

TRB STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

November 2006 Draft

V. OBJECTIVES AND ACTION PLAN

“A goal without a plan is just a wish.”

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

The following objectives have emerged from the strategic planning process, based on the Executive Committee’s scan of the external and internal environments; revised TRB mission and goals; surveys of standing committee chairs, state representatives, and e-newsletter subscribers; analysis of TRB strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; and gap analysis. Under each objective, potential actions are noted. Some of these candidate actions were proposed by members of the Subcommittee on Planning and Policy Review at its October 2006 meeting; others were suggested by respondents to one of the three strategic planning surveys conducted by TRB; and still others build on action items in the Board’s prior strategic plan or are proposed by TRB staff. This broad set of candidate actions is included here for the purpose of discussion; it is not expected that all of these actions will be featured in the final plan. Finally, to assist the Executive Committee in its review of this draft, the bracketed line beneath the title of each objective below identifies which ‘rubric’ the objective belongs to (using the three rubrics suggested by Adib Kanafani—finance; outreach; and research, knowledge, and information), and also indicates which of the Plan’s 8 Goals it relates to.

1. Broaden and solidify TRB’s financial base

[*FINANCE*; all goals]

A. Develop a strategy to enhance revenues:

- Consider increasing conference and workshop registration fees, publication prices, and other charges to bring them more into line with the market
- Increase private-sector base and enhance revenues by offering recognition opportunities for organizations that contribute to TRB, e.g. by listing them as contributors in the Annual Meeting Program, etc.

B. Develop a fundraising strategy to diversify and increase core support:

- Explore potential for stronger relationships with foundations, including research foundations of transportation organizations
- Restructure TRB Affiliates program to attract more donors and yield greater revenues by targeting affiliate packages and services to different constituencies, including the private sector, universities, and public agencies
- Develop strategy to engage high-ranking officials of government agencies more actively, to ensure their continuing support for TRB; assist them in understanding

how the changing role of governments in transportation is changing funding mechanisms in a way that may affect research and TRB

- Develop strategy to attract support from additional federal government agencies, including those that are ‘lapsed’ TRB sponsors

2. Expand coverage and relevance

[*RESEARCH, KNOWLEDGE, & INFORMATION; OUTREACH*; goals: 1, 4, 5, 6]

A. Develop a strategy to expand TRB’s coverage and its relevance to different segments of the transportation community:

- Freight — build on existing activities and leverage new National Cooperative Freight Research Program; pursue active outreach to freight companies and associations
- Aviation — build on existing activities and leverage new Airport Cooperative Research Program; pursue active outreach to aviation agencies and associations
- Local government — Establish closer ties with metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), local government; pursue active outreach to MPOs, mayors, counties, and county associations
- State DOTs—Explore methods to enhance the ability of state DOT employees to participate directly in TRB committees, meetings, and conferences
- International — promote meaningful partnerships with transportation research organizations outside the United States; assess opportunities for expanded international collaboration on research and other activities; pursue active outreach to international transportation community
- Industry and professional groups—pursue partnerships and joint activities with other organizations, including those that have overlapping interests and are not TRB sponsors, as well as organizations such as tollway authorities and international firms that are playing a bigger role in operating U.S. transportation facilities
- Review how effectively the current structure and activities of TRB’s Marine Board serve the needs of the marine transportation community and various maritime sectors; identify opportunities to broaden and strengthen the Marine Board’s ability to identify research and engineering needs and to provide a forum for exchange of information

B. Promote greater involvement by women, minorities, and young professionals

- Explore establishing a special relationship with historically black college(s) or minority-serving institution(s), to bring TRB’s research focus to the institution(s) and facilitate increased participation (TTI model)

- Explore creation of scholarship program for minority students and young professionals to attend TRB Annual Meeting
- Continue measures already in place to enhance diversity, such as following through with monitoring minority subcontracting on CRP projects

3. Improve Effectiveness of TRB

[RESEARCH, KNOWLEDGE, & INFORMATION: goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6]

A. Target advice and guidance

- Issue and update regularly a comprehensive transportation research agenda, keyed to the *Critical Issues*
- Anticipate future transportation challenges and explore means of addressing them, e.g. through self-initiated policy studies, core technical activities
- Building on action item from 2002 TRB Strategic Plan to develop a ‘big issues in transportation’ study series, identify several key national transportation policy issues for which there are significant gaps in information/analysis, together with potential study designs and fundraising suggestions
- Serve as an information resource on research issues for staff of Congressional committees, especially during reauthorization cycles
- Improve and expedite the reporting of research results to practitioners, e.g. through practical information and tools generated from research

B. Ensure continuing strength and relevance of TRB standing committees

- Improve coordination, communications, and linkages among committees, sections, and groups
- Audit the scopes of existing committees to discover any major gaps that need to be filled and to identify opportunities for merging of existing committees
- Enhance committees’ ability to address emerging and cross-cutting issues, including issues that may not fall within the domain of an existing committee
- Develop and update research needs statements, to be provided as a comprehensive electronic database available to sponsors, affiliates, and subscribers
- Pursue measures to foster increased participation and leadership on standing committees by women, minorities, and young professionals
- Pursue measures to address growing size and complexity of TRB Annual Meeting

- Monitor effectiveness of measures taken to improve stature of TRB's peer review process, including establishment of TRR Publication Board; consider additional measures/refinements as appropriate
- Present more research of interest to the private sector; sponsor conferences/sessions for industry, practitioners

C. Ensure continuing strength and relevance of TRB research management activities; assist in development of additional cooperative research programs

- Monitor effectiveness and usefulness to customers of TRB's research management activities
- Develop 'success stories' from newer programs to assist in marketing their continuation and funding support in the future
- Provide information and guidance upon request to other organizations interested in initiating cooperative research, such as metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) or toll road authorities
- Provide information on how individuals are selected to serve on CRP panels and SHRP II expert task groups
- Provide information on 'matchmaking' for individuals/organizations who wish to form a team to propose on a research project

4. Promote enhanced outreach and public understanding of TRB, research, and transportation

[*OUTREACH*; goals 2, 6, 7, 8]

A. Promote public understanding of TRB, research, and transportation

- Explore means to facilitate two-way communication with transportation customers—to better understand them and their needs, and to communicate more effectively with them on issues and solutions
- Include technology transfer and information dissemination as part of initial planning of research projects, conferences, and other TRB products
- Develop strategies to achieve greater visibility for research results, enhanced coverage of transportation and transportation research stories
- Do a better job of communicating the benefits of TRB participation, including direct communications/meetings with elected and appointed officials and decision makers
- Undertake more aggressive marketing of TRB—build on existing activities, develop stronger ties with media, and raise TRB profile with targeted groups and

the general public (e.g., through an attention-getting tool on research similar to ASCE's 'report card' on the state of U.S. infrastructure)

B. Enhance electronic outreach

- Make enhancements to website and e-newsletter formats, accessibility
- Put *Transportation Research Record* journal series online, available through subscription and on pay-per-view basis (individual articles)
- Use webcasts, e-newsletters, and other technology tools to reach those who find it hard to attend meetings

TRB STRATEGIC PLAN COMMITTEE SURVEY RESULTS

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

The survey was sent out in late July to chairs of TRB Groups, Sections, Standing Committees and task forces. Responses were due on August 15. Surveys were sent to 250 chairs, with 126 chairs submitting responses— about a 50% response rate (some chairs submitted more than one survey response on behalf of subunits of their committee, bringing the overall total to 144 surveys received). Slightly more than half of the responding chairs reported that their responses reflected input from their members that they were able to solicit prior to responding to the survey. A general summary of the responses received is presented below, followed by the full set of responses for each questions.

In the lists below, a check-mark (✓) indicates that item has been included in the latest draft of the action plan for the updated TRB Strategic Plan.

What Does TRB Do Best?

The overwhelming majority of the 142 respondents to this question cited TRB's role in providing forums that bring together practitioners, researchers, and multiple disciplines. This general role was alluded to by no fewer than 78 respondents. Added to this were mentions of the TRB Annual Meeting (35), conferences (16), and standing committees (5).

Research information dissemination was the next most commonly cited (30). Also named under this category were publications (16), the Transportation Research Record and its peer review process (11), the TRB e-newsletter (2), and TRIS (1).

TRB's role in identifying and conducting research was cited by thirteen respondents, followed by identification of research needs (7), promotion and facilitation of research (7), cooperative research programs (5), and policy studies (4).

Other areas receiving mention were TRB staff support (5), and identification of critical issues (4).

What Could TRB Do Better?

The chairs provided 194 suggestions in answer to this question. These included suggestions for TRB in general and for the Technical Activities Division in particular, as summarized below. The number of suggestions received for each category are shown in parentheses.

TRB:

- ✓ Participation (33): Enhance ability to attract and involve practitioners, young people, minorities, international, private sector. Consider providing travel assistance.
- ✓ Conduct of Research (23): Include technology transfer and implementation as part of initial project planning. Shorten time from initiation through completion. Pursue more funding for research.
- ✓ Technology Tools (21): Employ more technology tools to provide communications and searchable databases to TRB committees and constituents.
- ✓ TRB Promotion (18): TRB should do more to promote itself and transportation research to Congress, government agencies, other organizations.
- TRB Bureaucracy (13): Reduce and/or better explain the administrative requirements and complexities for individuals to understand and for committees to deal with.

Technical Activities Division:

- ✓ Management of Standing Committees (25): Improve coordination, communications and linkages among Groups, Sections and committees.
- ✓ Annual Meeting Program (19): Pursue additional measures to deal with the growing size and complexity of this meeting.
- ✓ Peer Reviews/TRR (15): Improve the stature and management of peer reviews and the Transportation Research Record (TRR)
- ✓ Cross Cutting Issues (9): Enhance the ability of committees to address cross cutting issues.

What Else Can TRB Do to Meet the Needs of Your Committee

A number of committee chairs (19) used this question as an opportunity to compliment TRB and its staff. In addition, requests were submitted in the following areas. Many of these follow up on and/or provide specific suggestions related to the comments made in the previous question.

- ✓ Technology Tools (15): Improve communications and searchable databases using technology tools.
- ✓ Participation (14): Ideas to increase participation among practitioners, young people, minorities, international, private sector.
- ✓ Miscellaneous (14): Items pertaining to a specific committee.
- ✓ Cross Cutting Issues (13): Find ways to communicate and coordinate among committees similar and cross-cutting issues
- ✓ Annual Meeting Program (12): Various comments on scheduling sessions, meetings and workshops. Several mentioned avoiding conflicts among committee meetings with similar interests.
- Staff Support (11): Appreciation for staff support, combined with requests for more such support, including staff training of committee chairs.
- Funding (7): Funding to support travel and committee activities.
- Volunteer Time (6): Statements pointing out that chairs and committee members have a limited amount of volunteer time to donate, and that this is being stretched thin.

- ✓ Peer Reviews/TRR (5): Suggestions for improving the peer review process.

Do You Feel That Constituencies in your Committee's Areas of Interest are Adequately Represented and Involved in TRB? If the Answer is "No", What Constituencies Should TRB Reach Out to in Order to Improve the Representation of your Committee's Areas of Interest?

Of the 70 chairs who responded to this question, 61% answered "yes", and 39% answered "no". Somewhat surprisingly, more respondents cited increased public agency participation than any other category. A number commented that participation from the academic community was more than adequate, and no chairs cited this category for more attention. The summary of responses is shown below:

- ✓ Public Agencies (21): State DOTs were mentioned the most often. Others cited included local agencies, transit, and the Department of Defense.
- Specific Expertise (17): Specific areas of technical expertise needed by individual committees were identified.
- ✓ Private Sector (13): Shippers, carriers, and contractors were among those mentioned.
- ✓ Young, Women, & Minorities (10): Younger members were mentioned most often, followed by women.
- ✓ Organizations (5): Involvement by other organizations, particularly associations, who should have an interest in TRB activities.
- System Users (4): Pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers, and other users of the transportation system.
- ✓ International (3): More involvement from those outside of the U.S.

What Should TRB do to Stimulate Greater Involvement by Those in Your Areas of Interest?

123 chairs responded to this question. The most common suggestions involved better communicating the benefits of TRB participation, and undertaking activities that are of direct interest to targeted groups. A number of chairs (16) commented on how well TRB is already doing to meet this need.

- ✓ Outreach (27): Better promote the benefits of TRB involvement to targeted groups and senior executives.
- ✓ Target Opportunities (27): Pursue activities, meetings, conferences and other opportunities for involvement that are of interest to these targeted groups.
- ✓ Provide Funding (12): TRB travel assistance to state DOT employees and others was mentioned most often. Reduced registration fees for targeted groups was also cited.
- ✓ Partnering (10): Pursue partnerships and joint activities/conferences with other associations and groups representing targeted audiences.
- ✓ Technology Tools (6): Use webcasts, e-newsletters and other technology tools to reach those in targeted groups who find it hard to attend meetings.

Please List any Specific Issues That TRB Should Address or New Directions That Your Committee Would Like to See TRB Pursue in the Future.

94 chairs provided suggestions in response to this question. Many presented ideas on how TRB could follow up on specific aspects of one or more of the TRB Critical Issues. Others provided suggestions for other specific issues that TRB should be addressing. The remainder reiterated points made in response to earlier questions contained in this survey.

- ✓ TRB Critical Issues Follow-ups (23): A variety of ideas on how TRB should follow up or focus on specific aspects of one or more of the TRB Critical Issues.
- ✓ New Issues (20): Suggestions for specific issues that TRB should be addressing that are NOT covered in the latest set of TRB Critical Issues. One theme that runs through these and responses to other questions is the need for more long term visioning and research.
- ✓ Standing Committees (14): Reiteration of a variety of responses to earlier questions on management and operation of standing committees
- ✓ Technology Tools (11): Additional support for applying more advanced technology tools, including webcasting/webinars, and support for standing committee webpages.
- ✓ Conduct of Research (8): Emphasizing the need for more funding for transportation research, and also more direct linkages between the TRB standing committees and the cooperative research programs.
- ✓ Cross-cutting Issues (5): Better coordination and communication among committees with overlaps in interest areas.
- ✓ Peer Reviews/TRR (5): Reiteration of comments made in response to earlier questions.
- ✓ Annual Meeting Program (4): Additional ideas on managing the growing Annual Meeting program.