1. INTRODUCTION

This paper provides a brief survey of research into and use of Traffic Conflict studies in the United Kingdom and is intended to be supplemented in detail by material presented at the seminar.

Interest and research into the possible use of traffic conflict studies in the United Kingdom originated at the Transport and Road Research Laboratory and has developed both there and in associated research groups. As this paper will show, these studies are still mainly concerned with the development of the traffic conflict technique as a viable research and operational tool which it is hoped will be applicable in a variety of situations. This development work has caused considerable interest in the technique's use among organisations concerned with improving road safety, such as central government agencies, local highway authorities and police forces. There is however, at present, no recommended operational use of the technique in the United Kingdom.

2. INTENDED USES OF TRAFFIC CONFLICT STUDIES

During the course of work on traffic conflicts it has become clear that such studies can be for one of three purposes:

(1) To obtain objective records of road user behaviour in "accident" situations for further analysis (and therefore of most interest to road safety research workers).

(2) To provide a measure of safety to be used in "before and after" studies to evaluate accident countermeasures, (therefore of interest to traffic engineers and road safety officers, as well as research workers).

(3) To evaluate the present state of a given location with respect to safety.
Work at the Transport and Road Research Laboratory started with the first purpose which was to use the conflict study technique to provide records of driver and vehicle actions in situations which could be described as potential accidents, i.e., near misses. (This work has concentrated on situations at road junctions as these are the locations where most road accidents occur.) To do this it was however realised that any such studies must produce valid and reliable data to be scientifically acceptable and most work at TRRL has been directed towards establishing validity.

In obtaining validity data the possibility of using conflict counts to compare situations became clear and some work has been done using conflict studies in before and after experiments where some modification of junction design has been made.

The third purpose, that is of using traffic conflicts as a surveillance tool to determine if an accident problem exists, has not been pursued at TRRL. The determination of accident black spots for example, is still considered best pursued by the routine collection of accident data over preceding periods of time. It is considered that traffic conflict studies are at present too expensive in terms of man power and time to make them a general survey tool. They could often be justified however if historical accident data were not available.

3. DEFINITIONS

At the present time in the United Kingdom the general definition used is that a traffic conflict is a situation involving one or more vehicles where there is imminent danger of a collision if the vehicle (or other road user) movements continue unchanged. This general definition has led to two practical interpretations in identifying such situations:
10. REFERENCES