

# Monterey County Freeway Service Patrol Annual Report

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**Fiscal Year 2015 – 2016**



Tow Trucks to the Rescue

## **Program overview**

### **What is the Freeway Service Patrol Program?**

The purpose of the Freeway Service Patrol is to provide for the rapid removal of disabled vehicles and those involved in minor accidents from the freeway. The Freeway Service Patrol program is managed by a partnership of Transportation Agency for Monterey County, the California Department of Transportation, and the California Highway Patrol.

The Monterey County Freeway Service Patrol operators contracting with the Transportation Agency provide motorists with the following “quick-fix” services free of charge:

- Changing a flat tire
- "Jump starting" your vehicle
- Taping cooling system hoses and refilling your radiator
- Providing you a gallon of gas

If the disabled vehicle cannot be repaired in this manner, it is towed to a CHP-designated drop location, absolutely free of charge. If needed, the Freeway Service Patrol driver will transport motorists to the nearest telephone, or call the California Highway Patrol to request additional assistance. The Freeway Service Patrol has provided over 40,000 assists in Monterey County since its beginning in February 2000.

### **Keeping Monterey County Moving**

These roving tow trucks:

- Provide direct assistance to stranded motorists, increasing safety and security for them in a moment of need.
- Reduce the number of traffic jams by quickly clearing accidents and other incidents - the cause of more than 50 percent of traffic congestion.
- Through quick response, lessen the chain of further accidents and bottlenecks caused by drivers passing by the accident scenes.
- Help save fuel and cut air-pollution emissions by reducing stop-and-go traffic.

## **Service Routes**

To ensure maximum coverage over high-traffic areas while remaining within the allocated budget, the Freeway Service Patrol operates in two beats: one along Highway 101 from Sanborn Road to the San Benito County Line (Beat 1) and one along State Route 1 between Carpenter Road in City of Carmel-by-the-sea and Del Monte Boulevard in City of Marina (Beat 2).

Freeway Service Patrol drivers patrol these two beats during times of peak traffic congestion: Monday through Friday. Both beats operate from 7:00-9:00 a.m. and 3:00-7:00 p.m. Both beats provide Saturday and Sunday service on special event weekends, such as the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am. A modified Beat 1 operates from Highway 156 to the San Benito County Line on Sundays during the summer months to accommodate the increase in traffic due to tourists visiting the Monterey County area, while the regular Beat 2 operates on Saturdays during the summer months to accommodate increased tourist traffic.

## **Funding**

The Freeway Service Patrol program is funded by the California Department of Transportation, with a 25% local match from the Transportation Agency. The state program funding is specifically designated for Freeway Service Patrol operations. The 25% match comes from the call box funds, which originate from a \$1 per registered vehicle fee collected by the Department of Motor Vehicles. The Transportation Agency spent \$218,051 on the program in fiscal year 2015/16.

## PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

### Benefit/Cost Ratios

**Table 1: Benefit Cost Ratio (Fiscal Year 2015/16)**

<b>Beat</b>	<b>Weekday Benefit/Cost Ratio</b>	<b>Weekend Benefit/Cost Ratio</b>	<b>Total Benefit/Cost Ratio</b>
1 (Hwy 101)	2.0	2.0	3
2 (Hwy 1)	5.0	5.0	5
<b>Average Benefit/Cost Ratio</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>

The effectiveness of the Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) Program is assessed by calculating the annual benefit/cost ratio of each beat. The annual savings in incident delay, fuel consumption and air pollutant emissions due to FSP service are calculated based on the number of assists, beat geometries and traffic volumes. The savings are then translated into benefits using monetary values for delay (\$17.35/vehicle-hour) and fuel consumption (\$3.48/gallon). The costs include the annual capital, operating and administrative costs for providing FSP service.

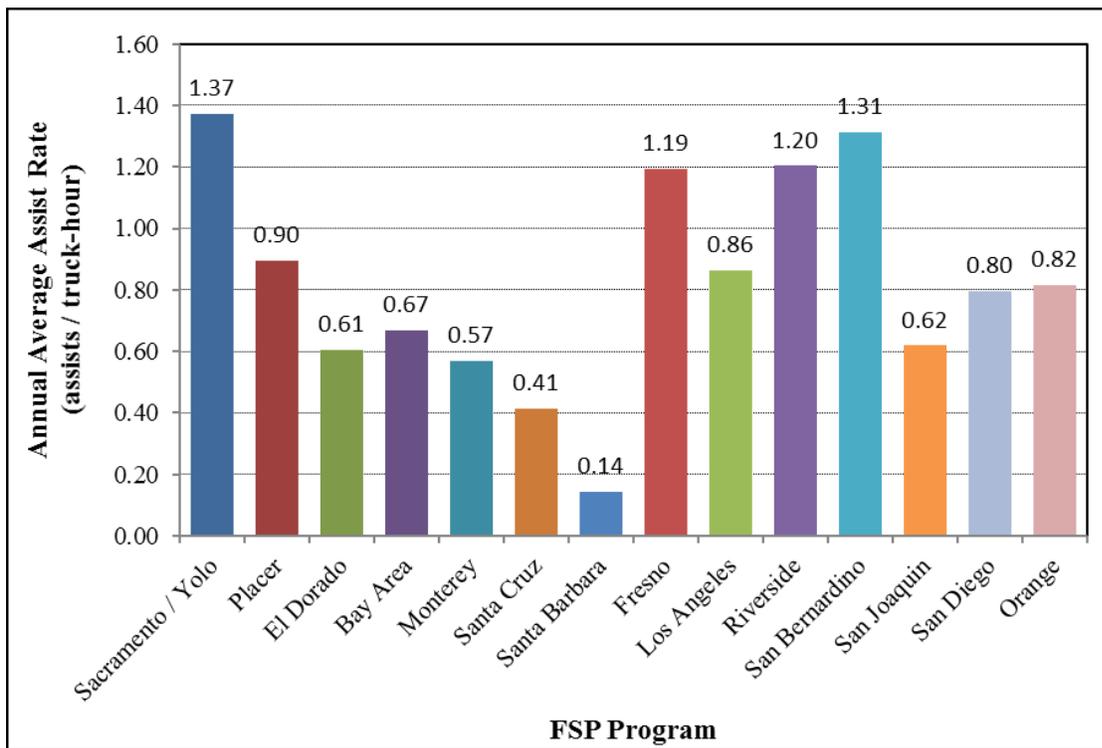
In fiscal year 2015/16, the overall benefit cost ratio for the Monterey County Freeway Service Patrol Program was 4:1, which indicates that the tow truck program provided an average benefit of \$4.00 for every dollar invested in the program. This is a 25% increase from fiscal year 2014-15, when the ratio was 3:1, or \$3.00s of benefit for every dollar spent. The increase is largely a reflection of a higher number of responses along Highway 1 during both the weekday and summer weekend periods. This increase in responses along Highway 1 comes at a time when the number of responses along Highway 101 continues to see fewer responses following the Prunedale Improvement and San Juan Rpad Interchange Project, both of which have improved the safety and operations of Highway 101 along Beat 1.

Based on the Freeway Service Patrol statewide model, the Transportation Agency’s Freeway Service Patrol program provided an annual savings of 32,546 vehicle hours of delay, 55,947 gallons of fuel savings, and a decrease of 492,334 kilograms per year in carbon dioxide.

### Assists per Hour

Figure 1 shows the assists per hour from each of the individual FSP programs. In 2015-16 Monterey County had an assist rate of 0.57 assists per hour, ranking towards the middle of assist rates for FSP Programs across the state.

**Figure 1: Statewide Average Assist Rate by Hour (Fiscal Year 2015/16)**



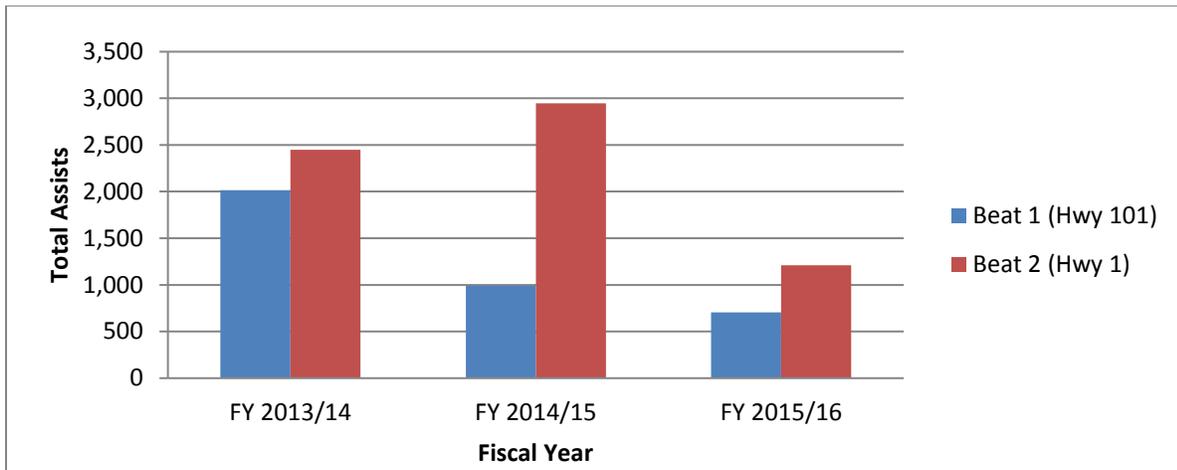
## Total Assists by Fiscal Year

In the last three fiscal years, there were a total of 10,636 assists. Figure 2 below shows the annual total assists from fiscal year 2013/14 to fiscal year 2015/16. Fiscal year 2013-14 shows a number of assists for both beats well above the historical average. Some of the contributing factors to that increase include construction activity for the Prunedale Improvement Project and San Juan Road Interchange Project. Both construction projects were completed in fiscal year 2014-15, and there is a corresponding decline in assists along Highway 101. Notably, assists along Highway 1 saw a significant reduction from 2014-15, with the amount of debris removed and accidents responded to declining considerably.

**Table 2. Total Assists by Quarter for Fiscal Years 2013/14 through 2015/16**

FY 2013/14	Jul 13 - Sep 13	Oct 13 - Dec 13	Jan 14 - Mar 14	Apr 14 - Jun 14		
Beat	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total Assists	%
1 (Hwy 101)	636	574	553	252	2,015	45.1%
2 (Hwy 1)	505	421	624	899	2,449	54.9%
<b>Total Assists</b>	<b>1,141</b>	<b>995</b>	<b>1,177</b>	<b>1,151</b>	<b>4,464</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>25.6%</b>	<b>22.3%</b>	<b>26.4%</b>	<b>25.8%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	
FY 2014/15	Jul 14 - Sep 14	Oct 14 - Dec 14	Jan 15 - Mar 15	Apr 15 - Jun 15		
Beat	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total Assists	%
1 (Hwy 101)	351	241	212	189	993	25.2%
2 (Hwy 1)	1,038	756	549	605	2,948	74.8%
<b>Total Assists</b>	<b>1,389</b>	<b>997</b>	<b>761</b>	<b>794</b>	<b>3,941</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>35.2%</b>	<b>25.3%</b>	<b>19.3%</b>	<b>20.1%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	
FY 2015/16	Jul 15 - Sep 15	Oct 15 - Dec 15	Jan 16 - Mar 16	Apr 16 - Jun 16		
Beat	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total Assists	%
1 (Hwy 101)	220	165	138	180	707	36.7%
2 (Hwy 1)	377	305	232	205	1,210	63.3%
<b>Total Assists</b>	<b>597</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>461</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>1,913</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>31.2%</b>	<b>24.6%</b>	<b>24.1%</b>	<b>20.1%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	

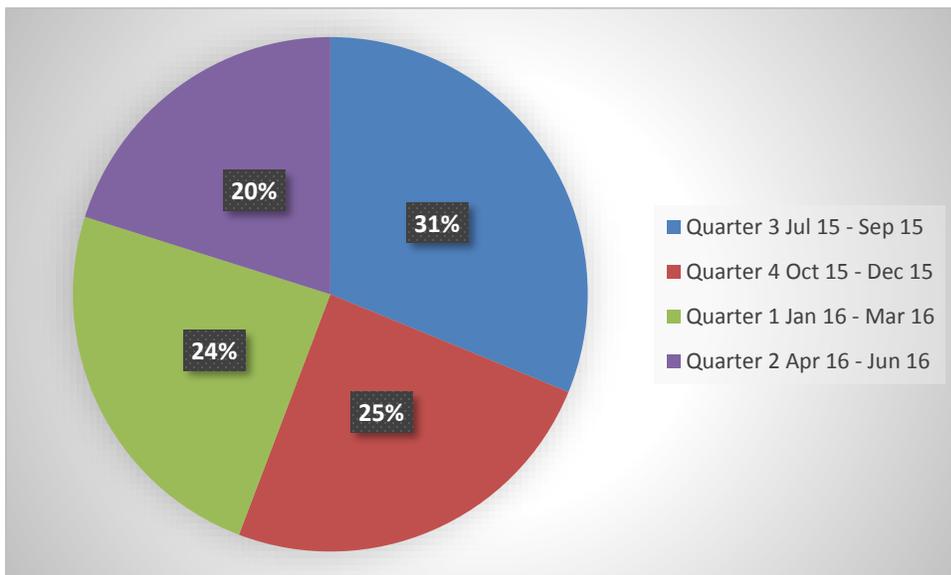
**Figure 2: Total Assists and Annual Change by Fiscal Year**



### Total Assists by Quarter

Figure 3 displays the total number of assists provided on a quarterly basis for fiscal year 2015/16. As is typical, the peak summer travel season experiences a higher percentage of assists than the rest of the year, which is reflected in the pie chart with the July through September period accounting for nearly one third of the total assists for the year.

**Figure 3: Total Assists by Quarter (Fiscal Year 2015/16)**

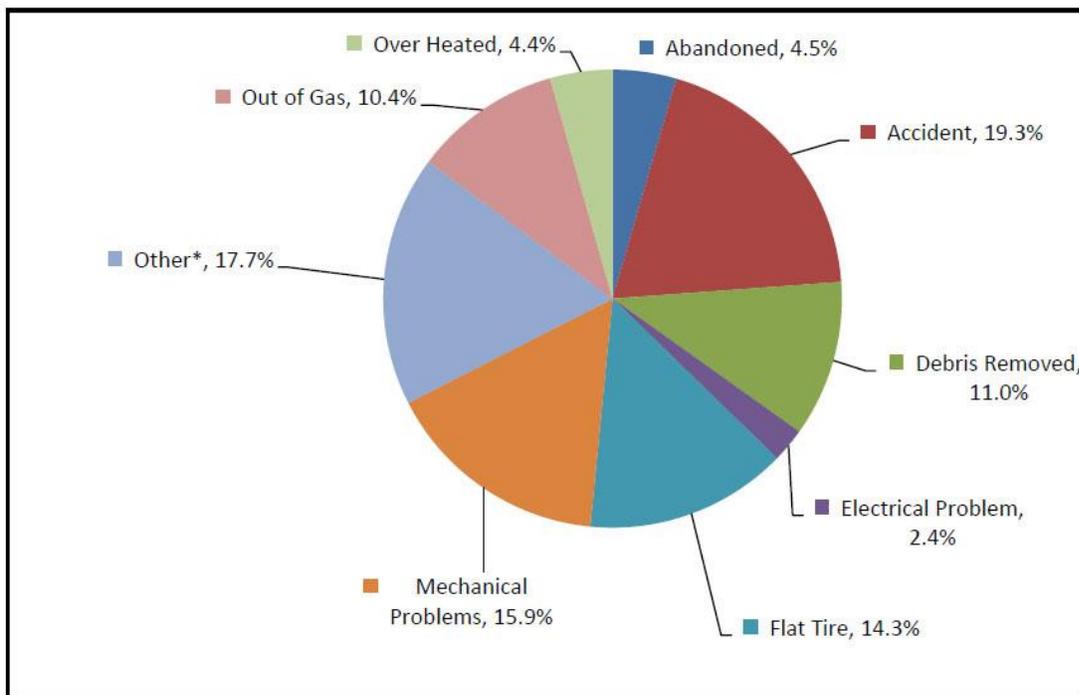


## Total Assists by Problem Type

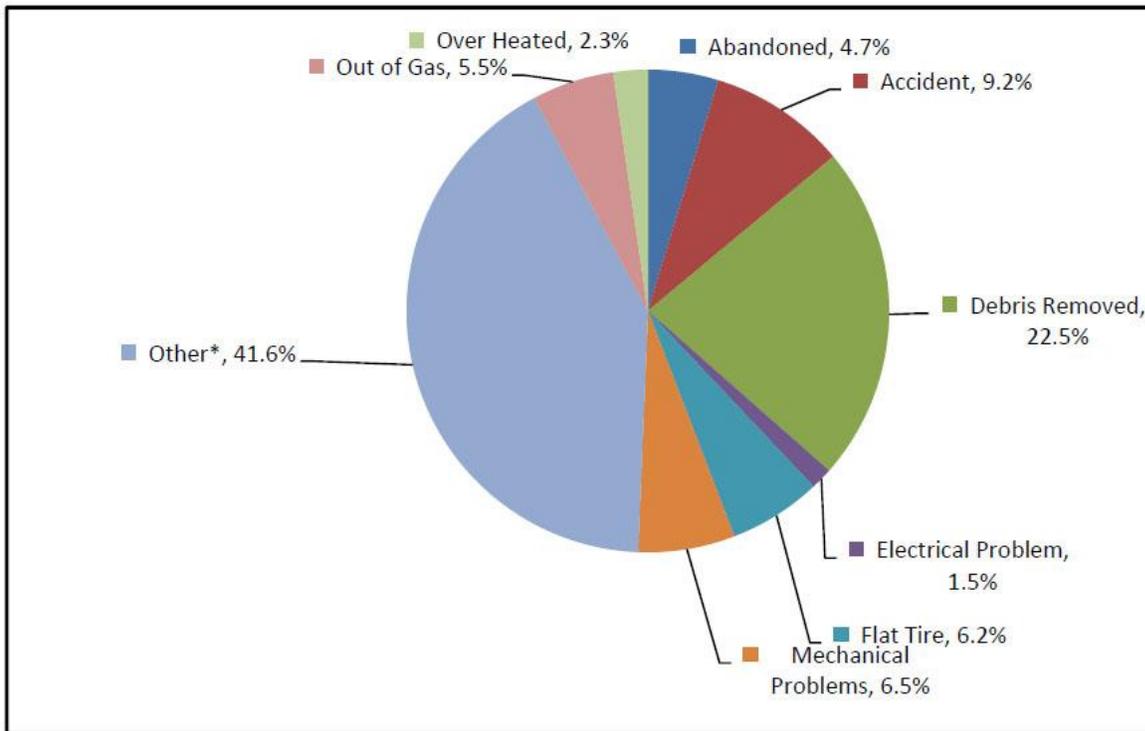
The three most common problem types are accidents, mechanical problem, and “other”. The “other” category refers to motorists that are idling to make adjustments to their vehicles, making personal phone calls, getting directions, driving away after the tow operators stop to assist, and/or incidents with too little information. Figures 4, 5, and 6 show how the percentages of problem types in the last three years. This year saw a significant reduction in the amount of debris removal and “other” assists, reversing what had been a steady increase in those categories over the previous years.

Although a majority of the causes for vehicle breakdown are common and easily fixable, many motorists lack the proper tools or ability to repair their vehicles themselves on the state highway. Therefore, assistance from the Freeway Service Patrol operators plays an important role in getting drivers back on the road safely and quickly. By clearing the problematic vehicles off the roads, the program delivers great results in congestion relief and safety enhancement.

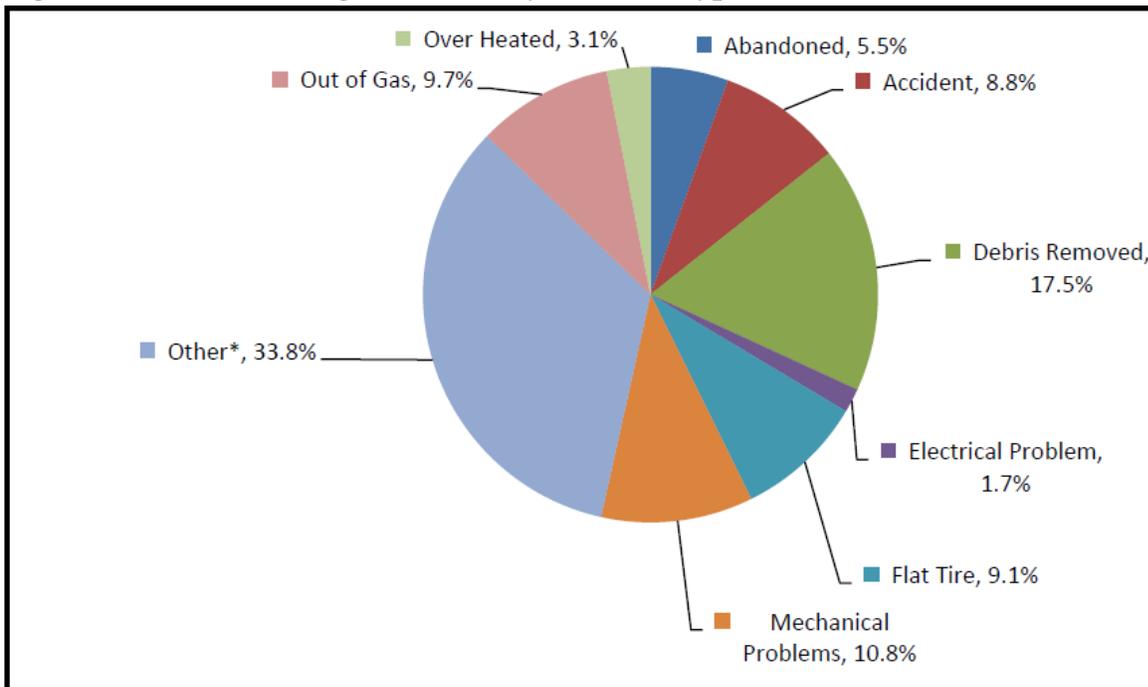
**Figure 4: Total Percentage of Assists by Problem Type (Fiscal Year 2015/16)**



**Figure 5: Total Percentage of Assists by Problem Type (Fiscal Year 2014/15)**



**Figure 6: Total Percentage of Assists by Problem Type (Fiscal Year 2013/14)**



## Average Assist Duration by Problem Type & Beat

In general, repair times for Freeway Service Patrol drivers to address common vehicle breakdowns range from 10 to 20 minutes. Figure 7 shows the average duration that drivers spent on an assist in the last fiscal year was between 16-21 minutes. The data also demonstrates that the contractors spent the most time clearing accident scenes and helping vehicles with electrical and overheating problems.

**Figure 7: Average Assist Duration by Beat (Minutes) (Fiscal Year 2015/16)**

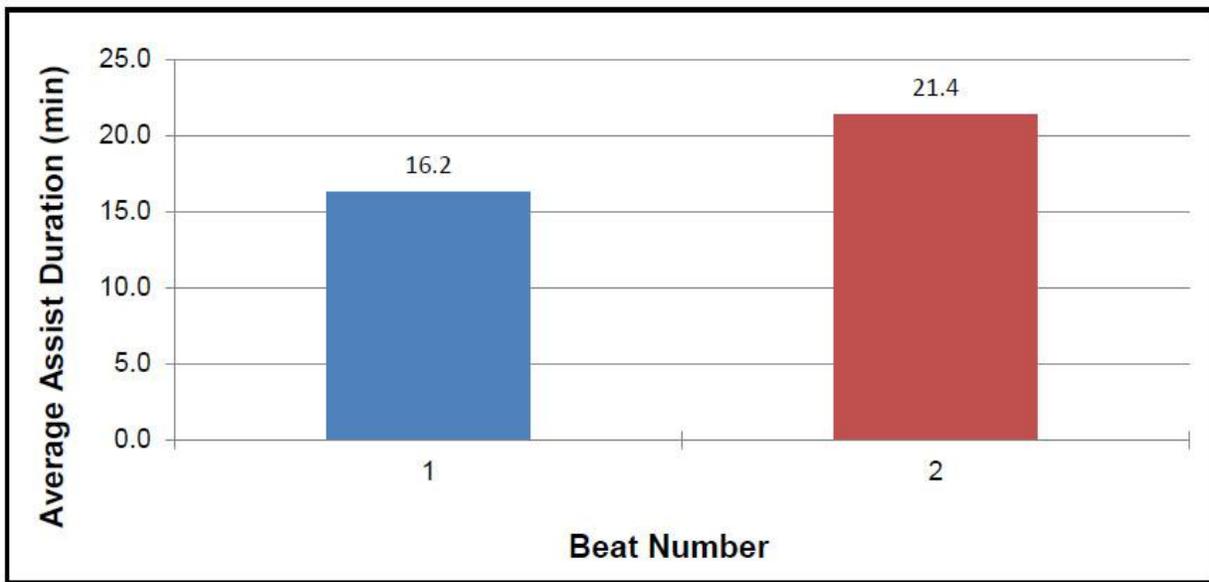
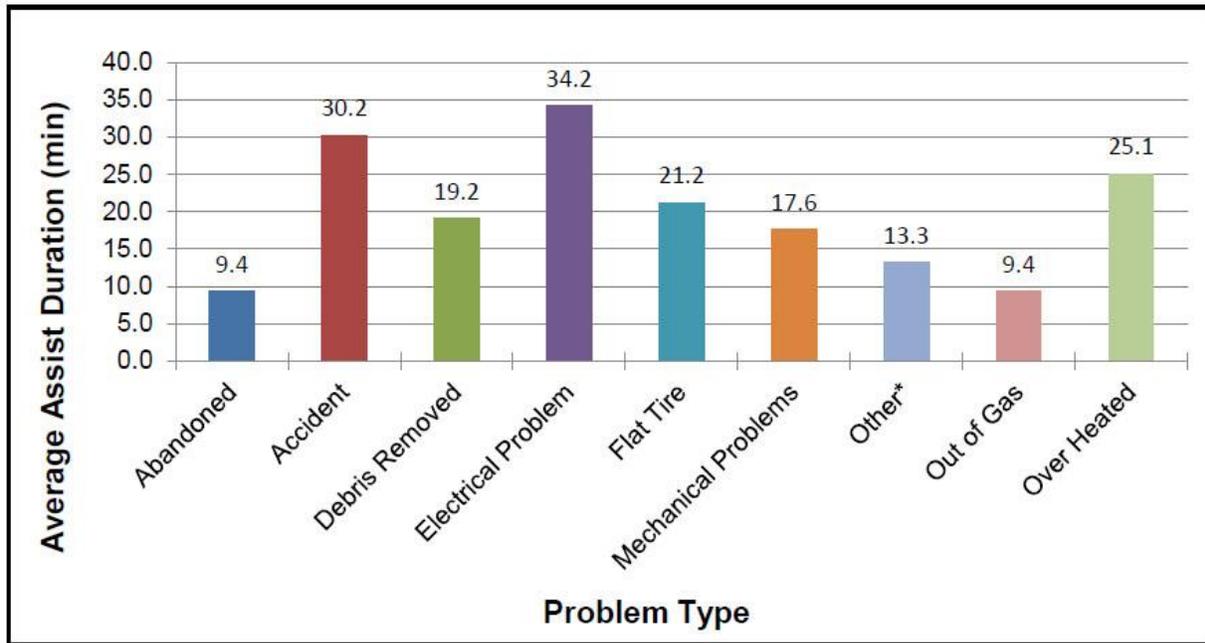


Figure 8 shows the average time per type of assist. The three most frequent types of assists for Monterey County — accidents, mechanical problems, and other — took an average of 30 minutes, 17.6 minutes and 13.3 minutes, respectively. Compared to the fiscal year 2015-16 statewide average, the Monterey County tow operators were more efficient with mechanical problems, took longer for accidents, and consistent with the state average for “other” assist time.

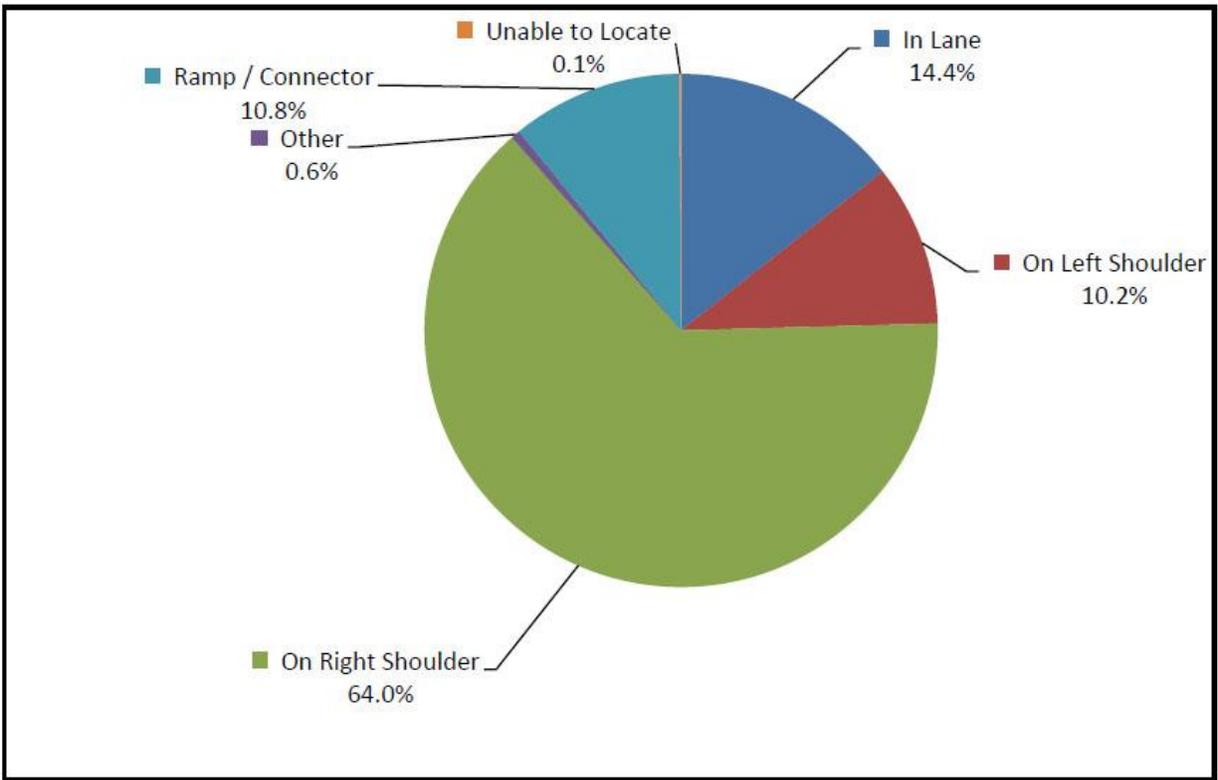
**Figure 8: Average Assist Duration by Problem Type (Minutes) (Fiscal Year 2015/16)**



### Total Assists by Vehicle Location

The primary locations for assists is the right shoulder, with nearly two thirds of the assists provided by program tow operators were located on the right shoulder. However, a significant percentage of assists, 14.4%, occur in the travel lane. The remaining assists predominately occur on the ramps and the left (inside) shoulder. These percentages illustrate some of the primary program benefits: preventing accidents by safely clearing the highways, and reducing delay for other motorists by maintaining the capacity of the highway system.

**Figure 9: Average Percentage of Total Assist by Location (Fiscal Year 2015/16)**



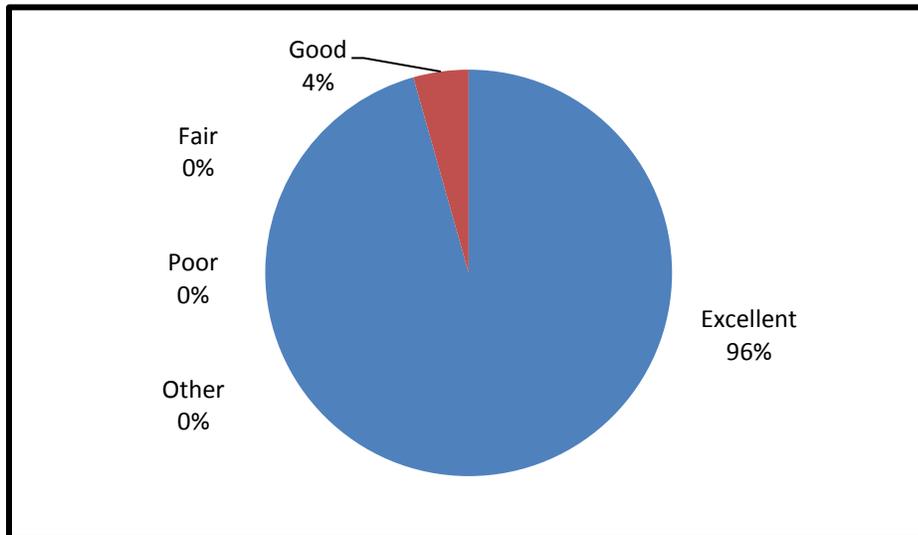
## **PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY**

### **Survey response**

The Freeway Service Patrol drivers are required to provide opinion surveys to motorists with every assist. Opinions and comments received from the surveys are used to improve the service and motorists' experience. The survey seeks feedback from motorists on the length of their waiting time, the overall service rating, the way they heard about the service, and suggestions for program improvement.

Of the surveys received, ninety-six percent of respondents rated the service they received as "Excellent," with the remaining four percent stating the service was "Good."

**Figure 12: Rating by Survey (in Percent) Fiscal Year 2015/16**



### **What the motorists say**

Comments received on the survey cards include some of the following:

- *"Thank you for great service!"*
- *"The driver came right away, didn't know that we had this service and he saved my day!"*
- *"It was wonderful to get me safely off the freeway!"*
- *"As a single female I really appreciate this service. Driver was wonderful."*
- *"The dude was awesome!"*
- *"EXCELLENT!!! Thank You =)"*

### **Moving forward**

In the next fiscal year, the Freeway Service Patrol will keep patrolling Monterey County's busiest commute corridors, clearing the roads and helping drivers in need. Looking ahead, major goals for the Freeway Service Patrol include increasing the rate of survey responses, maintaining a high benefit to cost ratio, and continuing to reduce vehicle hours of delay, gallons of fuel used, and total emissions of carbon dioxide in Monterey County. Keeping Monterey County's freeways clear benefits everyone.

**The Monterey County Freeway Service Patrol Is Here to Help You!**