



The National Academies

The National Academies perform an unparalleled public service by bringing together committees of experts in all areas of scientific and technological endeavor. These experts serve pro bono to address critical national issues and give advice to the federal government and the public. Four organizations comprise the Academies: the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council.

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) is an honorific society of distinguished scholars engaged in scientific and engineering research, dedicated to the furtherance of science and technology and to their use for the general welfare. The NAS was signed into being by President Abraham Lincoln on March 3, 1863, at the height of the Civil War. As mandated in its Act of Incorporation, the NAS has, since 1863, served to "investigate, examine, experiment, and report upon any subject of science or art" whenever called upon to do so by any department of the government. Since 1863, the nation's leaders have often turned to the National Academies for advice on the scientific and technological issues that frequently pervade policy decisions. Most of the institution's science policy and technical work is conducted by its operating arm, the **National Research Council**, created expressly for this purpose. These non-profit organizations provide a public service by working outside the framework of government to ensure independent advice on matters of science, technology, and medicine. They enlist committees of the nation's top scientists, engineers, and other experts, all of whom volunteer their time to study specific concerns. The results of their deliberations have inspired some of America's most significant and lasting efforts to improve the health, education, and welfare of the population. The Academy's service to government has become so essential that Congress and the White House have issued legislation and executive orders over the years that reaffirm its unique role.

The Academy membership is comprised of approximately 2,000 members and 350 foreign associates, of whom more than 200 have won Nobel Prizes. Members and foreign associates of the Academy are elected in recognition of their distinguished and continuing achievements in original research; election to the Academy is considered one of the highest honors that can be accorded a scientist or engineer. The Academy is governed by a Council comprised of twelve members (councilors) and five officers, elected from among the Academy membership. Dr. Ralph J. Cicerone is the president of the National Academy of Sciences.

The Transportation Research Board (TRB)

The mission of the TRB—one of six major divisions of the National Research Council—is to promote innovation and progress in transportation through research. In an objective and interdisciplinary setting, the Board facilitates the sharing of information on transportation practice and policy by researchers and practitioners; stimulates research and offers research management services that promote technical excellence; provides expert advice on transportation policy and programs; and disseminates research results broadly and encourages their implementation.

TRB fulfills this mission through the work of its standing committees and task forces addressing all modes and aspects of transportation; publication and dissemination of reports and peer-reviewed technical papers on research findings; management of cooperative research and other research programs; conduct of special studies on transportation policy issues at the request of the U.S. Congress and government agencies; operation of an on-line computerized file of transportation research information; and the hosting of an annual meeting that typically attracts 10,000 transportation professionals from throughout the United States and abroad.

TRB's varied activities annually draw on more than 5,000 engineers, scientists, and other transportation researchers and practitioners from the public and private sectors and academia, all of whom contribute their expertise in the public interest by participating on TRB committees, panels, and task forces. The program is supported by state transportation departments, the various administrations of the U.S. Department of Transportation and other federal agencies, industry associations, and other organizations and individuals interested in the development of transportation.

For more information about the next TRB Annual Meeting (January 10-14, 2010), please visit this website:

<http://www.trb.org/meeting/>