

**Research report  
KTC 96-15**

**Development of a Critical Path Method Specification and a  
Training Program for use of CPM for KyTC**

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**In cooperation with Kentucky Transportation Cabinet  
and**

**Federal Highway Administration  
U.S. Department of Transportation**

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16. Abstract The Critical Path Method is a proven management technique used for determining the critical activities that would need additional care in any type of construction projects. The KTC requires that CPM schedules be used on selected highway projects. This research project offers a detailed idea on CPM scheduling application in highway construction projects, as well as current practices in other departments of transportation nationwide, together with specifications for proper application of CPM scheduling.					
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## **INTRODUCTION:**

The Critical Path Method (CPM) is a proven management technique that can be used for various types of construction projects to determine the critical activities, i.e. the ones that need special care not to delay the anticipated completion of the project, and the path that links them over the project phase under investigation. This technique can be applied successfully to the pre-construction as well as the construction phases.

The KyTC requires that CPM schedules be used on selected highway projects. CPM has proven to be beneficial for planning and monitoring on many highway projects, in Kentucky and in other states. However, contracts requiring the use of CPM often result in confusion and claims, indicating the need for better specifications and a better understanding of the requirements of both contractors and KyTC personnel.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT :**

Problems with the use of the Critical Path Method (CPM) for scheduling construction projects can be caused by an inadequate specification and/or lack of training on the part of KyTC and contractor personnel. A process is needed whereby all parties involved understand exactly what is expected when CPM scheduling is specified, in order to facilitate communication and reduce the incidence of claims. Another problem of equal importance is the need for a

systematic method for estimating project contract duration, which plays an important role in determining the financing and staffing plans for the project. These two problems, CPM specification and usage, and project time determination, are directly interrelated, as the former requires the latter as a basis for planning, and the latter requires the former for monitoring and control.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:**

The objectives of this research were:

A - To understand the needs of the KyTC for scheduling highway construction work and to learn as much as possible about current practices in Kentucky and elsewhere.

B - To develop a specification for the use of the Critical Path Method (CPM) schedules for highway construction in Kentucky that will clarify requirements for contractors and reduce the number of schedule-related claims.

C - To develop and implement a training program for KyTC personnel and highway contractors on how to better utilize CPM to plan and monitor highway construction projects.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

The methodology followed to achieve the research objectives consisted of several steps, including:

### **A - Literature review:**

A review was made of similar research projects, published articles in specialized journals and magazines, and a computer search on related topics with such key-words as : Highway construction, highway scheduling, and CPM for highway scheduling. This literature review yielded several articles related to other DOT efforts in scheduling, as well as different scheduling techniques used in highway construction scheduling, including bar charts, networks, and linear scheduling methods (LSM).

### **B - Nationwide questionnaire:**

This questionnaire was prepared with the goal of assessing current practices as well as the projected future trends of applying scheduling techniques, particularly CPM, by the DOTs in different states, and making use of the best of these practices. A blank copy of the questionnaire is enclosed in appendix A of this report, along with the statistical analysis of the questionnaire results.

### **C - Site visits and telephone conversations:**

Site visits were made to different highway districts statewide, to get information about scheduling efforts in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, about the

current problems faced due to the lack of scheduling on some projects, and to assess the training needs for construction personnel, which will assist in properly designing a tailor-made training course on scheduling. These site visits were followed by telephone conversations to confirm the findings reported from the visits, and to update the districts on the anticipated plan. The results of the site visits and the telephone conversations are listed under "Current practices" in this report.

### **QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS:**

Fifty questionnaires were sent to different departments of transportation nationwide, and thirty-six responses were returned. The questionnaire included a set of questions about the current use of any scheduling techniques, specific utilization of CPM and its frequency, providing contractors with milestone schedules, requiring the contractors to submit schedules with their bids, the inclusion of CPM specifications in their contracts, problems faced while using CPM, and the availability of trained personnel to review the schedules. Following is an analysis of the responses to the questionnaire:

1 - What planning techniques were used to schedule the project during the pre-construction phases?

Most of the respondents (58.33 percent) stated that they were using bar charts, for their simplicity and ease of preparation and follow-up, whereas other

techniques were used by a smaller percentage of the DOTs. However, almost 39 percent of the respondents were using CPM in both its forms (14 percent arrow diagramming, and 25 percent precedence diagramming), while no DOT used Linear Scheduling Methods (Line of Balance, ..etc.)

2 - How often was CPM used in scheduling the project during the pre-construction phases?

Among the departments responding to the questionnaire, 22 percent stated they were always using it, whereas almost 39 percent stated they never used it, other departments used it on an irregular basis.

3 - Does the DOT provide the contractor with a milestone schedule in the bid documents?

Sixty-five percent of the respondents stated that they did include a milestone schedule with the bid documents, and that the successful bidder had to abide by the general requirements of that schedule. Thirty-five percent stated that they did not include any milestone schedules.

While having a milestone schedule in the bid documents has its advantages, as it guarantees beforehand that all bidders will follow the same guidelines and a common general logic, it should not be construed as an imposed schedule obliging the contractor to follow a certain method of construction or a detailed sequence of



work. Imposing a detailed schedule on the contractor might have negative legal implications, and lead to claims or disputes.

4 - Is the contractor required to submit a CPM schedule with his bid?

Twenty-six percent of the respondents stated that they required the contractor to submit a CPM schedule, either with his bid, or within a very short period from the notice to proceed. Eighty-four percent of the respondents did not require any CPM schedules with the bid or shortly after the award of contract.

However, it is a good practice to require the contractor to submit a schedule either with his bid , or very shortly after the award of contract, to guarantee a reasonable and steady rate of performance.

5 - How often did the contracts include special provisions for CPM preparation and updating?

Only 20 percent of the respondents stated that they always included provisions for using CPM in their contracts, while the majority (36 percent) stated they seldom had such provisions. The remaining percentage of respondents was distributed as 17 percent for never having such provisions, and 27 percent often having them.

6 - What criteria control the use of CPM on a project?

The respondents could mark more than one of the available criteria, or even add their own criteria. The distribution of criteria showed:

- Degree of complexity: 50 percent
- Time constraints: 55 percent
- Dollar amount: 31 percent
- Always used: 8 percent
- Other: 8 percent

7 - What were the problems faced while monitoring and/or controlling the CPM construction schedule?

Multiple answers to this question were allowed. Responses were distributed as follows:

- We don't know how to follow-up the CPM schedule: 25 percent
- The contractor does not know how to prepare/update the schedule: 50 percent
- The schedule is not regularly/timely updated: 56 percent
- No problems: 3 percent
- Not applicable: 17 percent

From the above answer distribution, it appears clear that the major problems concerning the preparation and updating of the schedule are related to the fact that often neither party, the DOT or the contractor, knows how to prepare the schedule, and whenever a schedule is presented, it is seldom looked at or updated. A proposed remedy for these problems is selecting an easily understandable software package that will enable both the DOT and/or the

contractor to develop a schedule, and regularly update it to reflect the actual progress and its comparison to the initial plans. Training personnel from both parties to have a common language is a major issue.

8 - How frequently is the contractor required to update the schedule?

Fifty-six percent of the respondents require regular updates, which ranged from weekly to bimonthly. Other answers included: Occasionally (11 percent), upon problem occurrence (33 percent) and never (3 percent).

Again, it appears that the best way of making use of the CPM schedule is to regularly update it. In case of major deviation from the initial plan, an overhaul of the schedule might be needed.

9 - What are other uses of the CPM schedule than just scheduling?

Answers given to this question included:

- Claims resolution: 61 percent
- Cash flow preparation: 6 percent
- Other: 17 percent

Under other, responses included such uses as:

- Evaluating change in construction sequence requests
- Communicating and coordinating between the DOT and the contractor
- Informing the public
- Documenting work progress and productivity rates

- Identifying the reasons of delay
- Identifying the amount and impact of delay
- Evaluating time extension and time suspension requests
- Evaluating the effects of weather
- Identifying ways to mitigate delays
- Contract time determination
- and finally: Design project management.

10 - Do you have trained staff to check and review the contractor-submitted CPM schedule?

Sixty percent of the respondents did not have any trained staff to perform the task of reviewing, evaluating and commenting on the contractor's CPM schedule, whereas the remaining 40 percent had such staff with variable levels of experience.

It is a necessity to have available trained staff to perform this task, otherwise, the main advantage of using a CPM schedule will be wasted.

11 - Do you offer such training for your staff?

Responses were distributed exactly on the same lines as the previous question. Sixty percent did not offer any training, whereas the remaining 40 percent offered training with different levels of detail and thoroughness.

## CURRENT SCHEDULING PRACTICES:

Through the conducted site visits and phone calls with construction personnel in different state highway districts, as well as contractors, it was concluded that CPM had been used on very few projects in Kentucky, usually the ones including major intersections and structures, with some problems resulting from lack of training and lack of understanding the network scheduling rules.

When asked about the method used to determine project contract duration, the districts' construction staff said it was decided centrally in Frankfort, without any involvement on their part. The contractors' comment on the allowable project duration was that it is usually (in 90 percent of the cases) on the flexible side, whereas about 10 percent of the projects have a tight given duration. Some of the contractors complained that this inconsistency makes it harder for them to determine the project indirect costs, including overhead.

On the other hand, most of the construction staff interviewed showed great enthusiasm toward learning and applying the principles of network scheduling in order to be able to monitor and control the project progress. Another point worth noting is that the state has an excellent post-construction evaluation document to evaluate the performance of the contractors. Although this document is filled by the construction staff at the end of the project, and sent to Frankfort for future

reference and action, there is no feedback concerning the results of such evaluations returned to the districts.

Additional points discussed included the need for improved public relations efforts to inform the public about future closures and detours, especially for major construction. The discussions also included the need for scheduling the design work for these major projects in order to avoid any misunderstandings resulting from unequal allocation of time for different design activities which might result in late completion of design. The questionnaire analysis revealed that more than 50 percent of the interviewed state DOTs schedule their own pre-construction activities, including design, either always or often.

Concerning the current method used in measuring progress, discussions showed that it was done through expenditure comparison, where the expenditure to date is compared to the total project budget, and the resulting percentage is used to represent the percentage of work progress to date. However, this method might not yield very accurate results, as materials stored on site do not represent actual work progress, whereas the contractor is paid partially for it.

One of the unique features to some of the remote districts was the limited number of available contractors (3 or 4), which almost guarantees each of these contractors a certain amount of work. This necessitates more stringent control on schedule performance, as any time slippage in one project might be repeated in other projects.

As for current practices in other states, both the questionnaire and telephone conversations showed some positive trends including:

- Public relations for highway projects including notification of public, advertising of scheduled closures and detours on billboards as well as in different media.
- Cost + Time bidding, which requires the contractors to submit a schedule with their bids. These bids are not going to be evaluated based only on the cost, but on the schedule as well. A point system is set to evaluate different features in the schedule, and convert the number of working days to equivalent monetary value. This would enhance the use of innovative methods of construction, and most likely result in a better overall project performance.
- Flexible scheduling: which including letting a group of projects in the same bid, and giving the contractor the flexibility to start with any of these projects, provided that the completion date for all projects does not exceed the specified time frame. These are usually small projects that are done on a regular basis like resurfacing and painting.
- Scheduling pre-construction activities, including design, utility relocation and right-of-way acquisition. This practice will fairly distribute the project's overall duration between these activities.

## **PRELIMINARY FINDINGS:**

Based on the literature review, the questionnaire analyses, the site visits and the telephone conversations, the following findings were reached:

- Network scheduling should be introduced to all projects containing multiple structures, tight time constraints or complicated phasing
- Multiple levels of scheduling should exist:
  1. One for small, linear projects
  2. Another for mid-size projects
  3. And a third for large sized projects with multiple structures.

The level of detail as well as the scheduling tool would differ between these three types of projects, ranging from check lists, to bar charts, linear scheduling diagrams, and ending with detailed CPM networks.

- Detailed clauses should be added to the specifications specifying the method of preparation of the schedule, level of detail, frequency of updating, as well as consequences of non-compliance.
- Training, including state-of-the-art scheduling software, should be offered for construction staff in all districts, as well as for willing contractors, and methods for building, updating, and reporting schedules. This training is to be divided between theory and hands-on training including computer software utilization.



### **1996-97 WORK PLAN:**

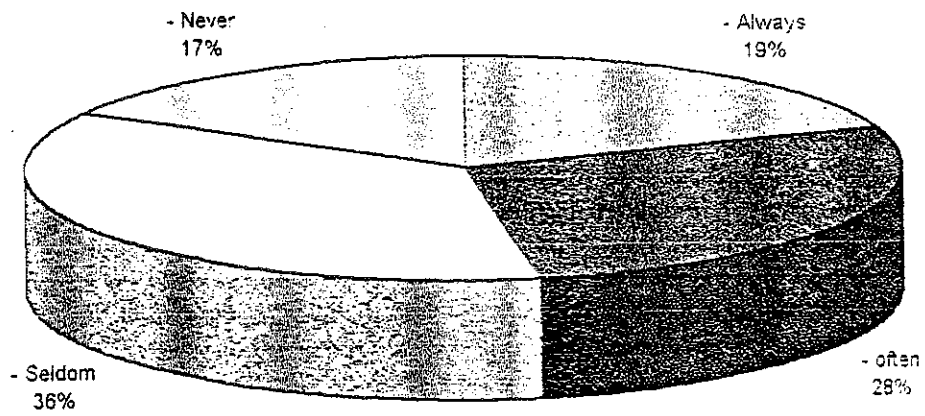
A meeting with the project advisory committee will be held to review project progress to date, and to finalize the project work plan for next year. Items proposed are an improved specification for KyTC construction project schedules, a scheduling training program for both KyTC and its contractor personnel, and possibly, a revised contract time determination method.

## APPENDICES

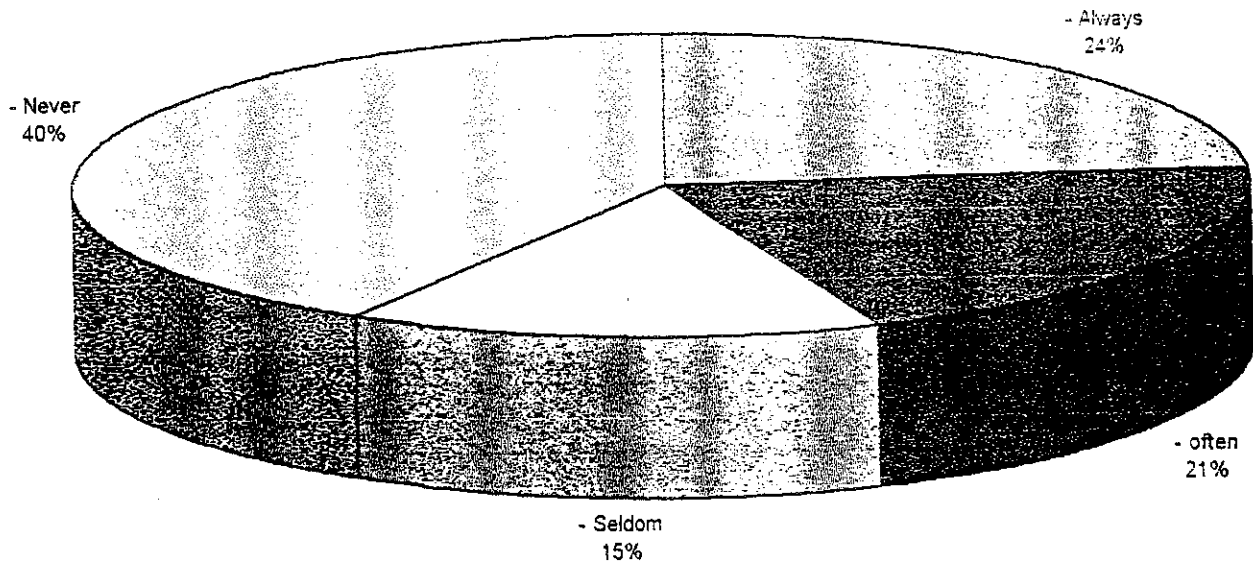
- APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS
- APPENDIX B: SAMPLE OF BAR CHART SCHEDULE
- APPENDIX C: SAMPLE OF NETWORK SCHEDULE

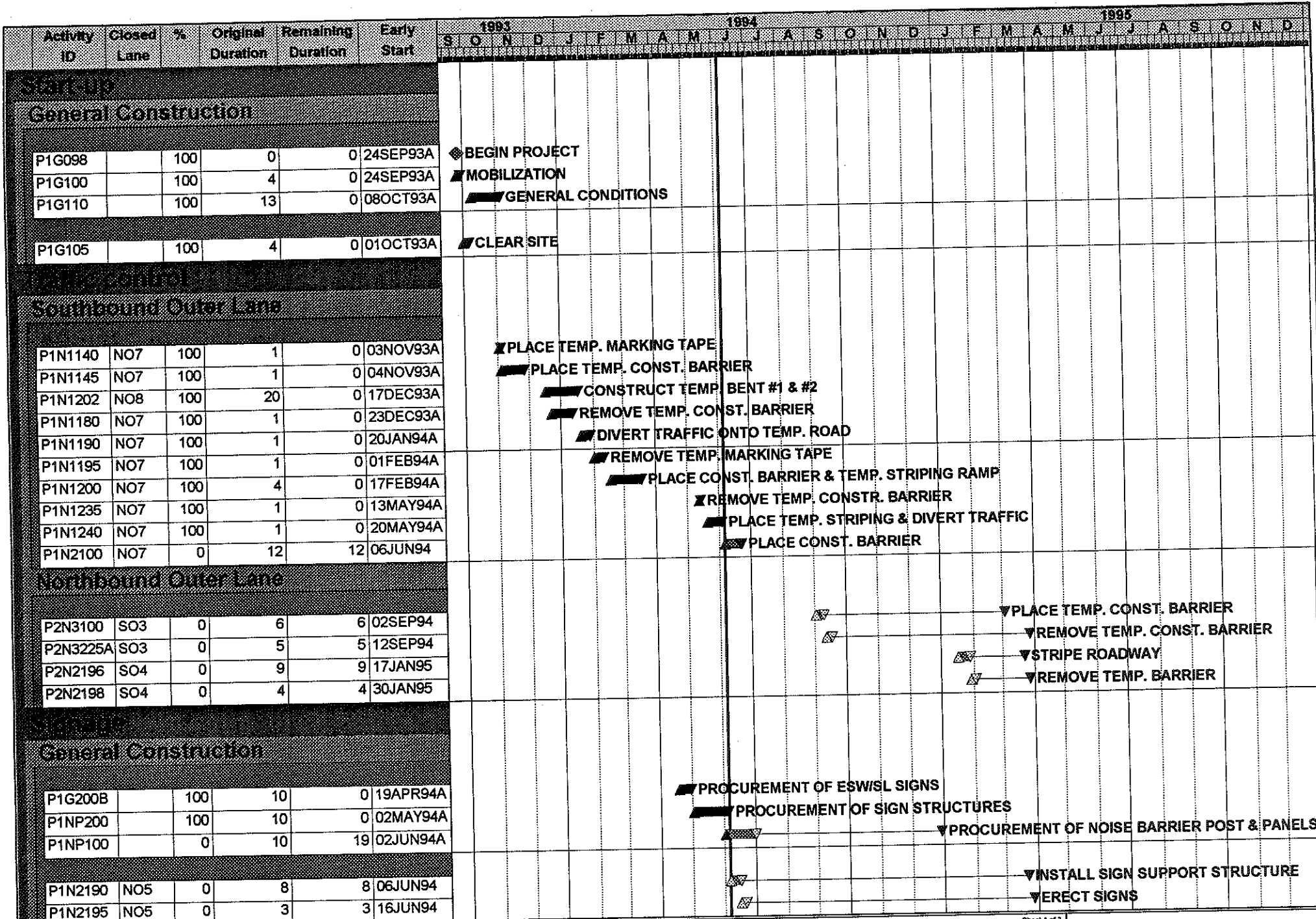
PLANNING TOOLS	NO. OF STATES	%	STATES RESPONDING
- Bar charts	21	58.33	ALASKA
- J networks (Arrow diagrams)	5	13.89	ARIZONA
- Precedence diagrams	9	25.00	ARKANSAS
- Line of balance	0	0.00	COLORADO
- Other ( please state )	7	19.44	DELAWARE
- None of the above	5	13.89	FLORIDA
			GEORGIA
			IDAHO
			ILLINOIS
FREQUENCY OF CPM USAGE IN PRE-CONSTRUCTION			INDIANA
- Always	8	22.22	IOWA
- often	7	19.44	KENTUCKY
- Seldom	5	13.89	LOUISIANA
- Never	14	38.89	MARYLAND
			MASSACHUSETTS
PROVIDING MILESTONE SCHEDULES WITH BID DOCUMENTS			MINNESOTA
NO/YES	13 / 23		MISSISSIPPI
CONTRACTOR REQUIRED TO SUBMIT CPM SCHEDULE WITH BID			MONTANA
NO/YES	26 / 10		N. CAROLINA
			N. DAKOTA
FREQUENCY OF USING CPM CONTRACT CLAUSES			N. HAMPSHIRE
- Always	7	19.44	NEBRASKA
- often	10	27.78	NEVADA
- Seldom	13	36.11	NEW JERSEY
- Never	6	16.67	NEW YORK
			OHIO
CRITERIA FOR USING CPM			RHODE ISLAND
- Always used	3	8.33	S. CAROLINA
- Degree of complexity	18	50.00	S. DAKOTA
- Dollar amount	11	30.56	TEXAS
- Time constraints	20	55.56	VERMONT
- Other (please state)	3	8.33	VIRGINIA
			WASHINGTON
			WISCONSIN
PROBLEMS WITH CPM USAGE			WYOMING
- We don't know how to follow-up the CPM schedule	9	25.00	
- the contractor does not know How to prepare/update the schedule	18	50.00	
- the schedule is not regularly and/or timely updated	20	55.56	
- Other (please state)	5	13.89	
- no problems	1	2.78	
- not applicable	6	16.67	
FREQUENCY OF SCHEDULE UPDATING			
- regularly	20	55.56	
- Occasionally	4	11.11	
- Upon problem occurrence	12	33.33	
- Never	1	2.78	
OTHER USES FOR CPM SCHEDULES			
- Claims resolution	22	61.11	
- Cash flow preparation	2	5.56	
- Other (please state)	6	16.67	
DO YOU HAVE TRAINED STAFF			
NO / YES	20 / 14		
DO YOU OFFER TRAINING FOR YOUR STAFF			
NO / YES	19 / 14		
WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE UPDATED ON THIS PROJECT			
NO / YES	1 / 35		

### CONTRACT CLAUSES FOR CPM



### USAGE OF CPM BY OTHER DOTs

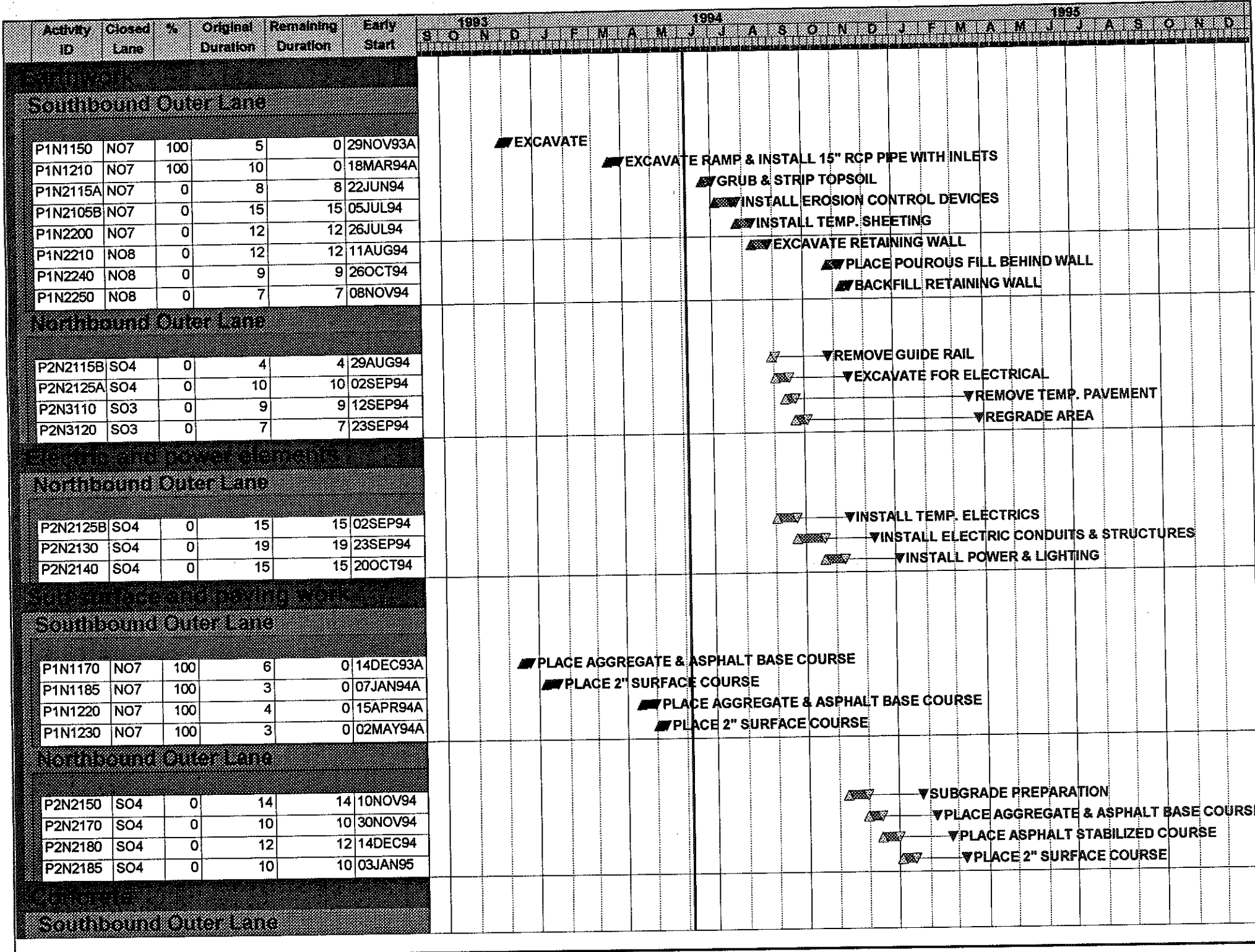




Project Start	24SEP93	▲ Early Bar
Project Finish	29MAR95	▼ Float Bar
Delta Date	06JUN94	▬ Progress Bar
Plot Date	19JUL95	▲ Critical Activity

HWY1

C.M. Construction, Inc.  
Highway Widening  
By Work Type/Area Of Roadway/Resp.



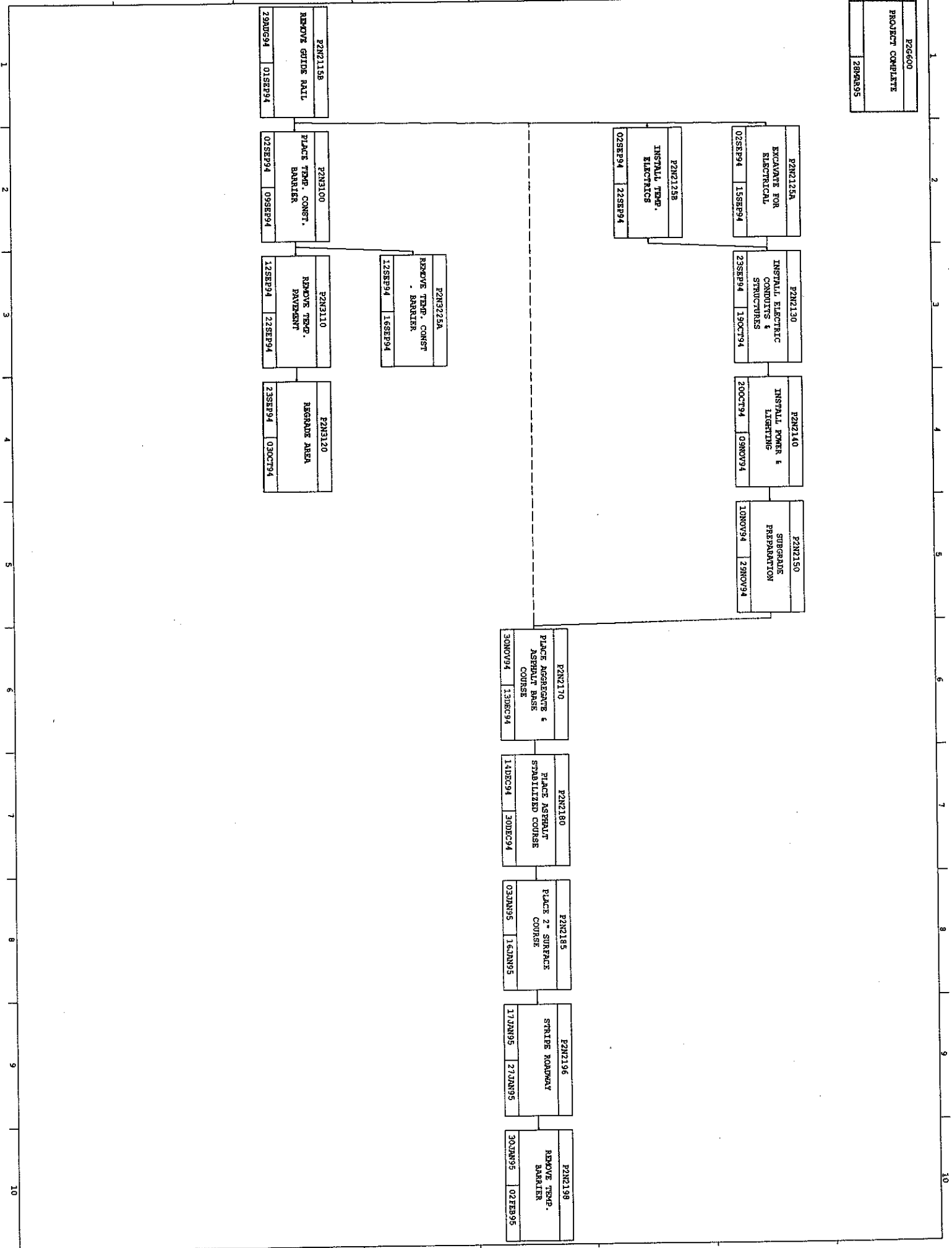
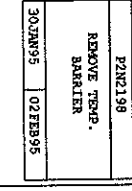
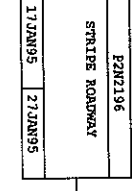
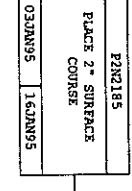
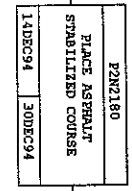
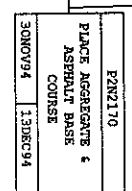
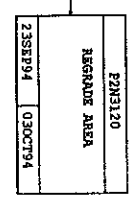
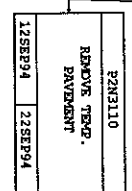
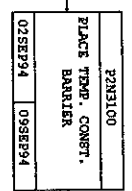
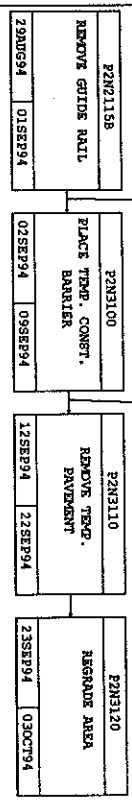
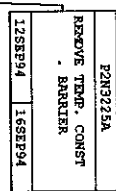
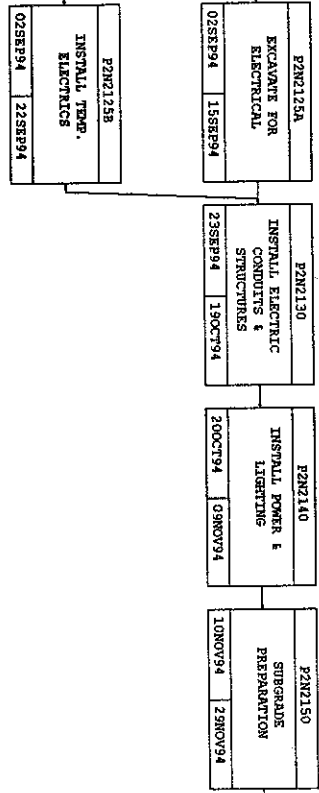


## **APPENDIX C**

### **Sample of a Network Schedule for Complex Projects**



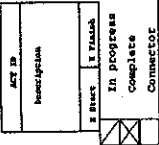
P26600  
PROJECT COMPLETE  
28MAR95



Plot Date: 12/27/94  
 Date Issued: 05/20/94  
 Project Name: 2112572  
 Project Number: 270405\*

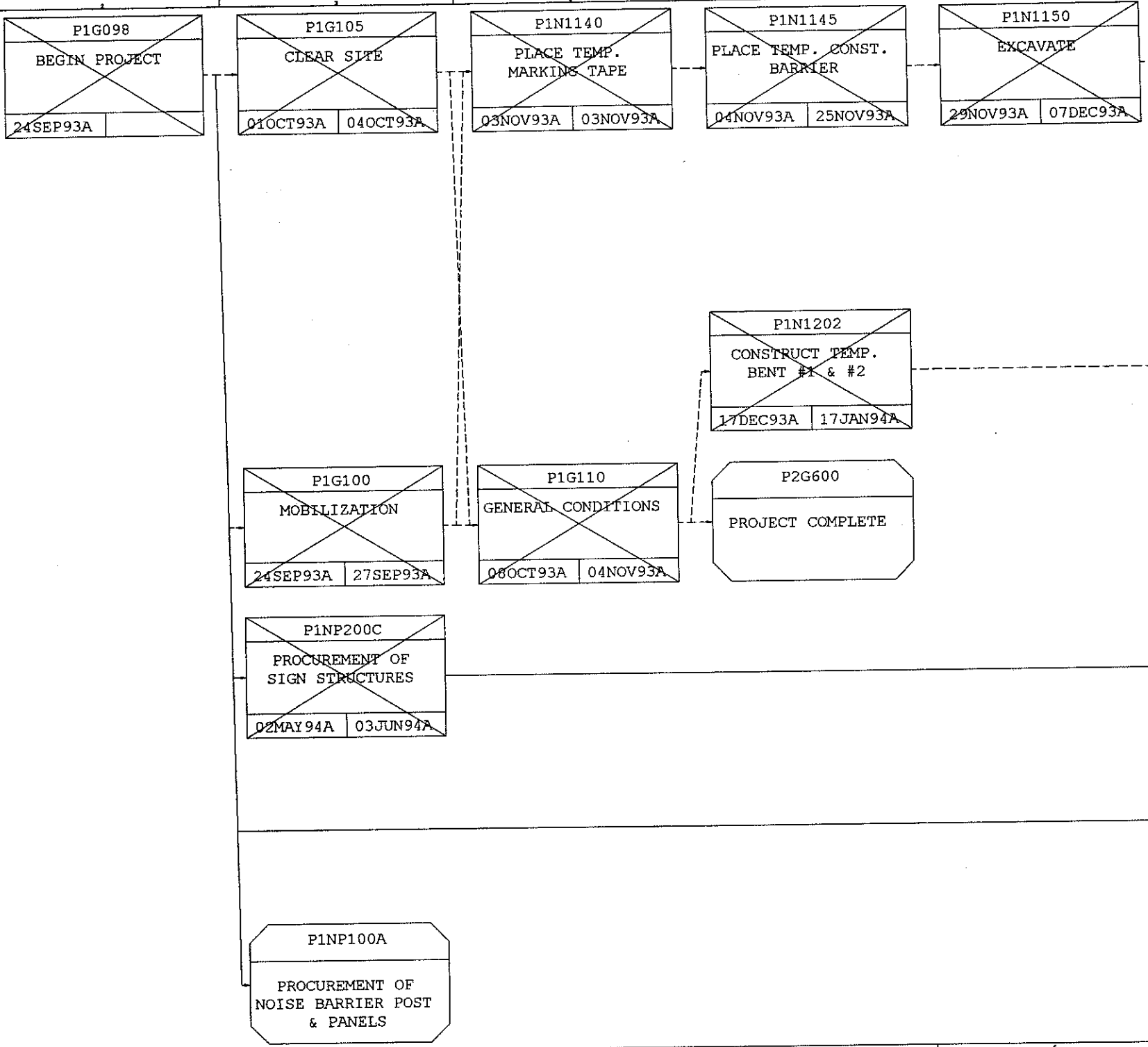
(C) Primavera Systems, Inc.

**LEGEND**



**C.M. Construction, Inc.  
 Highway Widening  
 Connectors to Excluded Activities**

Date	Revision	Checked	Approved



P1N1170	
PLACE AGGREGATE & ASPHALT BASE COURSE	
14DEC93A	22DEC93A

P1N1180	
REMOVE TEMP. CONST BARRIER	
23DEC93A	11JAN94A

P1N1185	
PLACE 2" SURFACE COURSE	
07JAN94A	19JAN94A

P1N1190	
DIVERT TRAFFIC ONTO TEMP. ROAD	
20JAN94A	28JAN94A

P1N1195	
REMOVE TEMP. MARKING TAPE	
01FEB94A	09FEB94A

P1N1200	
PLACE CONST. BARRIER & TEMP. STRIPING RAMP	
17FEB94A	17MAR94A

~~P1N1210~~  
EXCAVATE RAMP &  
INSTALL 15" RCP  
PIPE WITH INLETS  
18MAR94A 30MAR94A

~~P1N1220~~  
PLACE AGGREGATE &  
ASPHALT BASE  
COURSE  
15APR94A 29APR94A

~~P1N1230~~  
PLACE 2" SURFACE  
COURSE  
02MAY94A 09MAY94A

~~P1N1235~~  
REMOVE TEMP.  
CONSTR. BARRIER  
13MAY94A 13MAY94A

~~P1N1240~~  
PLACE TEMP.  
STRIPING & DIVERT  
TRAFFIC  
20MAY94A 02JUN94A

~~P1G200B~~  
PROCUREMENT OF ESW  
/SL SIGNS  
19APR94A 29APR94A

P1N2190  
INSTALL SIGN  
SUPPORT STRUCTURE

P1N2100  
PLACE CONST.  
BARRIER