The Transportation Research Board is one of six major divisions of the National Research Council, which serves as an independent adviser to the federal government and others on scientific and technical questions of national importance, and which is jointly administered by the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the Institute of Medicine. The mission of the Transportation Research Board is to provide leadership in transportation innovation and progress through research and information exchange, conducted within a setting that is objective, interdisciplinary, and multimodal. The Board’s varied activities annually engage about 7,000 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. The program is supported by state transportation departments, federal agencies including the component administrations of the U.S. Department of Transportation, and other organizations and individuals interested in the development of transportation.

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* Membership as of December 2010.
3 Trends and Fundamentals: Guiding TRB to Its 2020 Centennial—and Beyond
Robert E. Skinner, Jr.
TRB’s executive director reflects on the organization’s resiliency and adaptability during its 90-year history and offers insights on what lies ahead in the next decade, identifying the fundamentals that have held true in the past and are likely to hold true in the future.

7 The Transportation Research Board at 90: Everyone Loves It, but No One Can Explain Why
Thomas B. Deen
Exploring the “institutional mystery” of TRB, the author—active in the organization since 1956 and its executive director from 1980 to 1994—offers personal, professional, and historical perspectives on the Board’s achievements and prospects. As long as future transportation legislation sustains the collaborative relationship between federal, state, and private interests, he concludes, TRB will “serve and thrive for another 90 years.”

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Michael R. Salamone

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Lloyd D. Brown
After a snowstorm in 2006, the Washington State Department of Transportation launched a blog to communicate with citizens and soon began developing a suite of Web 2.0 communication tools, including Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, and Facebook. The author, an architect of the efforts, traces the successes, failures, and lessons learned and examines the issues of privacy, archiving, accommodating special needs, staffing, and training.

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26 Medieval English Bridges and Modern Transport Policy: A Distant Mirror?
Alan Cooper and Damian J. Kulash
With the Highway Trust Fund in jeopardy, U.S. policy makers are struggling to find a clear, broadly accepted vision for highways to meet the demands of the post-Interstate era. In medieval England, society wrestled with a fundamental shift in how to finance, build, and maintain bridges, the most expensive and complex part of their road system. The authors explore instructive parallels.
features articles on innovative and timely research and development activities in all modes of transportation. Brief news items of interest to the transportation community are also included, along with profiles of transportation professionals, meeting announcements, summaries of new publications, and news of Transportation Research Board activities.

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Coming next issue:

The University Transportation Centers program, administered by the Research and Innovative Technology Administration, is a federal investment in transportation research, education, and workforce development; a feature article in the January–February 2011 TR News presents case studies of successful, problem-solving collaborations between the centers and state DOTs. In an annual mainstay feature, TRB Technical Activities program officers report on a range of state-related developments observed firsthand during field visits to state and regional transportation agencies and universities in 2010. A technical article reviews the safety and noise-reduction benefits of porous asphalt roadways in the Netherlands.

Researchers for Rijkswaterstaat, which manages the Netherlands’ road network, make friction measurements of braking deceleration with blocked wheels on a new porous asphalt surface.