

**STATE OF TRB  
June 2008 Report  
(a.k.a. “The Cheat Sheet”)**

This document is being provided to the chairs of TRB Groups, Sections, committees and task forces for their information and use in planning committee activities. It is also hoped that this “State of TRB” overview will help to maximize the efficient use of available time during your meetings and/or in communications with your committee. Comments are welcome, and can be addressed to Mark Norman ([mnorman@nas.edu](mailto:mnorman@nas.edu)) or any TRB staff member. This information will be updated and distributed following the Technical Activities Council meeting on June 12. *(Please note those items in italics for special attention by committee chairs.)*

1. Attendees Input to Help Guide Future TRB Annual Meetings.....	1
2. Planning for 2009 Annual Meeting Gearing Up.....	2
3. Audit of Scopes of TRB Standing Committees Completed.....	2
4. Efforts to Increase Diversity Continue .....	3
5. Guidelines for Updating Research Needs Statements to be Provided .....	4
6. TRB Webinar Series Takes Off .....	4
7. Multi-Group Globalization Initiative to Continue .....	4
8. American Planning Association/AICP Certification Maintenance (CM) Units .....	5

Attachments:

- Committee Plans for 2009 Annual Meeting Energy & Climate Change Sessions
- Demographics of Standing Committees – June 2008

**1. Attendees Input to Help Guide Future TRB Annual Meetings**

More than 1500 TRB 2008 Annual Meeting attendees responded to a comprehensive survey conducted in February 2008. TAC and TRB staff are using the responses in considering measures to address the growing size and complexity of TRB Annual Meeting, as required in the TRB Strategic Plan. The vast majority of the more than 1500 survey respondents gave high marks to the current Annual Meeting program and administration. Other highlights included:

- Most were satisfied with the current length of the meeting and with the number of activities offered in their interest areas. This held true across all interest areas.
- Opportunities to meet with peers was cited most often as the most valuable aspect of the Annual Meeting, followed by lectern sessions and committee meetings. The value of meeting with peers and participating in committee meetings increased in direct proportion to the number of Annual Meetings the respondent had attended.
- More than 60% rated the new hotel room reservation system as good to excellent, with about 23% rating this as fair to poor. The new system was rated about the same as the system that was used in previous years. TRB is implementing enhancements to the new system for the 2009 meeting.
- In response to a question about the possibility of moving the meeting to a location outside of the DC beltway, about one-third responded that this would hurt their

ability/willingness to attend. Access to the DC metro subway system was cited as the most important consideration in selecting locations for future Annual Meetings.

- Almost 75% of the respondents favored replacing the mailed printed Announcement with an email that includes a link to the Announcement on the TRB website. This change is being made for the 2009 meeting, and is in keeping with our “green” theme for this meeting.

In a separate survey, more than 90% of the organizations that exhibited at the 2008 Annual Meeting responded that they plan to do so again in 2009, citing their positive experience in 2008.

## **2. Planning for 2009 Annual Meeting Gearing Up**

Building on the success of the 2008 TRB Annual Meeting, which attracted a record setting 10,500 attendees and a sold-out first time exhibit, planning is in high gear for the 2009 meeting. Calls for papers have been posted by the committees, and the paper submission website opened on June 2. The new Special Task Force on Climate Change and Energy is helping the development of sessions on the spotlight theme “Transportation, Energy, & Climate Change.” In response to a recent survey, more than 45 TRB standing committees indicated that they are planning on sponsoring sessions on the spotlight theme, and another 50 are considering doing so.

We are following up on a suggestion from the SPPR to facilitate more direct involvement by TRB Executive Committee members in the Annual Meeting program. A survey is being sent to Executive Committee members soliciting their interest in participating in the program, and what topics or issues they would like to speak on. *Responses will be distributed among TRB staff and committee chairs, who will try to match up interest with sessions.*

The new Special Task Force on Climate Change and Energy is helping to coordinate the development of sessions on the spotlight theme “Transportation, Energy, & Climate Change.” In response to a recent survey, more than 45 TRB standing committees indicated that they are planning on sponsoring sessions on the spotlight theme, and another 50 are considering doing so. *Committee chairs are asked to review the attached list of energy and climate change sessions currently being considered by committees, and to contact the person listed to pursue any coordination or co-sponsorship of sessions.*

## **3. Audit of Scopes of TRB Standing Committees Completed**

In accordance with the newly adopted update to the TRB Strategic Plan, the TRB Executive Committee and the Technical Activities Council (TAC) requested that Group Executive Boards conduct a strategic review of all existing TRB standing committees. The results of all the Group reviews are contained in a 47 page report, which can be obtained from Mark Norman.

Based on the contents of the report, it is the consensus of TAC members that the Triennial Strategic Planning process has provided an effective tool to help ensure that the scopes of our standing committees are evolving to reflect current and future issues, and vibrancy of the committees. Over the last 20 years, the number of standing committees and task forces has increased by an average of 2.4 per year. This number is very small in comparison to the number of revisions to the scopes of existing committees that are approved each year to better reflect changing and emerging issues.

The audit by Groups consequently did not uncover any major surprises or significant needed changes. The effort did identify a number of tactical recommendations and scope changes for individual committees. These are being acted on. The process was useful to a number of Groups in fostering communications, in providing the opportunity to think holistically, and in considering cross-cutting issues.

In the future, the Groups will:

- Continue to rely on the Triennial Strategic Planning process as the primary tool in managing the number and scopes of committees
- Periodically conduct a top-down overview exercise addressing all committees and task forces
- Comply with the stronger criteria for the establishment of task forces and standing committees adopted by the Technical Activities Council in 2007

#### **4. Efforts to Increase Diversity Continue**

Steps continue to be taken to increase the diversity of those involved in TRB standing committee activities. TRB staff surveyed new and young attendees following the 2008 Annual Meeting to solicit their interest in participating in our standing committees. More than 120 positive responses were received. Of these, one-third were women, and slightly more than half were minorities. Information from all respondents and the committees they expressed interest in have been provided to the appropriate committee chairs. *Committee chairs are asked to involve these individuals as members, young members, or friends of their committee.*

A staff task force on diversity has been formed to give this issue continuing attention. In response to one of their early recommendations, TRB will have an exhibit booth at the annual meeting of the Council of Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO).

The latest standing committee member demographics are attached. The statistics show that we have increased the percent involvement in the following demographic groups in each of the past two years: young, international, female, and minority. On the downside, the attached spreadsheet shows a decrease in each of the last two years in the percent of TRB standing committee members who are state DOT employees. *Committee chairs are asked to continue to consider representation by these groups when nominating individuals for committee membership.*

## **5. Guidelines for Updating Research Needs Statements to be Provided**

TRB staff is in the process of developing guidelines for committees to maintain and update their research needs statements (RNS). The guidelines will be distributed to TRB committee chairs, and will be incorporated into the online RNS database, and in the updated Technical Activities Leadership Guide. In addition, TRB and AASHTO staff have agreed on steps to facilitate coordination between the TRB RNS database and the AASHTO TERI database on environmental research statements. User enhancements to the RNS database are also being developed, and will be announced when available.

*Committee chairs are reminded that their committee's research needs statements should be reviewed on an annual basis, and updated/added to as needed.*

## **6. TRB Webinar Series Takes Off**

More than 3,500 individuals have participated in the TRB webinars since September. This averages to more than 400 persons per webinar, or the size of a large-scale TRB conference! The Technical Activities Council will be discussing the strategic role of webinars at their June 12 meeting.

TRB launched its webinar (web-based seminar) series in September 2007 in accordance with a TRB Strategic Plan action item. The webinars include presentations by those involved in preparing newly released TRB products and reports. These webinars also bring some of the most popular TRB session topics to those who were not able to attend the original sessions. The webinars are about 90 minutes in length. Access is free for TRB Sponsor organizations, with a registration fee charged for other sites for most webinars.

Ideas for future webinar topics are welcome.

## **7. Multi-Group Globalization Initiative to Continue**

This initiative, led by the Policy & Organization Group, the Marine Group, and the Freight Systems Group, continues to generate dividends, including:

- Well received presentation of the globalization quiz at the 2008 Annual Meeting Welcome Session and to the TRB Executive Committee
- Development of the program of sessions for the 2008 TRB Summer Conference in June in Baltimore
- Recent reaffirmation by the lead Groups to continue this initiative to generate joint activities and sessions to bring these communities closer together

This initiative and the Special Task Force on Climate Change and Energy represent two models for enhancing coordination among Groups and committees to address cross-cutting issues.

## **8. American Planning Association/AICP Certification Maintenance (CM) Units**

In our meetings since the TRB Annual Meeting with the staff of the APA/AICP CM program, APA has acknowledged that this new program was not set up for a meeting with the volume and breadth of the TRB Annual Meeting in mind. TRB staff has been working with APA to see if some mechanism could be developed to qualify, enter, and pay for the approximately 100 Annual Meeting planning sessions under the AICP CM program. Despite our best efforts since last November, we were not able to work out a feasible arrangement that would apply to the 2008 TRB Annual Meeting. We will continue to try to negotiate with APA/AICP to try to come up with an arrangement that could apply to the 2009 Annual Meeting and to upcoming TRB conferences that address planning issues. It should be noted that in our February 2008 survey of TRB Annual Meeting attendees, about five percent of respondents reported that they have relied on the TRB Annual Meeting in past years to earn credit towards maintaining their AICP certification.