

# Report to Committees at the 2004 Annual Meeting

By Tom Palmerlee

## ***Introduction***

This report summarizes information collectively of committees that I staff. Some of the material is taken from information that will be presented in the Sunday afternoon All Chairs meeting.

## ***Reorganization: Promise and Challenge***

- Effective January 2004, the approximately 200 standing committees of TRB's Technical Activities Division have been reorganized into eleven Groups.
- Six of the Groups consisting of some 150 committees address various functional components of transportation, with a major focus on highways.
- Each of the remaining five Groups concentrates primarily on a specific mode, i.e., public transportation, rail, marine, aviation, and freight systems.
- The combined functional and modal structure creates the synergy among the groups to make it possible for TRB standing committees to address the wide variety of specific and cross-cutting transportation research issues.

Most of my committees became part of the Data and Information Systems Section of the Policy and Administration Group. This simplifies some administrative tasks. It also allows sections to be more active in addressing critical and cross-cutting issues. The purposes of Section include these programmatic functions.

1. Maintain a comprehensive plan of research needs, promote the conduct of needed research, identify emerging topics for future research, and stimulate the presentation of research reports within the scope of the Section. This information is critical for a number of reasons – it provides the basis for research projects that may be funded by a variety of sponsors, it communicates the research priorities to other Sections and committees, and it provides a focus for conferences, workshops, annual meeting sessions, and other activities;
2. Review activities of the committees to see if critical issues are being addressed and if strategic plans are being met;
3. Identify gaps not being addressed by the committees and cross-cutting topics of concern to more than one committee, within the boundaries of the Section or other Sections, and provide the liaison and synergy to ensure that the gaps and cross-cutting issues are addressed;

## **Addressing Critical and Crosscutting Issues**

A challenge for some committees under this new structure is to assure that continue to connect to their customers and key partnering committee. TRB has expanded the opportunities for joint sponsorship of sessions and meetings.

- For example, each Group will have the opportunity to propose an Annual Meeting session that addresses a topic of interest to multiple Groups, without that session counting against your allotted number of committee sessions.
- We are also considering setting aside a number of sessions to be sponsored by the Sections. Of course this may make it necessary to reduce the quota of sessions for committees.

Last year the committees provided big issue and research study ideas. Out of those suggestions, the Technical Activities Council combined into 30 themes with the following as the top rated issues:

- Capacity (or congestion) of the transportation system: what does the future hold?
- Getting rid of the seams (integrating modes and institutions for a more seamless transportation system)
- Matching transportation systems to the communities they serve (context sensitivity, land use/sprawl, demographics, environmental justice, economic impacts, etc.)
- The growing shortage of transportation personnel: outlook, implications, experiences, and actions
- Making transportation investment decisions – art or science?
- Transportation and energy: options for the long term
- Balancing environmental and transportation goals
- Moving the goods: giving freight the attention it deserves
- Show me the money: meeting the long term funding needs for transportation
- Safety: future options that could make a real difference
- Security: where do we go from here?
- Renewing the aging transportation infrastructure

The spotlight themes for this meeting – security, funding, and renewal – were selected from this list. The 2005 spotlight themes will be selected early Sunday afternoon at the Technical Activities Council Meeting.

## **Security Activities**

One specific example of a cross-cutting issue that we need to cooperatively address is transportation security. TRB is planning a security workshop for the spring of 2004.

Representatives from interested TRB standing committees, US DOT, TSA, and other organizations will be invited to participate and to provide input on:

- What have we learned since 9-11, and where do we go from here?
- What should the TRB role be, and what activities should we be pursuing to fill this role?
- How can this be best accommodated in the TRB standing committee structure and can this be a model for addressing other cross-cutting issues?

Pat Hu, chair of the National Transportation Data Requirements and Programs Committee (ABJ10) will be representing the Data and Information Systems Section (ABJ00) at a workshop planning group meeting on Tuesday, January 13.

### **Triennial Strategic Planning**

TRB has combined a number of currently required committee activities into one triennial strategic planning process. The strategic planning process in the Guide now combines the following:

- Committee Triennial Self Evaluations (TSEs)
- Regular review and update of committee's millennium paper
- Maintenance of up-to-date set of research problem statements
- Consideration of relevant critical and cross-cutting issues identified by the TRB Executive Committee, the Technical Activities Council, and the Group/Section

Most of my committee's have prepared draft TSE's for review by committee members. Those committees will continue with the format they are using.

### **Paper Awards**

At its Sunday meeting, the Technical Activities Council is considering recommending to the TRB Executive Committee adding two new paper awards to the four existing awards. One, the Charley V. Wooten Award, would be administered by the Policy & Organization Group and is named in honor of the forty-first Chairman of the Transportation Research Board.

### **Diversity**

As in previous years, TRB is surveying all young and first time attendees to this Annual Meeting to solicit their interest in serving on our committees. New statistics show that since 2001, the percent of TRB standing committee chairs who are women continued to increase, but chairs who are minorities dropped from 9% to 7% of the total. We will need to keep this in mind when selecting future chairs

### **Future Activities**

Reauthorization: A Meeting on Data-related Provisions

A November 19, 2003 meeting served as an initial investigation to identify and refine the data issues associated with surface transportation reauthorization legislation programmatic proposals. This meeting also discussed organizing a national conference, to be held shortly after the legislation is passed. That post authorization conference would seek to delineate the efforts needed to meet the data requirements resulting from reauthorization legislation. This meeting will be an excellent opportunity to the TRB committee interested in data and data systems to look at requirements across programs, and to suggest efficient data strategies for transportation organizations. Given the uncertainties of the reauthorization legislation, the timing of the conference is uncertain.

## ***Other News of Interest***

### **Cooperative Research Programs**

- The first products from the Commercial Truck and Bus Safety Synthesis Program, sponsored by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, were completed.
- The current deadlines for submissions are:
  - NCHRP January 31, 2004
  - TCRP March 31, 2004

An electronic form for "Suggest an NCHRP or TCRP Synthesis Topic" is available

### **Reorganization of USDOT Research**

- In December, the Secretary announced a proposal for reorganizing elements of the Department of Transportation, with the particular aim of establishing a more focused research organization within the department.
- To be fully implemented, the proposal would require congressional approval.
- Transform the Research and Special Programs Administration (RSPA) into a new Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA);
- Move into RITA both the Intelligent Transportation Systems Joint Program Office, currently located within the Federal Highway Administration, and the Bureau of Transportation Statistics; and
- Establish a "strong coordination and review function" within RITA that covers research activities throughout the Department.

## **Appendices**

### ***TRB Calendar Selections***

May 3, 2004

Workshop on International Trade Data  
Washington, DC

June 27-30, 2004

North American Travel Monitoring Exposition and Conference (NATMEC) 2004  
San Diego, California

July 25-27, 2004

Joint Summer Meeting of the Planning, Economics, Finance, and Management  
Committees  
Park City, Utah

November 1-2, 2004

National Household Travel Survey Data Users Conference  
Washington, DC

November 18-20, 2004

Conference for Research on Women's Transportation Issues  
Chicago, Illinois

January 9-13, 2005

TRB 84th Annual Meeting  
Washington, D.C.

May 11-13, 2005

Census Data for Transportation Planning: Preparing for the Future  
Irvine, California

### ***National Research Council Studies***

#### **Review of Bureau of Transportation Statistics' Survey Programs**

This study will review the current survey programs of the Bureau of Transportation Statistics in light of transportation data needs for policy planning and research and in light of the characteristics and functions of an effective statistical agency. For each of the three major surveys, the committee will comment on priority transportation data needs and recommend approaches that BTS can use to meet the needs of the variety of different data users over time. The committee will also provide guidance and suggest procedures BTS can use to ensure sound methodology and improved timeliness. It is anticipated that the guidance offered will differ for the specific surveys, but it is also anticipated that certain key themes will be important across the board. Specific guidance on each survey will be provided in letter reports, and major themes and cross-cutting guidance will be offered in a final report.

Complete

#### **Freight Transportation Data: A Framework for Development**

This committee will recommend a framework for the development of national freight data. The framework will identify the data requirements of the various users of freight

data (public, including various levels of government, and private). The framework will also identify appropriate federal, state and private-sector roles in the development and dissemination of freight data. The framework will be conceptual in nature. It will not be a detailed data collection plan; instead it will articulate the types of freight data needed by the variety of users in transportation and the roles of different data providers. See **Tuesday, January 13, 2004, 10:15 AM - 12:00 PM, Shoreham, U.S. National Freight Data Program Development**

### **Expert Review of the Statistical Procedures for the Decennial Census**

The panel is charged to review the statistical methods of the 2000 census, particularly the use of the Accuracy and Coverage Evaluation Program and dual-systems estimation, and other census procedures that may affect the completeness and quality of the data. Features the panel may review include the Master Address File, follow-up for nonresponse, race and ethnicity classifications, mail return rates, quality of long-form data, and other areas. Ready for review, Oct. 2003

### **Bureau of Transportation Statistics International Trade Traffic Study**

Under the provisions of Section 5115 of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (PL 105-178), the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) of the United States Department of Transportation has requested the Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT) to evaluate the accuracy and reliability of measures of ton-miles and value-miles of international trade traffic carried by highway for each State for use as formula factors for highway apportionments. CNSTAT proposes to establish a panel to conduct such a study. The goals of this study will be to review the findings of a BTS staff report prepared in response to PL 105-178 and its recommendations, and to explore additional data sources and measures that may be utilized for this purpose. The study will result in recommendations for statistical quality standards that address data sources, data collection and estimation methodology. The approximate start date for this project is July 1, 2003. The project is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics. Two reports are expected to be issued: (1) a letter report approximately 9 months after the start of the project and (2) a final report at the end of the project in 12 months. Project duration: 12 months. In Progress

## ***TRB Circulars***

### **Data Partnerships – Making Connections for Effective Transportation Planning**

This is the report of the May, 2003 peer exchange by the Statewide Transportation Data and Information Systems. From the discussions, a synthesis of effective strategies, methods and tools was identified for addressing factors that influence the sharing of spatial and other data between and within federal, state and local governments. The circular will be available by the Annual Meeting.

## **Environmental Spatial Information for Transportation: A Peer Exchange on Partnerships**

In June, 2003 practitioners from transportation organizations, regulators and non-governmental organizations shared their experiences in partnering to develop environmental databases that meet the needs of multiple organizations and enable better, faster and more cost effective transportation decisions. Highlighted were successful partnering strategies to balance different goals, resource sharing, barriers to further improvements, and information technology infrastructures that facilitate sharing of environmental information. The circular may be available by the Annual Meeting.

## **Reauthorization: A Meeting on Data-related Provisions**

This meeting served as an initial investigation to identify and refine the data issues associated with surface transportation reauthorization legislation programmatic proposals. Federal, State and Local officials and practitioners discussed new and expanded requirements, in order to inform the state and MPO data communities about new responsibilities they are likely to face when new legislation is enacted. This meeting began developing an approach for a national conference, to be held shortly after the legislation is passed. That post authorization conference will seek to delineate the efforts needed to meet the data requirements resulting from reauthorization legislation. A circular should be available by the Annual Meeting.

## ***NCHRP Reports***

### **Project 20-47(1), Quality and Accuracy of Positional Data in Transportation**

The objectives of this research are to (1) identify the positional-data quality needs for common transportation applications, (2) document the effectiveness of various techniques for establishing spatial positions, (3) develop methodologies for assessing the impacts of positional-data accuracy in transformations between measurement techniques and spatial referencing systems, and (4) package the findings into materials that can be readily implemented by DOT personnel. For this project, all types of spatial data should be included with a primary focus on linearly referenced data that is predominant in transportation agencies. Also, positional-data quality is intended to include, at least, data accuracy, precision, and resolution.

### **Synthesis: Pavement Management Applications Using Geographic Information Systems**

The objective of this synthesis is to systematically document the state-of-the-practice and knowledge of pavement management applications using GIS. This will be done by literature review and survey of the state DOTs. A general survey will be made of all states, with a more detailed follow-up telephone survey of selected states and a limited number of other leading transportation agencies. The survey will include questions on available sources of information, to extend the literature review.

## ***NCHRP Projects***

### **Project 20-64, XML Schemas for Exchange of Transportation Data (TransXML)**

The objectives of this project are to develop broadly accepted public domain **XML** schemas for exchange of transportation data and to develop a framework for development, validation, dissemination, and extension of current and future schemas.

### **Project 20-24(19), State DOTs and E-Business**

The objectives of this research are to demonstrate how state DOTs have profitably incorporated **e-business** into their business practices and to present a conceptual design for one selected **e-business** application.

### **Synthesis Applications of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in Transit Planning and Operations**

This synthesis will document the state of the practice in applications of **GIS** technology in transit planning and operations, focusing on the potential of **GIS** for inter- and intra-agency coordination. Relying upon a review of relevant literature and a survey of selected transportation agencies, it will draw from a wide range of resources across several fields, as well as a number of case studies, in order to address common concerns, to document cost and benefits of the use of **GIS** for various applications, and to profile innovative and successful practices, as well as lessons-learned and gaps in information.

### **Project 8-48, Using American Community Survey Data for Transportation Planning**

The objective of this research is to develop a practitioner guidebook for incorporating ACS data into the transportation planning processes at national, state, metropolitan, and local levels. The guidebook must evaluate ACS data and products and demonstrate their uses within a wide range of transportation planning applications. Recommended applications and procedures will be based on both theoretical and practical considerations.