints requires resources, money and manpower. Reinforce how conducting sobriety checkpoints can help reduce alcohol-related crashes, injuries and fatalities within the community. Identify both the short and long-term benefits of conducting this strategy and discuss how it directly benefits the larger community.

Media Awareness and Advocacy

- Contact a local representative to convince him or her that holding sobriety/traffic safety checkpoints is a beneficial idea for the community.
- Hold individual meetings with those in key positions to affect change (e.g., elected officials, law enforcement).
- Work with local media outlets to air PSAs describing the details of the checkpoints.
- Write letters to the editor about the problems associated with drinking and driving and how sobriety/traffic safety checkpoints can help reduce these problems.

Potential Partners

- Local media – television and newspaper
- Local, county and state enforcement agencies
- Local and county prosecutors and judges
- Citizens on Patrol
- Auxiliary police
- Volunteer fire fighters
- Police cadets
- Groups like SADD and MADD chapters
- Local substance abuse agencies
- Parents
- Youth

Estimated Timeline

- Six to eight months for planning, implementation and evaluation of the strategy

Potential Barriers or Obstacles



- Lack of knowledge, training and experience on the part of law enforcement regarding how to conduct sobriety checkpoints
- Minimal or limited relationship with law enforcement
- Low priority for law enforcement
- Limited staff and resources to conduct sobriety checkpoints
- Poor follow-up on the part of the court system
- Poor public perception of sobriety checkpoints

Possible Short- and Long-Term Outcomes

- Increase in community's awareness and support of sobriety checkpoints
- Average time delay to motorists
- Number and type of arrests
- Number of motorists detained for field sobriety testing
- Perception of the quality of checkpoint cases brought before prosecutors and judges, including special problems
- Reaction of police officers participating in the sobriety checkpoint, including degree of support and effect on morale
- Decrease in alcohol-related crashes, injuries and fatalities
- Increase in alcohol-related driving offenses
- Decrease in arrests at sobriety checkpoints over time

Suggested Resources

Supplemental Resources Related to this Strategy

1. Sample Model Operational Plan Low-Staffing Sobriety Checkpoints – Sobriety Checkpoints Operations Plan.....	84-86
2. Model Operational Diagram Four-Lane Undivided Highway.....	87
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Additional Resources and Information Available at faceproject.org

Links (A browser document called “Helpful Links” is located on the Resource CD for easier navigation.)

www.ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/checkpoint_laws.html

A list of state laws governing the implementation of sobriety checkpoints.

**[www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/enforce/LowStaffing_Checkpoints/
images/LowStaffing.pdf](http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/enforce/LowStaffing_Checkpoints/images/LowStaffing.pdf)**

Low-Staffing Sobriety Checkpoints

www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/alcohol/saturation_patrols/satpats2002.pdf

Saturation Patrols & Sobriety Checkpoints Guide

**[www.wsdot.wa.gov/NR/rdonlyres/F8594F1C-7A55-4A0A-A8E4-7490CEB65A70/
0/SobrietyCheckpoints.pdf](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/NR/rdonlyres/F8594F1C-7A55-4A0A-A8E4-7490CEB65A70/0/SobrietyCheckpoints.pdf)**

Sobriety Checkpoints: Synthesis of Issues

Sample Model Operational Plan Low-Staffing Sobriety Checkpoints Sobriety Checkpoint Operations Plan

Purpose

The purpose of conducting three sobriety checkpoints during the same night is to send a message to motorists who are under the influence of alcohol or drugs that they may encounter a sobriety checkpoint anytime they get behind the wheel of a vehicle. They may encounter a checkpoint on any day of the week, at any time of the day and on any street in Jefferson County.

As with any sobriety checkpoint, the word spreads fast of the checkpoint location, and motorists under the influence avoid these areas. This operation is designed to be set up in 15 minutes, taken down and moved to another location within a minimal amount of time, usually 15-30 minutes. By completing this, motorists under the influence may see the sobriety checkpoint at one location and avoid this area in fear of being arrested. If the motorists later travel another road, they may encounter another checkpoint and later on another checkpoint on another roadway. Statistics from the Tennessee Checkpoint Operation have proven this a more effective way of discouraging motorists under the influence of drugs and alcohol to drive.

Location: 10600 Block of West Ken Caryl Avenue

This particular location was selected due to the number of DWI arrests that have been made in the area. Approximately 41 percent of all DWI arrests made by deputies in unincorporated Jefferson County occur in this general vicinity. This location provides sufficient room for the necessary staging areas so the checkpoint and traffic will be able to flow smoothly and safely through the area. Drivers who choose not to be contacted can legally turn and avoid the checkpoint at South Kipling Street and Continental Divide for westbound traffic and South Simms Street, Chatfield Avenue and West Indore Drive for eastbound traffic. Variable messaging signs (VMS) warning motorists of the upcoming checkpoint will be placed before the checkpoint (see attached diagram). The shoulder for east and westbound traffic is sufficient to maintain patrol cars for contact deputies/officers. The number two lanes for both east and westbound traffic will be coned off and also provide an area for roadsides.

Selected Time: 1900 - 0330 Hours

Since the beginning of 2003, 96 percent of all DUI arrests made by Jefferson County deputies were made during the above times. This also correlates and parallels with data produced in national studies.

Date: May 30, 2004 (Sunday)

Operations Plan

The checkpoint will be placed in the 10600 Block of West Ken Caryl Avenue; six contact officers, three for eastbound traffic and three for westbound traffic, are assigned this duty. The contact officers' patrol units will have all of their emergency lighting activated and their spotlights shining in the contact area. Reflective cones will be placed on the center line and the number one lane will be blocked off by cones and a marked patrol car (see diagram). Reflective cones will also be placed against the median guiding the motorist into the pattern, approximately 50 feet in both directions. LED flares will be placed on the

cones entering the contact area as well as the white roadway boundary line. Two traffic control officers, not being used as contact officers, will be placed approximately 50 feet prior to the cone pattern along with contact officers with their overhead emergency lighting activated to slow approaching motorists. Roadway portable speed bumps will also be placed before entering the cone pattern in each direction.

To comply with the law, a VMS sign will be placed on Ken Caryl Avenue just west of Chatfield Avenue for eastbound traffic. This will allow motorists to legally exit the highway onto South Simms Street, Chatfield Avenue and West Indore Drive before entering the sobriety checkpoint. One marked uniform motorcycle, acting as a chase car, will be placed at this location. One VMS sign will be placed just east of Kipling Street for westbound traffic. One marked uniform motorcycle will be placed at this location, acting as a chase car. This will allow motorists to legally exit onto South Kipling Street and Continental Divide Road before entering the sobriety checkpoint.

One stationary sobriety checkpoint sign will be placed 100 feet west of Kipling Street on westbound Ken Caryl Avenue. One stationary sobriety checkpoint sign will be placed on Continental Divide Road at the intersection of Ken Caryl Avenue.

One stationary sobriety checkpoint sign will be placed approximately 100 yards east of Chatfield Avenue on eastbound Ken Caryl Avenue.

The motorcycle officers' responsibilities will be to watch for vehicles making inadvertent maneuvers to avoid the checkpoint.

Traffic will be maintained through both east and westbound traffic. Three contact officers at a time, per lane, will be used to look for intoxicated drivers. If a suspected DUI is located, the driver will be directed off the highway by the contact officer and onto the shoulder of the highway or into the blocked – off number two lane. The contact officer will remain with the suspected intoxicated driver. If the contact officer determines that the person is not capable of driving the vehicle to the shoulder of the road, the driver will be escorted from the vehicle and walked to the area where roadside maneuvers will be conducted. Another officer will then drive the vehicle to the shoulder of the road.

Patrol car spotlights will be the only lighting in the contact area. Contact officers, leaving the contact area with their patrol cars, will not leave until being relieved by another patrol unit that can illuminate the same area being vacated by the previous patrol unit. In the event that generator-operated lighting (light towers) are used, special care should be taken so as not to blind any oncoming traffic.

Contact officers will be responsible for their own arrests. The only exception will be if the motorcycle or K-9 officers contact a DUI. In this case, an available contact officer will respond to pick up the suspected intoxicated driver. The motorcycle officer will complete a statement of probable cause for the stop and give it to the assisting contact officer. The contact officer will then proceed as if it were his arrest originally. If a driver is suspected of DUI, the driver will be taken into custody by the arresting officer and transported to the JCSO booking area. The driver's vehicle will be searched by officers and towed by the JCSO contract tow company. If a sober passenger is in the vehicle, the passenger may, with the driver's permission, take responsibility for the vehicle. If the driver does not wish a passenger to take the vehicle, or the passenger(s) are unable to operate a motor vehicle, they will be taken to a nearby pay telephone that has a parking lot for safety. The motorcycle supervisor will make occasional runs through the parking lot to ensure the safety of these individuals. In no event will intoxicated passengers be allowed to leave on foot, and in most cases these intoxicated passengers will be transported to the Arapahoe House for safety reasons.

Warning Devices

Warning devices will be used to warn motorists of the checkpoint and guide them into the checkpoint with a minimum amount of confusion, delay or danger. VMS signs warning of the checkpoint will be placed before the checkpoint on Ken Caryl Avenue, just west of South Simms Street for westbound motorists, and just east of South Kipling Street on Ken Caryl Avenue. The motorcycle units will evaluate traffic conditions at the intersection of Ken Caryl Avenue and Continental Divide, and Ken Caryl Avenue at South Simms Street, notifying the operations sergeant of potential traffic back-ups. One stationary sobriety checkpoint sign will be placed 100 feet west of Kipling Street on westbound Ken Caryl Avenue. One stationary sobriety checkpoint sign will be placed on Continental Divide Road at the intersection of Ken Caryl Avenue. One stationary sobriety checkpoint sign will be placed approximately 100 yards east of Chatfield Avenue on eastbound Ken Caryl Avenue to alert motorists of the upcoming checkpoint.

Contacts

During the checkpoint, efforts will be made to stop every vehicle entering east and westbound Ken Caryl Avenue in the 10600 block. The only exceptions to this will be emergency vehicles on emergency runs. Motorcycle officers responsible for traffic control/chase units will be placed at the junction of South Simms Street and Ken Caryl Avenue for eastbound traffic, and South Kipling and Ken Caryl Avenue for westbound motorists. These officers will be responsible for monitoring the effect of the checkpoint on traffic at the two intersections.

Arrests

Contact officers will conduct the standardized field sobriety tests on any driver they suspect as being intoxicated. If there is probable cause to arrest the driver, the contact officer will take the driver into custody. The contact officer will be responsible for completing all of the paperwork required by his/her agency for DUI arrests, including the affidavit and notice of revocation form. The arresting officer will transport the driver to the Jefferson County Jail for chemical testing and processing. If it is determined the driver is under the influence, the arresting officer will call the operations sergeant and advise him the vehicle can now be towed.

Once the appropriate documents have been completed and served, the driver will be released to a sober adult or transported to the Arapahoe House. Copies of the documents generated will be forwarded to Sergeant Vette.

Briefing

At 1900 hours, a briefing will be held at the Jefferson County Sheriffs Office, 200 Jefferson County Parkway, Golden, Colorado. The purpose of the briefing is to assign tasks and outline checkpoint procedures. Any questions that arise will be addressed at that time. A post-checkpoint critique and report will be completed to address any problems, ensure paperwork regarding arrests is completed and to evaluate the overall success of the checkpoint.

Work Force Requirements and Responsibilities

Contact officers, traffic control officers and chase car positions are all interchangeable, so everyone will have to be familiar with everyone else's position.

- Driver Contact Officers (Line)/Roadside Evaluations (4)
- Traffic Control Officers (0)
- Chase Cars (0)
- Cadets/Reserves-Statistics/pattern set-up and take-down (1)
- Supervision (1)

Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Driver Contact Officers and Roadside Evaluations Officers will determine which drivers will be allowed through the pattern, and which will be directed to an evaluation area. Officers selected for this position should be familiar with the signs of intoxication and proficient in applying their knowledge. They will have a pre-rehearsed statement, (i.e., " I am Deputy/Officer [name] of the [name of department]. You have been stopped at a sobriety checkpoint set up to identify intoxicated drivers), which they will recite to the drivers. Contact officers will base their decision to allow the driver through the pattern or to the evaluation area on the recognized signs of intoxication. Contact officer will not ask for the driver's license or any other documentation. Any vehicle, in which plain view observations of illegal activity (i.e., drug paraphernalia, etc.) are made, will be directed to the evaluation area for further investigation. Contact officers directing drivers to the evaluation area will accompany the driver and continue the investigation in the evaluation area. Business cards may be given to motorists during the sobriety checkpoint. Contact officers will be responsible for conducting sobriety examinations on drivers directed to the evaluation area. Officers selected for this role should be comfortable and proficient in the use of Standardized Field Sobriety Tests.

Driver Contact Officers should be equipped with portable breath test (PBT) instruments (where applicable), but the decision to arrest should not be solely based on these instruments. The contact officers will place drivers who do not satisfactorily complete the examination into custody.

Traffic Officers will be required to slow and guide drivers into the traffic control pattern, and to the approaching driver contact officer. Reserve officers can be used for this role.

Date:

Location:

Jefferson County Sheriffs Department Personnel Lieutenant D. Gard/Watch Commander/
Supervision V-1 6, Sergeant B. Vette-Supervision-Operations

Contact Officers (list names of line officers)

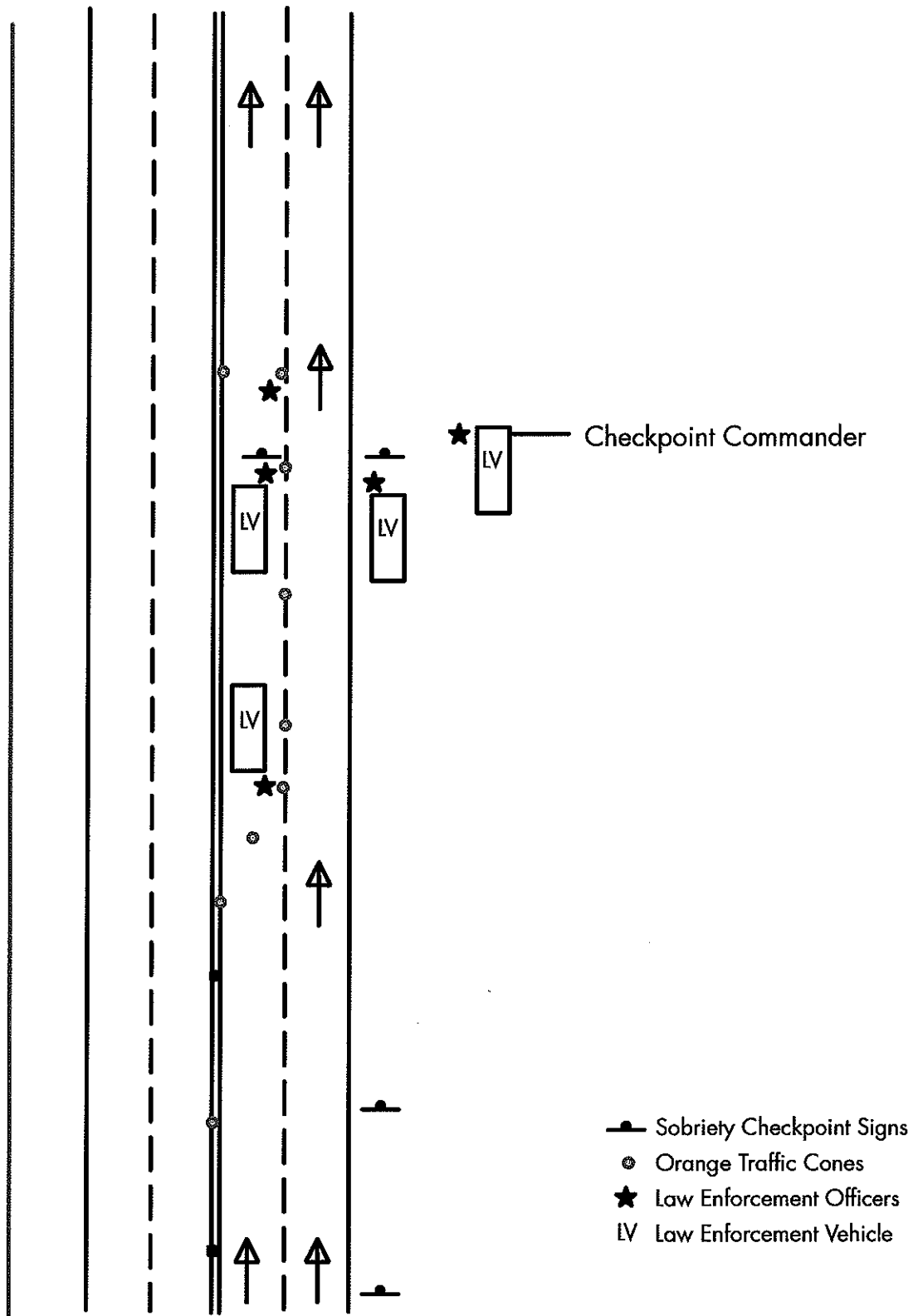
Public Information Officer (list name of officers)

Sobriety Checkpoint Resource Lists

Resource		Provider
Pre-Checkpoint Publicity PLO	(X)	CDOT , Jefferson County Sheriffs Office
Traffic Control Equipment	(X)	Jefferson County Sheriffs Office (2) Variable Message Signs (VMS) and 50 reflective cones. JCSO- (1) VMS sign and (10) stationary "Sobriety Checkpoint Ahead" signs. 100 LED flares
Vehicle Towing	(X)	Towing Company
Detox. Services	(X)	Name Service (if applicable)
Blood Draw/Intoximeter Operator	(X)	Ambulance Service/Certified Intoximeter Operator

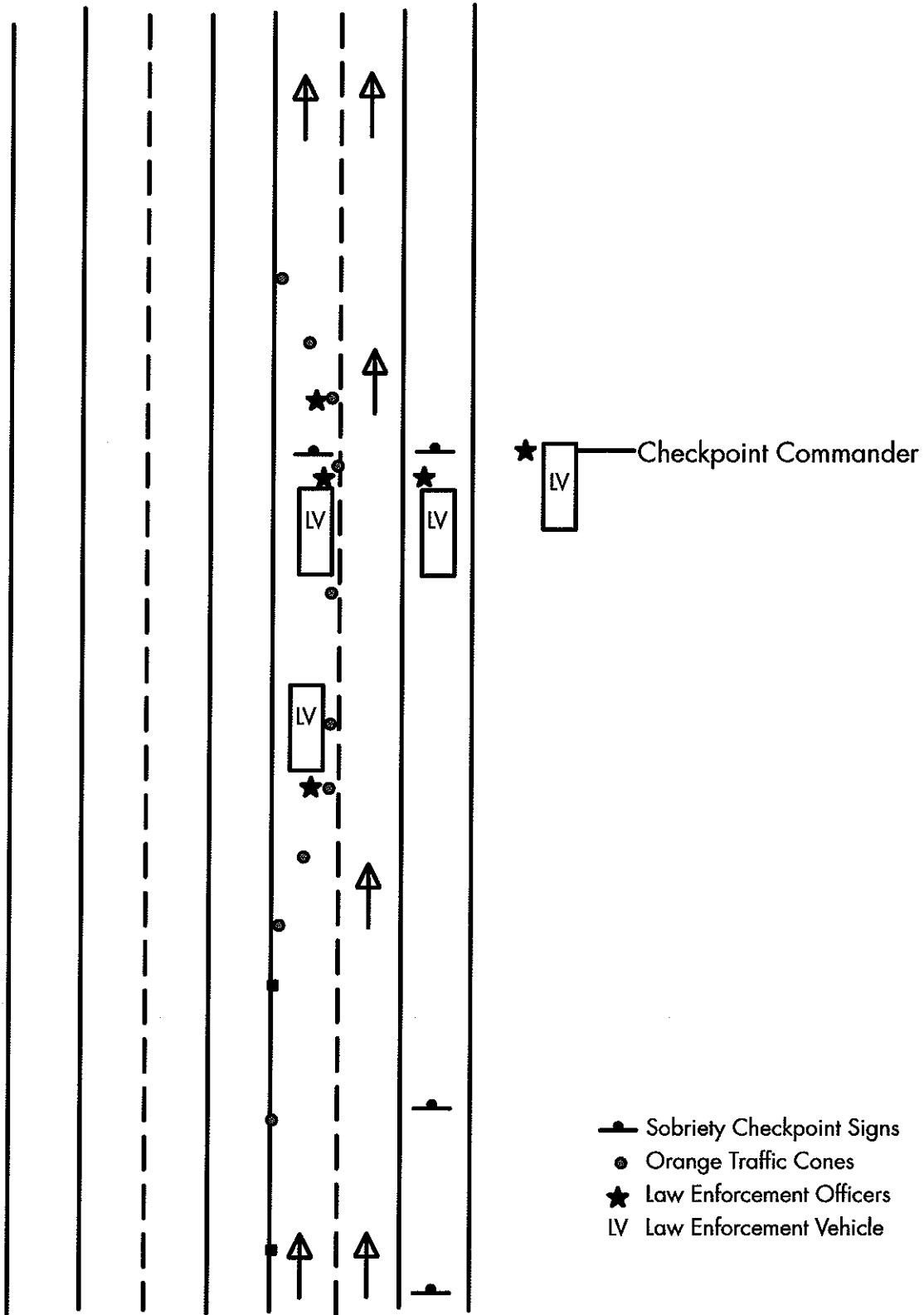
Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Model Operational Diagram Four-Lane Undivided Highway



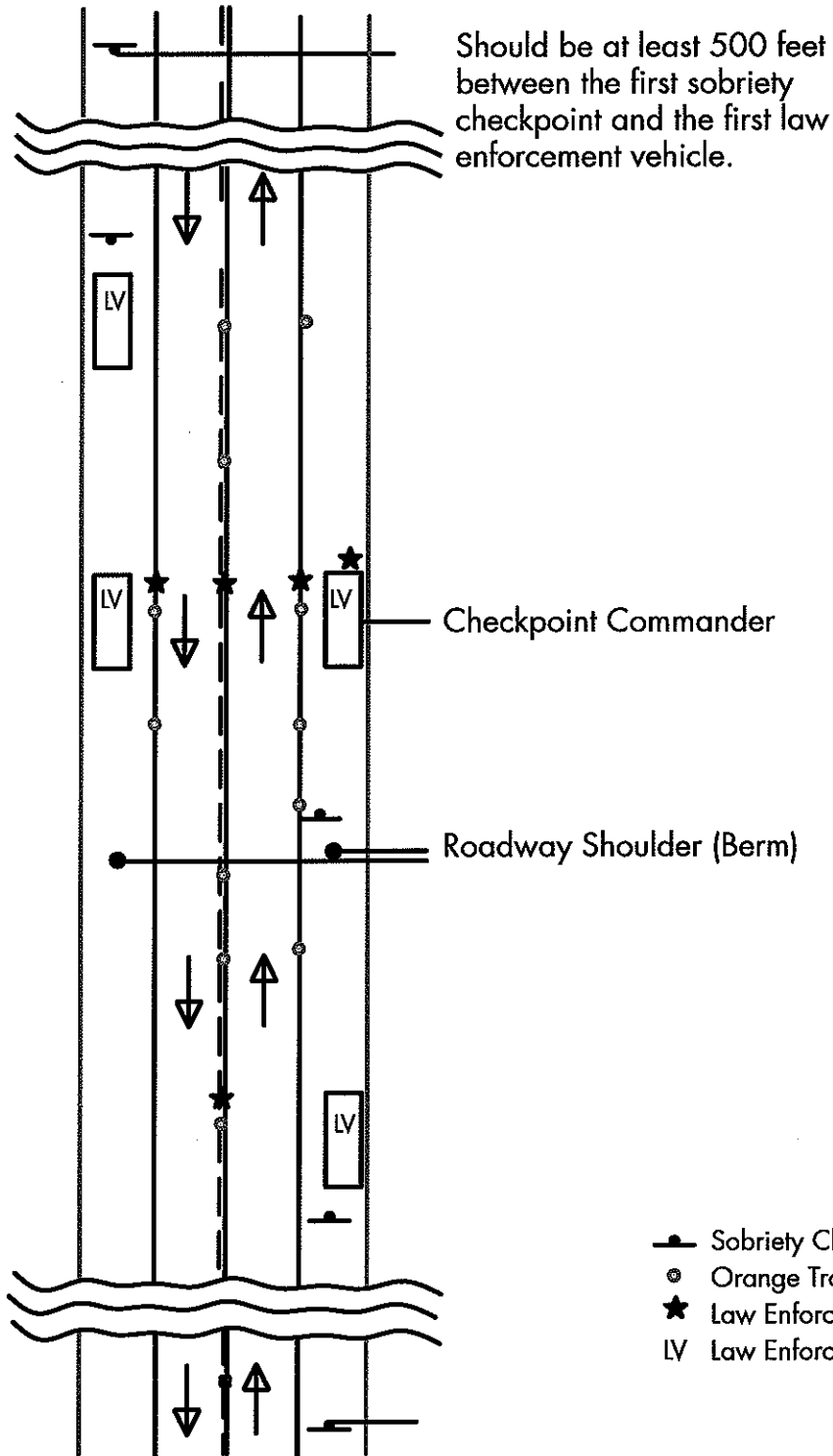
Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Model Operational Diagram Four-Lane Divided Highway



Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Model Operational Diagram Low-Volume Two-Lane Roadway Shoulder (Berm) Present



Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Low-Staffing Sobriety Checkpoint Assignment Report

Due to sobriety checkpoints being governed by a U.S. Supreme Court decision, Michigan State Police vs. Sitz, 1990, an assignment report should be completed and included with final reports and made available to the prosecutors and courts for prosecution.

(Name of Host Agency)
Low-Staffing Sobriety Checkpoint
(Location)
(Date)

Assignments

Checkpoint Commander:

Command Vehicle Driver:

Evidential Breath Test Operator:

DRE:

Phlebotomist:

Public Information Officer:

Traffic Control Devices:

Traffic Control Set-Up:

Booking Officer(s):

Roving Patrol Vehicle(s):

Chase Car(s):

Checkpoint Line Officers:

Volunteer(s) Assignments: