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E-NEWSLETTER for STATE DATA PRACTITIONERS  
TRB Statewide Data and Information Systems Committee  
10/14/2003  
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PURPOSE: The primary goal of the TRB Statewide Data and Information Systems Committee (A1D09) Newsletter is to disseminate research findings, description of new data tools, upcoming conferences/training announcements and summaries of recent advances in the data field to a wide community of transportation practitioners. As an information resource, the newsletter will perpetuate the improvement and integration of transportation data to assist statewide multimodal planning.

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## CONFERENCES

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## UPCOMING CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

### \* **5<sup>th</sup> National Conferences on Asset Management: Moving from Theory to Practice**

Seattle, Washington: October 21 – 22, 2004

<http://gulliver.trb.org/conferences/Asset><http://www4.trb.org/trb/calendar.nsf/web/lvr8>

### \* **Live Interactive Internet Training** (*Source: Office of Highway Policy Information Quarterly Newsletter: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohim/hiq/hiqjul03.htm#topicA>*)

David Jones of the Office's Travel Monitoring Division conducted a workshop during May on the use of the Vehicle Travel Information System (VTRIS) using a new communication tool that allows participants to be trained remotely. This remote training introduced State personnel to VTRIS, which is used by many States and FHWA to process vehicle classification and truck weight data. The States that participated in the training were Florida, Kentucky and members of the FHWA staff. The new tool is called Net Meeting, and uses the Internet to access an interactive live connection from a designated site. This tool allows an instructor to conduct live interactive presentations, demonstrations, meetings, classes or training sessions via the Internet while simultaneously communicating through an audio conference bridge. The effectiveness of this initial distance learning effort by the Office is being evaluated for application to other subject areas.

If you are interested in VTRIS training, contact David L. Jones Sr. at 202-366-5053 or [David.Jones@fhwa.dot.gov](mailto:David.Jones@fhwa.dot.gov).

### \***Data Requirements in Transportation Reauthorization Legislation: What is Included and Impacts on the Data Community**, Nov. 19, 2003 (Washington, DC)

<http://gulliver.trb.org/calendar/>

This meeting will serve 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 will focus on 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. The meeting will also be an opportunity to look at requirements across programs, and to provide feedback on efficient data strategies for transportation organizations. This meeting will develop an approach for a larger national conference to be held after the legislation is passed. The post authorization conference will seek to identify the efforts needed to meet the data requirements resulting from reauthorization legislation.

Organizers: Transportation Research Board Data & Information Technology Committees

#### *More Information*

Tom Palmerlee, TRB, [tpalmerlee@nas.edu](mailto:tpalmerlee@nas.edu), 202-334-2907

### \* **The North American Travel Monitoring Exposition and Conference (NATMEC)**, June 27-30, 2004 (San Diego, California)

Conference information: <http://www.NATMEC.org>, or call or email Tom Palmerlee, TRB, [tpalmerlee@nas.edu](mailto:tpalmerlee@nas.edu), 202-334-2907

## RECENT CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

\* **Statewide Transportation Planning Conference: Making Connections**, May 18-20, 2003  
*link address to be included in next newsletter*

\* **Data Partnering Peer Exchange**, May 21, 2003  
*link address to be included in next newsletter*

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## RESEARCH

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\* **Spatial Information Requirements for Multimodal Transportation Organizations**  
(TRB Policy Study) Contact: Tom Palmerlee, TRB, [tpalmerlee@nas.edu](mailto:tpalmerlee@nas.edu), 202-334-2907

This project examines common issues in the use of spatial information technologies among transportation modes and recommends actions where joint development of data, tools and organizational capabilities could improve collective capabilities. The committee's report is expected early in 2004.

\* **TRB Special Report 276: A Concept for a National Freight Data Program**  
<http://gulliver.trb.org/publications/sr/sr276.pdf>

A report by the Transportation Research Board (TRB) of the National Academies calls upon the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and its Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) to take the lead in coordinating freight data collection in the United States. Citing the need for accurate goods movement data in order to make informed decisions related to congestion, economic competitiveness, safety and security, and the environment, the TRB report recommends the development of a national freight data framework.

The report's conceptual framework focuses on increasing the linkages between different sources of data and filling data gaps to develop a comprehensive source of timely and reliable data on freight flows. The national freight database aims to fulfill the major needs of a wide variety of users by capturing the important characteristics of freight movements--namely, shipment origin and destination; commodity characteristics, weight, and value; modes of shipment; routing and time of day; and vehicle or vessel type and configuration. The database also forms a foundation on which users can build their own more specialized data sets.

\* **AASHTO Standing Committee on Planning approved NCHRP 8-36 projects for 2004**

The AASHTO Standing Committee on Planning (SCOP) approved several NCHRP 8-36 projects for research in 2004 including the following data related studies:

- Synthesis of Data Groups Locations in State DOTs
- Effective Organization of Performance Measurement
- What is the Impact of an Aging Population on Planning and Investments?
- Information Design for Effective Decision-Making and Communication

Also, SCOP recommended/supported three projects to the AASHTO Standing Committee on Research:

- Best Methods and Practices of Data Integration for State DOT's
- Update of the AASHTO Guidelines for Traffic Data Programs
- Handbook on Integrating Freight Movements into Planning

SCOP will select a project for funding in the beginning of 2004.

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## IN THE HEADLINES

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**\* SCOP Data Task Force Suggestions for Future BTS Roles and Responsibilities** by Jonette Kreideweis, Chair of the SCOP Data Task Force (jonette.kreidweis@dot.state.mn.us)

AASHTO's Standing Committee on Planning (SCOP) held their spring meeting May 2003 in Florida. The reauthorization of federal transportation funding and the planning and data opportunities and issues associated with reauthorization were key topics for discussion. As a part of this reauthorization discussion, the SCOP Data Task Force was asked to prepare a list of suggestions for future Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) roles and responsibilities. The following summarizes the suggestions, comments and ideas generated by SCOP Data Task Force members and state data contacts at the Florida meeting.

It was suggested that BTS, in collaboration with other federal transportation agencies could play a role in:

1. Partnering with the states to provide workshops or other forums on:

- Best practices in the privatization of data collection, analysis and storage.
- Best practices in state uses of BTS data, including what states have used BTS data for and what decision were made as a result.

2. Identifying and providing information on data sources and helping states develop analytical skills in the uses of the data. Examples include:

- Data on key freight facilities, flows and priority intermodal connections are a growing priority and challenge for many states. Economic and land-use data for freight are also important in analyzing long-term freight issues. Many state DOTs do not have much experience in these areas.
- National data on personal household travel continues to be needed. Data on bike, pedestrian and other modes would also be of assistance.

3. Assisting with the development of guidelines and/or best practices for GIS, linear referencing systems, and for the collection and management of spatial data on transportation system attributes.
4. Safety and security planning are on state radar screens as high priority areas. Perhaps there is a federal role in helping bridge data gaps, improve the accuracy and consistency of data and strengthen partnerships between the public safety community and state transportation agencies.
5. Helping states identify data needed to maintain and operate transportation systems and the methods, tools and technologies for expanding the utility of traditional data sets to help do this. This could include everything from methods for predicting travel time reliability and predictability to assistance in utilizing real time ITS data.
6. Developing better tools to estimate the value and benefit of data programs and the incremental costs and benefits of increased precision and data quality. States are also interested in how best to organize their agencies to better manage data resources.
7. Helping states assess risks, benefits and keep track of best practices in data partnering. Data partnerships are receiving renewed attention, especially as they relate to privatization of data collection efforts and the expanding relationships with universities, local governments and other partners for data management and maintenance

SCOP Data Task Force members also encouraged BTS to conduct a few state visits with SCOP members to discuss specific data needs, gaps and possible roles for BTS.

**\* Statewide Data and Information Systems Committee (A1D09): Current Statewide Trends in Data and Information Systems** by Anita Vandervalk, Chair of A1D09  
([avandervalk@camsys.com](mailto:avandervalk@camsys.com))

The scope of the Statewide Data and Information Systems Committee (A1D09) includes research and technology transfer activities pertaining to statewide transportation planning data and information systems for all modes of transportation. A primary concern of the committee is the capability of information systems to integrate various transportation-related data sources into a strategic multi-modal information database for statewide transportation planning.

The types of data that members are concerned with include operating conditions (such as traffic and speed); characteristics, features, and geometrics of transportation systems; performance indicators (such as mobility); safety; and data to support planning. The customers served by statewide data programs include planning (for inventory and decision support), environmental and design (for alternatives analysis), operations (for real time decisions) and maintenance units. Statewide data providers realize that in order to serve their external customers, they must first be able to serve our internal data customers. This includes providing accurate, reliable, timely, accessible data as well as efficiency in collection, processing, and reporting.

Characteristics of the current state environment affecting data providers include the following: the responsibility for different modes is fragmented within the state DOTs; funding is often constrained by mode and function; most states have independent pavement, bridge, transit, maintenance, financial and project management systems; and senior management often does not have access to condition and performance information needed to make tradeoffs effectively.

As a result, state data providers have been and continue to be concerned with the following topics: using data for performance measures of interest to state DOTs; measuring and evaluating data programs; data management, sharing and integration; adding value with data collection programs using spatial data (GIS, GPS and remote sensing) and making the most efficient use of tools and technologies to improve the delivery of transportation programs; forming and maintaining data partnerships; ensuring that state roadway information systems are state of the practice with respect to collection, integration and access; filling data gaps discovered as a result of reauthorization; identifying, defining and prioritizing customer needs for transportation related data; and meeting data requirements for safety and security initiatives. Another critical issue which affects most of those listed above is the relationship between state Information Technology and Data offices as they work together to successfully manage and improve their data resources in alignment with technological capabilities and business needs.

Specific technical and institutional barriers to resolving the issues identified above include:

- Integrating “independent” legacy systems;
- Developing comprehensive GIS based, enterprise-wide databases;
- Creating next generation management systems that support wide range of “what-if” analyses reflecting different budget and performance assumptions;
- Improving life cycle analysis methods;
- Strengthening system monitoring capabilities;
- Integrating decision-making and resource allocation across all asset classes and modes;
- Combining financial, management, engineering, and operational perspectives;
- Defining system performance measures that reflect customer perspective and user costs; and
- Securing senior management support and leadership.

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**IN EVERY ISSUE**

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TRB Statewide Data and Information Systems Committee:  
<http://members.tripod.com/~TRBstate/members.html>

TRB E-Newsletter:

<http://gulliver.trb.org/news/>

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