

Identification and Evaluation of Engineering Solutions to Accident Reduction in North Queensland

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Abstract:

This study is directed towards the design of cost-effective engineering solutions for reducing accidents which have been identified to have been mainly caused by adverse road conditions. Using the Queensland Department of Transport database PHYLAK, accident frequency, severity and circumstances (RUM numbers) have been analysed for all declared rural roads within the three northern Queensland districts of Townsville, Cairns and Mackay. Priority for remedial measures has been based on the road contributing accidents/km of link. A benefit/cost ratio has been calculated for each remedial measure for the selected links for each district. These measures have been ranked in descending benefit/cost ratio for funding priority.

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Introduction

It has been reported that road accidents in Australia cost the community an estimated six billion dollars annually (BTCE,1988). This figure is based on the financial cost of loss of life, emergency and recuperative services for the injured, pain and suffering of victims and families, property damage, and lost productivity. A reduction in accidents results in a direct benefit to the community, and it is therefore, important to implement effective measures for accident reduction. In order to reduce road accidents it is necessary to establish trends in accident location and circumstances surrounding the accidents so as to design the most effective strategies for reducing accidents and thus provide maximum benefit to the community in general.

The principal objectives of this study are as follows:

- (i) identify sections of rural roads that have above average accident concentrations,
- ii) determine trends in location or circumstance surrounding these accidents,
- iii) design measures which may be implemented to reduce accidents along those sections,
- iv) determine benefit/cost ratios in order to determine priority for implementation of remedial measures.

This study has been carried out for the Queensland Department of Transport districts 9, 11 and 8 based respectively in Townsville, Cairns and Mackay. The district boundaries are shown in Figure 1. The entire period for which data is available in the Department of Transport accident database is used in this study. This covers four years and eleven months from July 1984 to May 1989.

Methodology

Accident Classification

Many attempts have been made to devise a useful system for classification of accidents. This is a difficult task as a variable describing an accident must be able to

- i) identify the vehicle manoeuvres that were indicated by the drivers
- ii) describe factually what the vehicle manoeuvres actually were
- iii) reflect directions of impacts received by vehicle or vehicles.

This is achieved by means of the Road User Movement (or RUM) system of numbers (Hutchinson, 1987) which uses 85 categories to describe the nature of an accident. These categories consist of ten groups of related circumstances. Major classification of RUM numbers are shown in Table 1

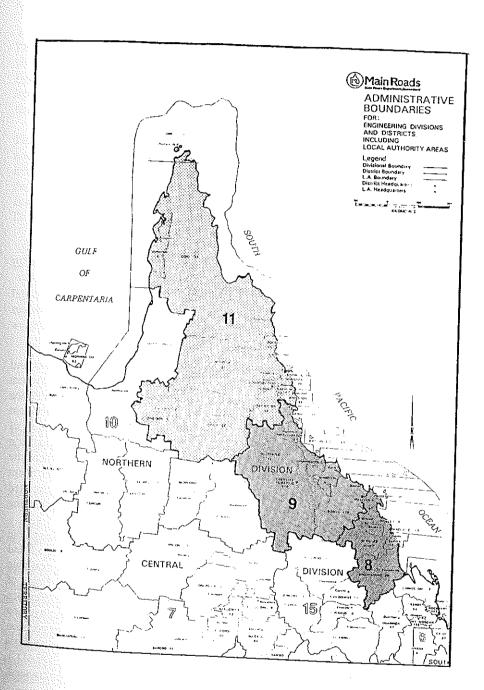


Figure One: District Boundaries

Table 1 Accident classification by RUM numbers

Accident category	RUM numbers
Pedestrians (on foot, in toy or pram)	00 -> 09
Vehicles from adjacent directions	
(intersections only)	10 -> 19
Vehicles from opposing directions	20 -> 29
Vehicles from same directions	30 -> 39
Manoeuvring	40 -> 49
Overtaking	50 -> 59
On Path	60 -> 69
Off Path on Straight	70 -> 79
Off Path on Curve	80 -> 89
Passengers and Miscellaneous	90 -> 99

The complete list of RUM number classifications is shown in Appendix A.

PHYLAK database and dBASE III Plus

PHYLAK is an accident information database system developed for the Queensland Department of Transport by consultants Cameron McNamara in 1988. The system provides a convenient repository of all information on accidents reported by the Police Department. The road accident data feeding PHYLAK is obtained from police accident records (Police forms PT51) which are computerised by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). One of the distinguishing features of PHYLAK is the accurate location of each accident. This is done by specifying the link in the road section where the accident occurred and the distance from the beginning of the link to the exact accident location (+/- 10m). This degree of accuracy enables useful information to be generated about the road system and assists in designing road improvement strategies (engineering solutions) to reduce accidents.

dBASE III Plus, a general-purpose spreadsheet program, is used to manage the stored data on traffic accidents. It enables data to be retrieved, displayed, rearranged, and analysed. This allows considerably more flexibility for data analysis than that available with PHYLAK. Data for each accident is contained in one record with 99 fields of information e.g. accident number, time, true date, severity, ARP (accident reference point), RUM number, etc. Fields of particular interest can be selected and displayed on the screen or printed. Searches can be carried out for either a particular field expression (e.g. YEAR = "1988"), or combined with logical expressions for a more detailed analysis (e.g. YEAR = "1988" AND SIREET 1 = "BRUCE" AND SEVERITY = "DEAD") Useful also is the facility where records can be simply summed, averaged, or counted, rather than just displayed, for a particular search condition.

Accident concentration

When undertaking any type of accident research, it is important to examine accident location and concentration. The most useful way to describe accident location is generally in terms of links and more specifically in terms of distance from the start of a link Determining accident concentrations along a link is more complex due to differences in the length of each link and the traffic volumes using them These factors are combined in terms of vehicle kilometre (vkm) where

vehicle kilometre/day on a link = vehicles/day * link length (km)

This enables accident intensity to be represented in terms of travel task undertaken e.g. number of accidents/108 vkm Another useful measure of accident concentration is the number of accidents per km of link. In both cases, links have been ranked in order of decreasing accident concentration and plotted onto maps to show the areas where accidents are concentrated These maps have been adapted from the Queensland Department of Transport district maps.

EPDO

Equivalent Property Damage Only (EPDO) is a method of weighting accidents of different severity (death, injury, property damage only). The relevant factors upon which the weightings are calculated are:

Minor Damage	=	1
Treatment	**	2
Hospitalisation	=	3
Death	=	4

Total EPDO and EPDO/108vkm have been calculated to indicate the severity of accidents on each link.

Road conditions and accidents

A useful parameter in the PHYLAK database identifies whether or not road conditions may have been the major cause of an accident

A statistical analysis was carried out to determine whether or not the accidents where road conditions were not a contributing factor fall within the limits expected by chance. That is, to ascertain whether a hypothesis of randomness of these accidents can be rejected. The analysis of each section consisted of two tests:

i) the number of accidents/km of link above and below the average for the section

ii) the number of runs up and down

If non-random influences are found to exist, a more detailed inspection of these accidents is necessary in order to identify recurring trends in accidents which are not related to the condition of the road This is beyond the scope of study reported in this paper.

Remedial measures, costs and benefits

Remedial measures and their costs, projected benefits and effectiveness have been determined for those links which have greater than 1.5 times the average number of road contributing accidents/km of link. The proposed action is based upon the common groups of RUM numbers and/or recurring accident locations, which can be targeted by an engineering solution. Table 2 shows the expected service life for remedial measures employed, their initial and maintenance cost, as well as their service life.

The cost of accidents has been researched in detail by the Bureau of Transportation and Communication Economics (BTCE) and the Federal Office of Raod Safety (FORS) Their methods have been employed to update accident cost estimates for 1990. These estimates are shown in Table 3. Benefits for each remedial measure have been based upon the number of accidents targeted, cost of accidents (a function of severity) reduced, effectiveness of remedial measures and the time period for which measure is effective.

Estimated costs and expected life of remedial measures Table 2

Remedial measure S	ervice life (yrs)	Initial cost (\$)	Maintenance cost (\$/yr)
Signage	5	600	30
Street lighting	10	30 000	6 000
Railway crossing lights	10	35 000	6 000
Turning lanes	10	15 000	1 500
Intersection reconstruction	10	100 000	10 000
Lane widening (/km)	20	200 000	25 000
Dual carriageway construction (/kr	n) 30	1 800 000	54 000
Bridge reconstruction	30	Varies	Varies

Cost estimates for rural road crashes Table 3

Crash severity	Cost (\$)
Fatality	514 000
Admitted to/treated at Hospital	115 000
Minor injury	13 800
Property damage only	3 300

The effectiveness of the remedial measure is expressed as a percentage of accidents reduced based on Sanderson et al (1985) A discount rate of 8% has been adopted to determine the net present benefit of each remedial measure

Application of the proposed methodology

Figure 2 shows a flowchart of the methodology followed. This methodology has been applied to analyse accident occurrences in the three districts in Northern Queensland and to propose cost-effective engineering solutions for reducing accidents on declared rural roads in these districts. The next three sections describe this application.

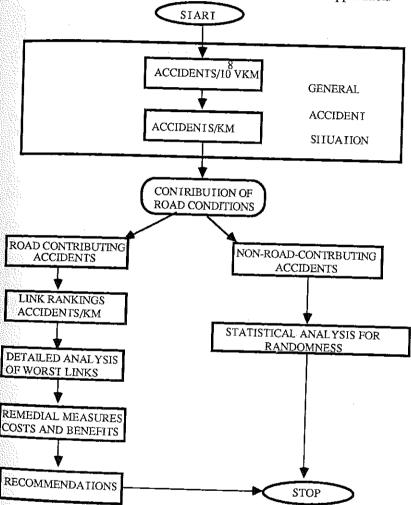


Figure 2 Methodology used in this study

Engineering solutions are proposed for each site (with accident intensity greater than 1.5 times the district average) based on an analysis of the nature and recurrence of accident types as revealed by the RUM number distribution. For example, the obvious engineering solution for a site with predominance of right rear accidents (RUM 32) would be the provision of a right turn lane.

Accident analysis and engineering solutions for Townsville district

Townsville district (Queensland Transport district 9) includes eight local authorities covering an area of 59,100 sq.km. These are Bowen, Dalrymple, Burdekin, Hinchinbrook, and Cardwell Shires and three cities of Charters Towers, Townsville and Thuringowa.

Major roads in this district include the Bruce Highway, Flinders Highway, Gregory Developmental Roadand Bowen Developmental Roads. This amounts to 450 km of National Highways, 463 km of National Arterials and 539 km of Rural Arterials

Accident analysis

The annual number of accidents in the district has varied from 319 to 365 during the study period. The majority of accidents resulted in only minor injury or property damage. One in four accidents resulted in hospitalisation and one in twenty was fatal. This is shown in Figure 4.

Accident circumstances, described by RUM numbers are classified in Figure 5 which shows that over 44 per cent of accidents that occured during the study period involved vehicles travelling off the path (or pavement) on either straights or curves.

The randomness of non road attributable accidents is shown in Figure 6 which clearly demonstrates that there is no evidence to reject the hypothesis of a random distribution of non road contributing accidents over the 60 links on the Bruce Highway in the Townsville district. Accident concentrations on various links were analysed by using EPDO/108 vkm and accidents/km. The first measure relates accidents to travel task and the second to length of the link. A summary of the analysis, showing the ten links with the highest concentration, is given in Table 4.

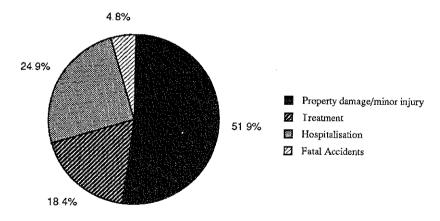


Figure 4 Accident severity in the Townsville district

Engineering solutions and their evaluation

Based on the circumstances surrounding road-related accidents (as shown by RUM number distribution for each link), engineering solutions have been proposed and evaluated for all links with an accident intensity of greater than 1.5 times the district average of 0.77 road contributing accidents per km. of link. It will be noticed that no solution has been proposed for link 010K/03 (a 6.8 km link of Bruce Highway between Bowen and Ayr). This is due to the fact that no single road characteristic appears to be the dominant cause of accidents as evidenced by the accidents' RUM numbers, and, therefore, no single solution is likely to be cost effective. Table 5 shows the ranking of various engineering solutions applicable in the Townsville district based on benefit/cost ratio. Eight solutions have benefit/cost ratio of greater than one

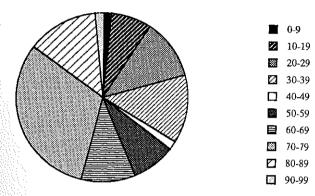


Figure 5 district

Accidents/km

Accident circumstances (RUM numbers) in the Townsville

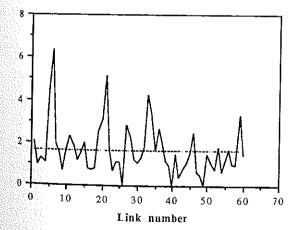


Figure 6 Randomness of non-road-contributing accidents in the district

Table 4 Links with high accident rates in Townsville district

Rank		Accidents/10	Accidents/km			
	Link	Acc./108vkm	Severity ratio	Link	Acc./km	Intensity
1	6106/01	385.51	2.22	010K/01	5.82	7.56
2	088B/01	306.72	1 83	010K/01	5.63	7.31
3	5407/07	248.37	1.89	014A/11	3.75	4.87
4	083A/05	201.77	2 20	010L/01	1.95	2.53
5	5407/02	193.54	2.00	010N/06	1.77	2.30
6	010N/01	167.44	1 50	010K/06	1.62	2.10
7	014A/11	158.33	225	010K/03	1.32	1.71
8	010K/02	145 46	1 57	010N/04	1.26	1.64
9	5407/06	144.22	200	010N/15	1.22	1.58
10	5407/03	114 61	1 60	010K/04	1.18	1.53

Accident analysis and engineering solutions for Cairns district

Cairns district (Queensland Transport district 11) includes twelve local authorities covering an area of 122,600 sq.km. These are Douglas, Mareeba, Atherton, Eacham, Herberton, Johnstone, Mulgrave, Etheridge, Croyden, Cook and Torres shires and the city of Cairns.

Table 5 Engineering solutions for Townsville district

Link	Action	Cost (\$)		dents getted	Effective- ness (%)	Benefits (\$)	B/C ratio
010L/01	Stop sign	7	50	2	65	17 129	22.8
010K/01	Intersection reconst.	200 0	000	9	40	3 248 978	16.2
	Bridge reconst.	1 480 0	000	7	100	4 032 362	10.9
	Right turn lane	30 0	00	2	40	317 491	10.6
	Intersection reconst	200 0	00	7	40	2 032 155	10.2
	Lane widening	3 010 0	00	22	25	5 974 992	1 99
	Lane widening	1 680 0	00	7	25	2 132 628	1.27
	Lane widening	840 0	00	3	25	846 768	1 01
	Right turn lane	30 0	00	2	64	17 714	0.59
	Flash Lights	95 0	00	2	64	28 342	0.30
010K/04	Lane widening	2 240 0	00	6	25	622 681	0.28

Major roads in this district include the Bruce Highway, Captain Cook Highway, Palmerston Highway, Kennedy Highway, Gulf Developmental Road, Burke Developmental Road, parts of Gregory Developmental Road and the Kennedy Developmental Road. This amounts to 105 km of National Highways, 333 km of National Arterials and 334 km of Rural Arterials.

Accident analysis

The annual number of accidents in the district has varied from 359 to 489 during the study period. The majority of accidents resulted in only minor injury or property damage. One in four accidents resulted in hospitalisation and one in twenty was fatal. This is similar to accidents in the Townsville district. This is shown in Figure 7.

Accident circumstances, described by RUM numbers are classified in Figure 8 which shows that over 42 per cent of accidents that occured during the study period involved vehicles travelling off the path (or pavement) on either straights or curves.

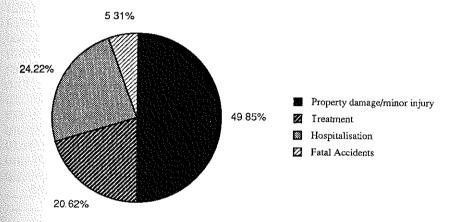


Figure 7 Accident severity in the Cairns district

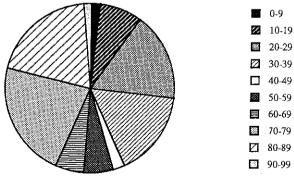


Figure 8 Accident circumstances (RUM numbers) in the Cairns district

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Accident concentrations on various links were analysed by using EPDO/ 10^8 vkm and accidents/km. The first measure relates accidents to travel task and the second to length of the link. A summary of the analysis, showing the ten links with the highest concentration, is given in Table 6.

Engineering solutions and their evaluation

Based on the circumstances sorrounding road-related accidents (as shown by RUM number distribution for each link), engineering solutions have been proposed and evaluated for all links with an accident intensity of greater than 1 5 times the district average of 1 44 road contributing accidents per km of link

Table 6 Links with high accident rates in Cairns district

Rank		Accidents/10	Acc			
	Link	Acc/108vkm	Severity ratio	Link	Acc./km	Intensity
 -	092B/01	632.94	2.25	020A/05	13.33	9.24
2	6471/02	525.79	2.20	0647/06	7.53	5.22
3	091A/02	524.38	2.57	032A/07	7 20	4.99
4	090C/01	501.65	2.11	032A/02	6 60	457
5	090D/03	498.56	1.71	010P/17	5.44	3.77
6	090D/01	484.34	200	032A/03	5.20	360
7	0627/03	481.85	257	032A/04	4.41	3.60
8	0653/05	386.12	238	010P/08	4.21	2.92
9	0204/12	35215	325	032A/01	3.86	2.68
10	092B/07	350.16	2.33	010P/07	3.83	2 65

Table 7 shows the ranking of various engineering solutions applicable in the Cairns district based on benefit/cost ratio. Twelve solutions have benefit/cost ratio of greater than one and six of these have a benefit/cost ratio greater than four

Accident analysis and engineering solutions for Mackay district

Mackay district (Queensland Transport district 8) includes seven local authorities covering an area of 43,700 sq.km. These are Broadsound, Nebo, Mirani, Sarina, Mackay, Poineer and Proserpine shires

Major roads in this district include the Bruce Highway, Peak Downs Highway, Sutter and Fitzroy Developmental Roads, and Shute Harbour Road This amounts to 340 km of National Highways, 313 km of National Arterials and 577 km of Rural Arterials.

Table 7 Engineering solutions for Cairns district

Link	Action	Cost (\$)		idents getted	Effective- ness (%)	Benefits (\$)	B/C ratio
020A/07	Signage		750	6	35	921 121	1000
020A/05	Right turn lane		000	5	40	1 243 393	1228
0647/06	Right turn lane		000	5	40	643 838	41.4
032A/04	Right turn lane		000	2	40	617 268	21.5
020A/07	Light instl.	90 ($\frac{2}{4}$	30	701 069	20.6 7.79
Sie Stable Lander	_	1 000 (5	25	4 349 197	4.35
032A/01	Lane widening	250 (5	25	614 582	2.46
010P/08	Lane widening	2 000 (15	25	3 679 391	1.84
032A/11	Lane widening	900 (000	7	25	1 453 250	1.61
	Lane widening	1 100 (000	9	25	1 652 057	1.50
010N/24	Lane widening	600 (000	5	25	862 967	1.44
	Lane widening	500 (000	7	25	622 681	1.25
	Reconstruct hwy	7 040 0	000	15	25	2 900 447	0.41
	Reconstruct hwy	6 160 0	000	13	25	1 671 350	0.27
	Reconstruct hwy	16 720 0	000	28	25	2 732 566	0.16
	Reconstruct hwy	6 600 0	000	11	25	973 252	0.15
032B/15	Reconstruct hwy	10 560 0	00	3	25	1 034 611	0.10
010P/07	Reconstruct hwy	12 760 0	00	20	25	1 238 981	0.10
J32A/02	Reconstruct hwy	2 068 0	00	30	25	929 400	0.04

Accident analysis

The annual number of accidents in the district has varied from 214 to 278 during the study period. Almost one half of accidents resulted in only minor injury or property damage. A higher rate of accidents resulted in hospitalisation in Mackay district (29 per cent) compared to Cairns and Townsville districts. One in twenty accidents was fatal. This is shown in Figure 9.

Accident circumstances, described by RUM numbers are classified in Figure 10 which shows that a large proportion of accidents 46 per cent) that occured during the study period involved vehicles travelling off the path (or pavement) on either straights or curves.

Accident concentrations on various links were analysed by using EPDO/10⁸ vkm and accidents/km. The first measure relates accidents to travel task and the second to length of the link. A summary of the analysis, showing the ten links with the highest concentration, is given in Table 8

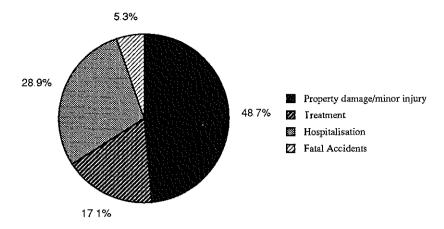


Figure 9 Accident severity in the Mackay district

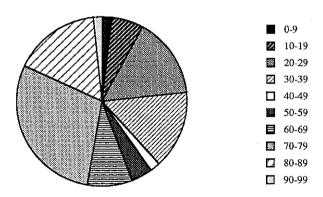


Figure 10 Accident circumstances (RUM numbers) in the Mackay district

Engineering solutions and their evaluation

Based on the circumstances sorrounding road-related accidents (as shown by RUM number distribution for each link), engineering solutions have been proposed and evaluated for all links with an accident intensity of greater than 1.5 times the district average of 0.88 road contributing accidents per km. of link. This occured on six links. It will be noticed that no solution has been proposed for link 0106/21 (a 760m link of Bruce Highway between St Lawrence and Mackay). This is due to the fact that no single road characteristic appears to be the dominant cause of accidents as evidenced by the accidents' RUM numbers, and, therefore, no single solution is likely to be cost effective

Table 8 Links with high accident rates in Mackay district

1 53 2 01 3 83 4 53	Link 307/03 10H/14 509/02 307/05	Acc./108vkm 441.90 427.36 323.95	2.20 1.43 2.13	0851/04 010H/11	9 49 3 72	Intensity 10.76 4.22
2 01 3 85 4 53	10H/14 509/02	427.36 323.95	1.43	010H/11		
7 05 8 08 9 082	10H/18 35C/06 516/01 351/04 2A/03 0H/11	181.96 150.37 128.12 119.31 101.98 101.85 98.92	1 40 2 33 1 14 2 17 2 74 1 00	0857/04 010G/21 0851/05 033B/15 010J/03 010H/04 010H/07	2.67 2.63 1.85 1.73 1.30 1.24 1.23	3.03 2.98 2.10 1.96 1.47 1.41 1.39

Table 9 shows the ranking of various engineering solutions applicable in the Mackay district based on benefit/cost ratio Four solutions have benefit/cost ratio of greater than two.

Table 9 Engineering solutions for Mackay district

Link Action	Cost (\$)	Accidents targetted	Effectiv		B/C ratio
0857/04 Lane widening 0851/04 Lane widening 033B/15 Lane widening 010H/11 Lane widening 0851/05 Lane widening	350 000 1 900 000 250 000 1 500 000 33 000 000	0 23 0 5 0 18	25 25 25 25 25 25	1 277 761 4 755 400 588 810 3 476 167 2 649 934	3.65 2.50 2.36 2.32 0.08

Discussion and conclusions

The objective of this study has been to design cost-effective engineering solutions for reducing accidents which have been identified to have been mainly caused by adverse road conditions. Using the Department of Iransport database PHYLAK, accident frequency, severity and circumstances (RUM numbers) have been analysed for all declared rural roads within the three northern Queensland districts of Townsville, Cairns and Mackay. Links involving accidents in which the major cause may have been due to

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road conditions have been ranked in terms of accidents/km of link in order to determine priority for links where action to reduce the high accident concentrations is necessary. It was decided that road contributing accidents/km of link was the most useful parameter on which to establish priority for remedial action. Accidents/108 vkm was not considered when determining remedial action priorities as this parameter would place undue emphasis on links with low traffic volumes and thus the benefits derived from remedial action would be enjoyed by relatively few. The district average for road contributing accidents/km of link was calculated over all links in the district. The intensity factor for each link was then calculated to determine accident intensity relative to the district as a whole. A more detailed analysis listing trends, remedial measures and costs was then carried out on those links with an intensity factor greater than or equal to 1.5. Costs include initial costs plus maintenance costs over the expected service life The ex-post approach has been adopted to determine benefits from remedial measure implementation. A benefit/cost ratio has been calculated for each remedial measure for the links identified in accident analysis for each district. These measures have been ranked in descending benefit/cost ratio for funding priority.

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Appendix A

RUM Number Classifications

