

Standing Committee on Strategic Management (ABC10)
Andrea d'Amato, Chair

Strategic Evolution of Transportation Policy, Planning, and Practice at TRB

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YESTERDAY

History of the Standing Committee on Strategic Management (ABC10)

Growing interest in strategic planning in the late 1980s and early 1990s was one of the many drivers for the creation of the TRB Standing Committee on Strategic Management (ABC10). In keeping with the TRB practice, Strategic Management was initially formed as a Task Force in the mid-1980's to assess the value and demonstrate the relevance of the subject area. Kathy Stein served as the chair of the Task Force and the inaugural chair of the Committee, which held its first meeting in 1986. At the time, Ms. Stein was active on planning-related TRB committees and recognized that there was a missing component need to serve better the needs of transportation agencies. Core to the foundation of the Committee, was to establish a diverse membership by industry, mode and sector and engaged non-traditional TRB industries, such as AT&T, transit, and ports as members.

In the early years, The Committee's work revolved around its mission to engage both practitioners and organization's CEO's to:

Provide leaders and managers of transportation entities a resource to analyze, foster, and share ideas and practices with the goal to develop strategies for effective and quickly-implementable management and organizational innovations that can be used to improve performance, reduce costs, and manage change.

During the 1980's and early 1990's, strategic planning and management was not the practice in transportation. As a result of the committee's broad and diverse membership and approach, ABC10 was able to elevate some critical strategic issues in TRB as well as the transportation industry. The Committee brought in best practices from the auto industry and AT&T who were advancing strategic management and planning in their own industries to transportation community through the committee activities. Prior to the mid- 80's transportation functioned distinctly fragmented operations, focused exclusively on their own mode and service.

Committee members and friends recognized that transportation agencies were not prepared to address the emerging issues facing them in the last decade of the 20th century, including the growing importance of operations planning for changing mobility needs. This led to the development of a committee organized workshop in 1993 focused on gathering agency leaders and committee members together to discuss strategic issues that transportation agencies were grappling with and identify ways that research activities could help address those needs. The workshop resulted in an action plan that helped advance committee work in the coming years. These workshops were held every two- to three-years and were the hallmarks of the Committee's success. The mission of the workshops then – as they are today – was to:

- Be a resource to the members, to “self-educate” on the critical role, value and methods to advance strategic thinking;
- Foster and share knowledge on techniques, policies and practice;
- Highlight key issues and opportunities; and,
- Identify and promote best practices.

Therefore, three key hallmarks of early years, which continue today, include:

- 1) Advance the need and value of an “integrated approach” driven by strategy into the transportation arena for both practitioners and leaders in both the public and private sectors;
- 2) Shift the conversation from internal needs to customer facing – Ask the questions – who do we serve? What do our customers need? How can we better perform; and,
- 3) Efforts must be performance based and outcome driven. Use strategic planning as a decision making tool to measure success and improve performance.

In the mid-1990s ABC10 fine-tuned its focus on the strategic planning element of performance measurement. This focus caught the attention of Connie Sorrell who was a senior manager at the Virginia DOT (VDOT). Ms. Sorrell would later serve as the chair of ABC10 starting in 2002, taking over from Bob Johns. As she explains, Virginia had recently appointed its first “non-highway” Commissioner, Ray Pethtel. The new Commissioner was tasked with leading an organization that was great at delivering projects, but almost half of the staff was ready to retire. Ms. Sorrell went in search of new ways of managing to enable creative thinking and attract a younger and more diverse workforce. In 1998, Ms. Sorrell and Joe Lewis published a TRB paper on the *Introduction of Strategic Management* at VDOT. Through this process, VDOT would go on to change its organizational culture and address the need for greater transportation investments through new revenue sources. VDOT’s innovation and commitment to performance measurement and management has served as an example for other DOTs across the country.

Although performance management and productivity continued to play an important role in strategic management, it soon became clear that agencies were facing new issues as they shifted away from building roads and managing highways toward multimodal mobility management in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Key questions at the time included: What are the needs of the mobility corporation and what role do agencies play in providing mobility as a service?

As strategic planning continued to be highly important and relevant to organizations, practitioners, and experts recognized that a broader and more comprehensive approach to management was needed if strategic plans were to be successful in transforming organizations. As noted in the *NCHRP Synthesis Report 326: Strategic Planning and Decision Making in State Departments of Transportation*, published in 2004, *strategic management* is a “holistic process that encompasses the planning, implementation, evaluation, and up-dating of a strategic agenda aimed at maintaining the most viable fit between an organization and its external environment and moving into the future in a deliberate, purposeful manner.” Many members of ABC10 were involved in this publication and continued to advance the state of the practice in strategic planning through various committee activities.

During the time Hyun-A Park was chair of the Committee, from 2005 – 2011, the focus was on streamlining organizations, process improvement, improving efficiency, and managing

change. For instance, public private partnerships were a priority topic since it was emerging as a means to achieve greater efficiencies. Workshops on ways to manage change were a gathering place for agency leadership, academics, and consultants. The Committee collaborated with the Standing Committee on Management and Productivity (ABC20) with agency productivity emerging as an ever increasing focus of the Committee for many years.

When Mara Campbell became chair of the Committee in 2011, agencies were beginning to move away from managing in silos and taking a future-oriented, broader perspective. Risk, asset, and performance management emerged as key issues and remain important even today. Boards and CEOs look for transformational strategic management techniques that enable their agencies to “move the dial” on these issues. Transparency and accountability are also significant issues facing transportation agency leadership. ABC10, under Ms. Campbell’s leadership worked closely with the Standing Committee on Performance Measurement (ABC30) to address critical leadership issues, such as performance-based management, which lead to performance based decision-making.

The *Foresight NCHRP Report 750: Informing Transportation’s Future* proved to be a landmark study on strategic issues facing transportation. This report helped ABC10 establish a research agenda that touched on the issues that are disrupting the transportation sector. Under Robert Paddon’s leadership as chair of the Committee, starting in 2014, ABC10 embraced the Foresight Series and Mr. Paddon shifted the focus of Committee activities around the exploration of the disruptive forces impacting the transportation industry.

Most recently, with Andrea d’Amato as chair of the Committee beginning in 2017, the Committee has focused on sharing best practices emerging from all transportation sectors, understanding the challenges transportation agencies face, and developing strategic management practices to effectively manage changes occurring for users and for providers of transportation services. Core to ABC10’s new direction is to diversify the professional expertise of the members, to enhance representation in and of the industry, and to increase the representation of different modes. This diversity will help effectively explore new challenges, methods, policies, and practices in the latest era of change and disruption.

ABC10 is also taking a lead in advancing the conversation on transportation disruption and change to on the state and national lever. In 2018, the Governor of Massachusetts formed the independent Commission on the Future of Transportation representing diverse industries and professions. The Commission recently published a report of its findings in two volumes: *Choices for Stewardship: Recommendation to Meet the Transportation Future*. The report effectively outlines challenges and opportunities many states are facing as well as identifies many of the disruptive issues warranting more attention. At the 2019 Annual Meeting, TRB unveiled its *Critical Issues in Transportation 2019* looking at similar issues over the next 10-20 years. Building off those laudable initiatives, ABC10 elevated this conversation at the 2019 CEO session and engaged other states in further advancing this type of thinking and the opportunity to share findings and best practices nationally and internationally.

Over the quarter century of Strategic Management Committee activities, the issues facing CEOs and agency leaders have changed. However, what remains consistent is the importance that ABC10 places on delivering dynamic interactive workshops and sessions that bring leaders together to exchange ideas and learn in a peer-to-peer environment. It was a workshop in the late 1990s at the University of Minnesota that brought state departments of transportation leaders together to talk about strategic planning. Today, whether it is a workshop on autonomous vehicles, scenario planning, or War Games, the goal of the Committee remains to bring leaders

together for informed discussions on best practices and strategic solutions to the challenges agencies face today and tomorrow.

Focus and Scope

ABC10 strives to engage its members, friends and partners, to achieve its three-year planning goals, objectives and strategies. The scope is to:

- Identify practice ready research that address today's complex challenges and further the conversation on disruptive forces shaping an new transportation paradigm;
- Elevate the conversation on Equity in Transportation;
- Share best practices for operational approaches that produce improved performance and help transportation organizations achieve organizational excellence;
- Explore, analyze, synthesize, and disseminate information at the strategic, tactical and operational levels; and,
- Promote research needs, review papers, inform and engage the transportation community in identifying issues, trends and opportunities to enable them to effectively manage change.

Strategic Direction

The Committee's key objectives are three-fold:

1. Identify long-range internal and external issues and trends that impact transportation and the implications they have on transportation organizations, including: processes used to plan, implement and measure strategic change and policies; decisions and institutional structures; fiscal and economic considerations, and relationships that result from this strategic change.
2. Identify and promote research needs, practice-ready research to address immediate needs, review papers and inform and engage the transportation community by identifying strategic management issues and trends that may affect transportation organizations and workforces.
3. Encourage the use of strategic decision-making that is data-driven; incorporates risk and evaluates the long-term impacts of options. Research will expand and synthesize pertinent knowledge, and improve information exchange and dissemination about strategic management within the complex industry of transportation.

Major Accomplishments to Date

- Winner of the 2018 Blue Ribbon Award for “Implementation: Moving Research Ideas into Transportation Practice” based on the successful participation and outcomes of the War Games over two years;
- Over the past four years, ABC10 broadened its membership and friends to reflect the challenges facing transportation by diversity the composition of the Committee itself; thereby allowing it to better realize its mission and goals. The Committee added representatives from: all transportation modes (aviation, highway, transit, rail and freight), geography (nationally and internationally), gender, age, professional transportation expertise (public and private – engineering, policy, planning and technical);
- Expanded network of TRB committee alliances best exemplified by War Games, CEO session, and Cross-cutting session activities;

- Developed a mentoring program and succession planning strategy;
- Generated Papers – two calls per year –from shared economy to Automated Vehicles;
- Submitted the Committee’s first research proposal “Developing Workable Urban Freight Solutions: Ensuring the ‘Right’ Players are Engaged”;
- Created synergy during 2008-2012 to work across committees to ensure Strategic Management was discussed and research was elevated – cross pollinating the discussion of executives with multiple committees within TRB as well as within the Management and Leadership Section; and
- Benefited from well attended and provocative sessions with dynamic interaction with the audience – from sessions featuring CEOs from public agencies to roundtables on core issues and emerging challenges.

CONTINUING ADVANCEMENT IN STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The Committee continues to focus on identifying the dominate forces and factors of change that are most disruptive to the transportation industry and to engage leadership in identifying the challenges and opportunities they face. ABC10 utilizes the forum of meetings, webinars, research and papers to exchange best practices on strategies to minimize risk and maximize opportunities.

Best Practices

ABC10 pioneered a practice of translating research into practice and engaging professionals to exchange best practices in dynamic and evolving ways.

- A Philosophy and Practice of Shared Learning: ABC10 embraces the notion that the best solutions come from being open to dialogue, listening and exchanging ideas. That philosophy is the foundation upon which all activities are based. Effective change can only come from buy-in by practitioners and buy-in can only come from open, honest conversation and understanding of issues, challenges and ideas... the basis of strategic planning. To that end, ABC10 has taken a non-traditional approach to the organization and format of workshops and sessions.
- Workshops: ABC10 has always linked strategic planning in the workshops to engagement of CEOs by taking the ideas from the workshops and applying them to real world decision making. Pairing the workshops with CEO podium sessions is effective in sharing practice, and identifying critical areas and needs for research. ABC10 is planning its 3rd year of War Games which has taken workshops to an all new level of applying research and testing new ideas.
- Annual Meeting Sessions: ABC10 has adopted and evolved a more participatory approach to podium sessions. Parting from the traditional panel and PowerPoint presentations to reframing the format of speakers and topics on developing techniques to actively engage the attendees in meaningful dialogue. Sessions feature a broad range of diverse industries and modal experts to speak and share ideas and practices from private auto industry (Google cars) to health care (Lean) to climate from Africa. Most sessions feature all modes and benefit from lively conversations among the speakers and with the audience. Recently, steering further away from the traditional presentations, ABC10 has initiated roundtable conversations focused on learning and engaging on topics such as equity, procurement and design standards.

Current Issues / Needs / Research Gaps

ABC10 strives to engage its membership and friends in seeking to better understand and assess the challenges in organizations. Although the Committee continues to strongly track and elevate conversations from Foresight around technology, automation, climate change, resiliency, etc., it also continues to address current concerns and persistent problems agencies are facing, such as:

- Equity is a keen interest to the Committee as ABC10 evaluates how the disruptive changes in transportation are increasingly isolating more dependent users of transportation who do not have access to the internet, a car or money for private car service. ABC10 is now co-chairing TRB's Joint Subcommittee on Transportation Equity with Standing Committee on Environmental Justice in Transportation (ADD50) with the goal to elevate the conversation and engage more voices in the exploration of better policies, practices and process to affect better operational performance and mobility options for all users.
- The need to save time and money, reduce risk and inspire innovation begins with Procurement. As opposed to the flashy Public Private Partnership (P3) or Design/Build discussions, the core areas for delivering projects are somewhat ignored and yet critical to agency delivery and service needs. The methods and strategies to accelerate the bread and butter design and construction projects to reduce risk and cost while improving quality and innovation remains a challenge and warrants more attention.
- In an era of rapidly changing technology, demand, demographics and climate risks, there is a need to develop a set of Design Standards that streamline project delivery and minimize risk and error. Exploring best practices among modes and strategies to address changing technologies (and specs), expanding accessibility needs, cost effective, and preventative approaches to resiliency, etc.
- The Committee's key organizational challenge is to better integrate with the TRB research process to identify the most effective mechanism to get research ideas to market and for short term turn around in results. The committee is able to keep leaders engaged based on support for and responsiveness to the short-term needs of public sector leaders/managers where they do not have the luxury of a 3-5 year wait on a research statement.

Committee Alliances

The Strategic Management Committee continues to work closely with the other committees in the Management and Leadership section – ABC20, Management and Productivity; ABC30, Performance Management; and ABC40, Asset Management. In recent years, the focus has shifted from Data and Metrics to applying the research from the *NCHRP Report 750: Strategic Issues Facing Transportation* commonly called the “Foresight Series”. The Foresight Series detailed how transportation agencies (all modes and levels) will change in areas ranging from governance systems, policies, technology adoption, decision-making, and culture and enterprise management. Since the committee's engagement in Foresight, ABC10 has been able to identify and monitor the disruptive forces impacting transportation in sessions and research as well as expand relationships with other TRB committees. New TRB committee partners now include:

- 2018 War Games Workshop- Mobility as a Service: ADA10, Statewide Multimodal Transportation Planning; ADD10, Transportation and Economic Development; ABE30, Transportation Issues in Major Cities; and ALO20, Transit and Intermodal Transportation Law;

- Cross-Cutting Session on Equity: ABG30, Technology Transfer; ADD20, Social and Economic Factors of Transportation; ADD50, Environmental Justice in Transportation; APO10, Transit Management and Performance; and APO25, Public Transportation Research and Development; and
- Other Sessions: APC80, Alternative Transportation Fuels and Technology; AFH15, Project Delivery Methods; ABE10, Revenue and Finance; and ATO25, Urban Freight Transportation.

Mission Alignment

The Strategic Management Committee operates at the leadership level (CEO in both public and private sectors – all modes) examining the critical issues impacting the policy and operations of multi-modal providers of transportation services. ABC10's broader view of the challenges and an integrated approach toward analyzing impacts and identifying opportunities for change, sharing and research has been welcomed by other committees. For example, this year ABC10 raised concerns on traditional methods of procurement tied to accelerating and improving the quality of delivery while minimizing cost and risk. The response from the Legal and Finance committees was so engaging that discussions are underway to develop a joint committee with a strong research agenda. The same applies to the recent work on further exploring the myriad of issues on Equity in Transportation and innovative design standards. The outcome of these new alliances has been the generation of joint research statements to address overlapping needs.

TRENDS AND EMERGING ISSUES

As disruptive forces continue to evolve and challenge the transportation industry, it requires new strategies and the renewed testing of ideas. ABC10 is at the forefront of assessing the challenges related to governance, equity, system performance, etc., and exploring options to manage the consequent demands for change. Some key issues that remain at the forefront of the Committee's thinking include:

- Policies around TNC and last mile opportunities including but not limited to micro-mobility services such as motorized scooters;
- Policy, planning, financing around new transit, Automated Vehicles and Connected Vehicles technologies;
- Policy and planning around infrastructure corridors focused on who actually owns, manages and maintains the corridor assets above and below the asphalt; and
- Mobility as a Service policy development – the focus of the 2019 War Games at the TRB Annual Meeting.

Future Goals / Prospects /Challenges

There are several drivers that will influence ABC10's focus over the next few years. Where people live and work, and how people and freight move will require significant analysis and tracking which is central to strategic management and decision making. As many states are experiencing significant and disruptive changes, they are forming high level commissions and think tanks to tackle some of the challenges similar to the Massachusetts Commission featured at the Annual Meeting and in Webinars.

Another area associated with disruptive forces that has not received much attention is the impact of changing demographics, technologies, mobility services and options on vulnerable populations, specifically, low income, elders, minorities, disabled, and rural populations. More

and more, the changes in transportation are isolating larger populations from services and creating bigger equity gaps. ABC10 organized a cross-cutting session at the 2019 Annual Meeting on *Equity in Transportation* and now co-chairs the Joint Committee on this issue. Planning for a mid-year conference is underway as is the development of research needs statements and calls for papers on this topic. ABC10 is well positioned with this session to lead the conversation on the intersection of disruptive forces and equity.

In the coming years, ABC10 will continue to tackle the issues identified in the Foresight Series, the Commission's report and TRB's *Critical Issues in Transportation 2019*; already integrated in the War Games workshop. In sum, the most notable drivers of disruption and change, include but are not limited to:

- The rate of technology acceleration within transportation particularly with vehicle manufacturers, ITS and Connected and Autonomous Vehicle adoption;
- Multi modal expansion into metro areas and the competing demands of third party and private services to provide space, promote innovation while also protecting and preserving public access and use of the right of way and mobility options;
- Legislation and regulation at the state level for innovative technologies (Spectrum/Bandwidth debate);
- Continuing to raise the issues and present the data on addressing accessibility and equitable mobility options in the industry;
- Governance and change management in response to changing demands and suppliers;
- Volume, types and use of 'Data' associated with innovative technologies; and
- Equitable access to affordable transportation options.

To that end, ABC 10 objectives and outcomes are to:

1. Advance the art and science of strategic management while working in a complementary fashion with other committees (see Triennial Strategic Plan (TSP) committee partners list). Pursuing a complementary approach with committee partners that advance the state of practice, with a strong focus on avoiding duplication;
2. Follow national and international developments to anticipate the emerging strategic management issues, innovative practices, needs and opportunities from member agencies;
3. Promote needed research that advances the practice of strategic management; and
4. Through our Committee meetings and events, create a forum and community to advance strategic management.

Outcomes

- Engage a lively committee membership and share the learnings and best practices to a broader audience through meetings, webinars and research.
- Develop challenging and provocative workshops and sessions with Practical Applications on Innovations.
- Develop practice ready and published research on emerging trends and solutions.
- Maintain well attended sessions at meetings, webinars and workshops – both at annual and mid-year meetings.

Managing Change

The Strategic Management Committee's mission is to bring expertise together to stay on

top of current industry challenges and identify innovative solutions to current and future management of transportation practices. As noted above, change is challenged by the ability to listen, engage, develop a shared understanding, and harness solutions from those ultimately responsible for managing change. Leadership is fundamental to setting the direction and vision. Real change occurs when leadership provides the “buy-in” needed to develop the strategies as well as implement and oversee the solutions. The hardest part of change is that it is constant and as such requires an acceptance of continual assessment and improvement, re-engagement, and conversation.

Based on the rapid pace of change affecting transportation agencies for all modes, the workforce and organizational response to these subjects continues to be on top of the Committee’s agenda. ABC10 is blessed with significant diversity in its membership structure by mode, geography, gender, age, and professional affiliation. As such, conversations and direction is pro-active and practical in its focus on the disruptive changes in the transportation industry.

Managing Future Shifts in Policy and Technology

The committee membership is deeply committed to exploring new ideas, methods, policies, and practices that advance the industry and enhance the quality and accessibility of transportation services. The structure of the Committee, the workshops, and sessions continually allow us to explore and exchange data as well as to discuss emerging trends. The War Games workshop in particular is strategically “practice ready” – real time – all-hands engagements with targeted outcomes.

With Committee operating at the CEO level with a diverse membership of experts, it is a leader at TRB with the influence to raise issues and develop research need statements to today’s challenges. No policy is too simple or challenge too complex for our committee to tackle. Our membership continues to raise issues based on the rapidly changing world in which we operate and seek our Committee’s leadership in pulling together the industry experts and elevating the conversation to better understand the best options to consider, test, and implement. Finally, ABC10 has been fortunate to be able to attract, retain and engage a committed and dedicated group of professionals to give voice and direction to strategic decision-making and practice.

Measuring Success

In deference to ABC10’s continued commitment to advance performance based metrics, it is important to take a moment to reflect on ABC10’s own performance, using key TRB metrics.

- *Diversity.* ABC10 has not only achieved its diversity goals but exceeded expectations in expanding modally.
- *Engagement.* ABC10 committee meetings, workshops, and sessions are standing room only in attendance. Content proves to be valuable post meetings as strong relationships are formed in preparing participants and meeting in advance of each session.
- *TRB research needs are now well integrated with NHCRP, TCRP and ACRP.* This has been challenging as ABC10’s research needs require shorter timeframes and joint modal funding sources.
- *TRB papers and webinars.* ABC10 has improved its calls for papers and webinars significantly over the past few years with a robust program slated for the years to come.

- *Contributions to the Industry.* ABC10 is a strong force in addressing critical issues to position the industry better to understand, plan, and manage disruptions today and in the future.

Another way to assess the success of a committee is through its relationships using a “test of time metrics” such as careers launched and relationships sustained. If a committee was measured by its ability to train emerging professionals to be more open minded, engaging, and collaborative, well informed by data and research, TRB deserves more recognition for its collective contributions and ABC10 should rank high. ABC10 has launched and effectively prepared individuals for important leadership careers in transportation, from Corporate Vice Presidents to CEO of State Transportation Agencies.

If a committee’s performance was measured by the network of strong, lasting and fun relationships formed, then ABC10 would have extremely high marks. A testament of each chair’s leadership skills has been their individual abilities to engage and inspire a large group of volunteers to work on the most challenging issues facing transportation in a manner that was fun and lasting. Hyun-A Park initiated an evening gathering of leaders around food and laughter that has lasted for over a decade. Each subsequent chair has followed her lead, devoting time for a Saturday Museum outing and a dedicated dinner at every TRB Annual Meeting to catch up with ABC10 colleagues even after rotations require new paths and directions. As a result, there is a group of TRB’ers who continue to stay engaged with each other, share practices and meet at annual and mid-year meetings.

Special Thanks

The drafting of this paper required significant exploration of the roots of the Committee with little data to draw upon. As the Chair position rotates among different leaders whose own employment changes over time, committee files, and therefore historical data, are not centrally located but rest with the chair’s own agencies and organizations.

First, a thank you to all past chairs of ABC10 who were interviewed and edited this document, including, but not limited to: Bob Paddon, Mara Campbell, Hyun-A Park and Kathy Stein. Special thanks to Hyun-A Park and Kathy Stein with their historical links to the origins of the Committee, enabled us to collect critical historical perspectives from Bob Johns and Connie Sorrell. Finally, thank you to Hannah Groshong and Steve Woelfel for their editorial prowess. ABC10 has been built on the shoulders of Titans...thank you to past leadership and to all of our members for your continued engagement and contributions.

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