Caretakers and Change Makers

The Nine Leaders Who Built the Transportation Research Board

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The author retired as Associate Executive Director of TRB in September 2013 after 27 years in the Executive Office, guiding program oversight activities, report review, publications, and communications. She worked closely with the Board's eighth and ninth Executive Directors.

If you have ever visited the offices of the Transportation Research Board (TRB) in the National Academies' Keck Center in Washington, D.C., you may recall seeing row upon row of photographs of the Board's Executive Committee Chairs—78 individuals who have served in that role from 1920 to 2014. On a wall around the corner from the Executive Committee Chair gallery is a smaller group of portraits—eight of the nine men who have served as the Board's Executive Directors since its founding 94 years ago.

W. K. Hatt, Executive Director from 1921 to 1924.

Charles M. Upham, Executive Director from 1924 to 1928.

Shaping the Institution

These nine individuals—engineers all—have shared a strong commitment to TRB and its mission, and each has contributed to shaping the institution. Four of these men, three in the Board's first decade, could be described as "caretakers"—they provided leadership for a relatively short period of four or fewer years and then returned to the careers they had interrupted.

In contrast, the other five served 10 years or more as Executive Director, capping their careers with their tenures, and their accomplishments were vital to the building of TRB. Three of these "change makers" rose through the ranks at the Board, while the other two came from outside.

The stories of these nine men, individually and collectively, help tell the story of TRB—how it came into being, what gave it staying power, and how the profound changes in transportation, society, and technology have contributed to its growth and evolution into the institution it is today. Telling some of this rich story now is timely, with the advent of a tenth Executive Director in 2015.

Initial Caretakers

The story of TRB's creation has been told many times before. In a special issue of *TR News* marking the 75th anniversary of TRB, L. G. (Gary) Byrd vividly recounted the background, organizations, and individuals involved in establishing the National Advisory Board on Highway Research, as it was known at its founding on November 11, 1920, to provide a mechanism for the exchange of information and research results about highway technology:

> The founding fathers were early giants in the highway community—leaders in the National Research Council, professional societies, state highway departments, the Bureau of Public Roads, academia, and industry. (*1*, p. 7)

Photo: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

Thomas H. MacDonald, Chief of the Bureau of Public Roads, in 1939; nearly two decades earlier he had helped found the National Advisory Board on Highway Research.

The founders included Anson Marston, Dean and Director of the Engineering Department at Iowa State College; Thomas H. MacDonald, a former student of Marston's and Chief of the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads—the predecessor of the Federal Highway Administration; and several prominent individuals from state highway agencies, academia, the American Society of Civil Engineers, and the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO)—the predecessor to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO).

Flinn: Up and Running

The National Research Council (NRC), established in 1916 as the operating arm of the nonprofit National Academy of Sciences, became the institutional home of the new board. Its first director, referred to as Interim Executive Director, was Alfred D. Flinn, Vice Chairman of the Board's Executive Committee and Vice Chairman of the NRC Division of Engineering. Through his NRC role, Flinn was able to make the organizational and financial arrangements necessary to get the new board up and running. During his brief tenure, the Board's office was located in the Engineering Societies Building in New York City.

Hatt: Setting Firsts

In July 1921, William K. Hatt was appointed Executive Director. Professor of Civil Engineering and Director of Testing Laboratories at Purdue University, Hatt requested a leave of absence from the university to take on this new role.

Under his leadership, the Board held its first two annual meetings, the first in January 1922 at the Engineering Societies Building. Attendance grew rapidly, from 30 participants at first to 273 registrants by 1924.

During Hatt's tenure, the Board organized the first six technical committees, and the initial staff focused on a survey of highway research. Hatt is credited with suggesting the creation of a highway research information service—later accomplished under one of his successors. The Bureau of Public Roads provided the bulk of the funding for the Board.

Upham: Making Contacts

When Hatt returned to Purdue in 1924, Charles M. Upham, former Chief Engineer of the North Carolina State Highway Department, succeeded him. Upham, who served through 1927, focused on establishing relationships with the state highway agencies and with

universities. Under his tenure, the Board appointed "contact men" from the states and universities—assembling a network of 45 state and 121 university representatives by the close of 1924.

The Board gained a new name, the Highway Research Board (HRB), in 1925, after a vote by the Executive Committee. Upham resigned in 1928 to become Engineer–Director of the American Road Builders Association, the predecessor of the American Road and Transportation Builders Association.

Crum Takes the Helm

Building on the work of the three caretakers who preceded him, "idea man" Roy W. Crum took over as Executive Director in 1928; this first change maker as HRB director served 23 years, until his death in 1951. A graduate of Anson Marston's engineering program at Iowa State, Crum had served on the faculty, as well as at the Iowa Engineering Experiment Station and at the Iowa State Highway Commission.

During his tenure as the Board's Executive Director—the longest yet—Crum focused on building HRB's capabilities and its reputation in fulfilling its core missions: identifying national highway research needs, correlating research efforts to enhance efficiency and avoid unnecessary duplication, and disseminating the results of highway research.

In his first annual report to the Board's Executive Committee, Crum summarized these key elements of HRB's mission and noted:

> In a broad sense, the object of this institution is to make itself helpful in any way possible in the solution of the many problems that confront the builders and the users of the highways. . . . We hope as time goes on to broaden the scope and influence of the Board. (2, p. 40)

Information and Cooperation

Under Crum's leadership, the Board's program, technical studies, and staff expanded. Byrd notes that one of Crum's first acts was to request funding for a highway research information clearinghouse (*1*, p. 12); in 1931 the *Highway Research Abstracts* newsletter series was initiated. This laid the groundwork for what became the Highway Research Information Service in the 1960s and later the multimodal, international Transportation Research Information Services (TRIS) and Transportation Research Information Documentation (TRID). For many years, Fred Burggraf, who joined the Board in 1929 and became Research Engineer in 1931, handled the *Abstracts* series.

Other highlights of Crum's tenure included the following:

◆ Reorganization of the committees into six areas of research—Administration and Finance, Transportation, Highway Design, Materials and Construction, Maintenance, and Traffic;

◆ Cooperation with AASHO in conducting and maintaining a highway research census, *Highway Research, 1920–1940*, enumerating approximately 1,300 projects;

◆ Initiation of a cooperative project with the Bureau of Public Roads on highway safety research;

◆ Establishment of a joint committee with the American Road Builders Association on the development of equipment for constructing stabilized roads;

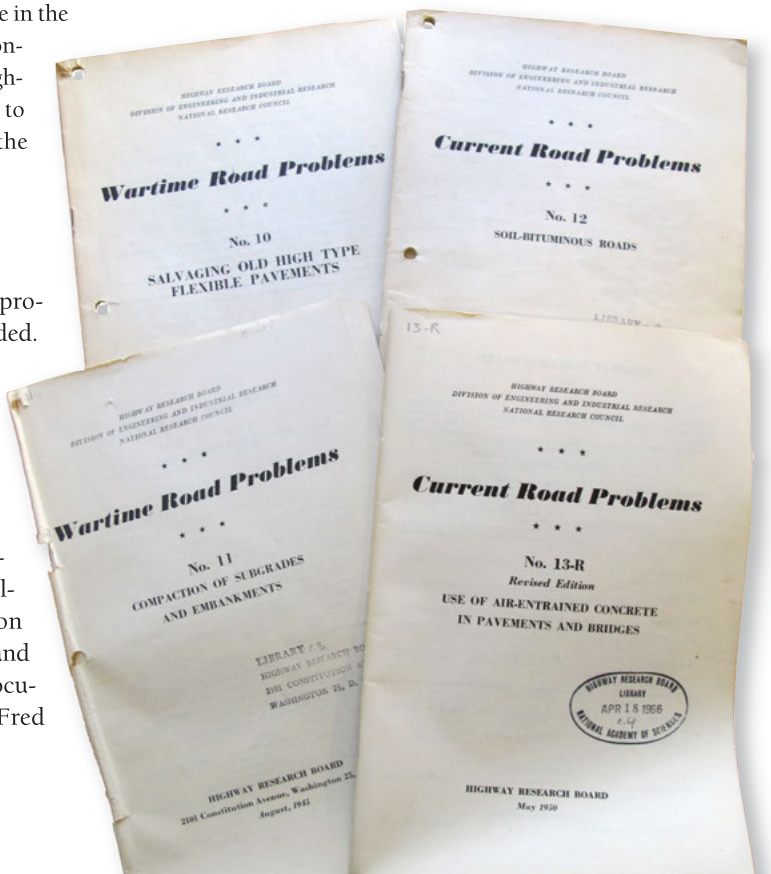
◆ Initiation of fees for member organizations;

◆ Creation of the Highway Research Correlation Service in 1945, the basis for much of today's core program, with the support of the Bureau of Public Roads and AASHO—41 states provided funds for the initial year of the service, which launched the continuing program of staff field visits to state and other research agencies;

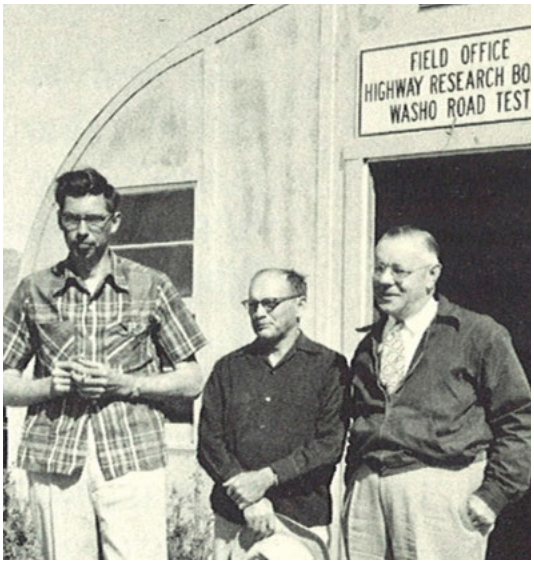
◆ Publication of wartime bulletins addressing transportation issues specific to World War II; after the war, these evolved into the *Current Road Problems* series; and

Roy W. Crum, Executive Director from 1928 to 1951.

Fred Burggraf, Executive Director from 1951 to 1964.



During World War II, the Highway Research Board published a series of bulletins focusing on transportation related to the war effort; after the war, the publications became the *Current Road Problems* series.



ARCHIVE PHOTO

W. N. Carey (*left*) worked with Burggraf (*right*) and A. C. Benkelman (*center*) on the AASHO Road Test. Benkelman developed the Benkelman beam or deflector beam, a nondestructive, portable tester for pavements.

◆ Publication of the first *Highway Capacity Manual* in 1949—apparently HRB lacked sufficient funds to publish the first edition, because the Government Printing Office handled the publication and sale.

Three Heritages

Crum's emphasis was on building a strong organization and partnerships with the states, federal government, and industry. In a tribute after Crum's death in 1951, MacDonald identified "three heritages" from the HRB Executive Director (*2*, p. 69):

◆ An organization grown from nine committees and 81 members to 80 committees and 758 members,

◆ A five-foot-high shelf of the finest in highway research publications, and

◆ The concept that highway research is a continuing, unfolding process and that new participants should be encouraged to share in the activity year by year.

Burggraf: Extending the Vision

Burggraf, who succeeded Crum, served as HRB Executive Director from 1951 until 1964. A graduate of George Washington University, Burggraf had worked at the National Bureau of Standards and the Illinois Division of Highways. He joined the HRB staff in 1928 and left in 1932 for a position at the Calcium Chloride Association. He rejoined the Board in 1940 as Research Engineer, was named Assistant Director in 1941, and was promoted to Associate Director in 1945.

Major developments during Burggraf's tenure in the 1950s included the initiation of an important series of controlled road tests of pavement performance, administered by HRB. Burggraf himself had participated in the first such test, the Bates Road Test, while he was a research engineer with the Illinois highway department.

The road test projects—culminating in the $27 million AASHO Road Test in 1955—expanded HRB's role and staff. William N. Carey, Jr., who had joined HRB in 1946 and later became Executive Assistant to the Director, served as Project Engineer on the Western Association of State Highway Officials (WASHO) Road Test and then as Chief Engineer on the AASHO Road Test.

Growth and Expansion

Areas for research also were expanding—among the emerging topics were metropolitan area traffic and transportation planning, highway law, urban passenger transportation, highway taxes, and tolling. The passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, which established the Highway Trust Fund and set in motion the construction of the nation's vast network of Interstate highways, produced new challenges.

Growth was evident during Burggraf's tenure—committee membership nearly doubled from 655 in 1951 to 1,255 in 1963, and Annual Meeting attendance almost tripled—from 850 to 2,443. The demand for lecture and committee rooms at the Annual Meeting led to a shift in location in 1956 to the Sheraton Park Hotel—now the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel—and a few years later to expansion to the nearby Shoreham Hotel—now the Omni Shoreham.

After stepping down as Executive Director in 1966, D. Grant Mickle (*center*) returned to chair the HRB Executive Committee in 1970. Alan M. Voorhees, 1972 Executive Committee Chair, is at left, and 1971 Chair Charles E. Shumate at right.

ARCHIVE PHOTO

Cooperative Research

A staff-authored report published in 1959, *Highway Research in the United States: Needs, Expenditures, and Applications*, made the case that research was not keeping pace with the states' needs. The report laid the groundwork for a new program, the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP), established in 1962 through a three-party agreement among NRC, the Bureau of Public Roads, and AASHO, and administered by HRB.

Approximately $3 million was provided to the new program of problem-solving, contract research on topics selected by the state agencies and guided by expert panels. The success of this model led to significant growth in the size of the Board's staff and volunteer base and in the range of subject matter addressed, as well as to a series of similar cooperative programs of research administered by the Board for other transport modes.

Other accomplishments during Burggraf's directorship included establishment of the Highway Research Information Service (HRIS), a clearinghouse for highway research results; growth in publications, specialty conferences, and requests for information; and creation of an industry category of membership, recognizing that highway industry representatives accounted for almost one-third of committee membership and Annual Meeting registrations. An Industry Dinner in 1961 attracted 100 highway industry leaders, and approximately 25 industries became affiliates at a fee of $1,000.

Mickle: Expanding Outreach

D. Grant Mickle became Executive Director when Burggraf retired in 1964. A civil engineer, Mickle had worked for the Massachusetts Department of Public Works, the Michigan Department of State Highways, and the City of Detroit. He had directed the traffic engineering division of the Automotive Safety Foundation from 1943 until 1961, when he was named the first Deputy Federal Highway Administrator.

During his nearly three years as HRB Executive Director, Mickle focused on expanding financial support and industry outreach, as well as on public information activities. In a report to the Executive Committee, he noted that a survey of industry leaders provided "some cogent and illuminating answers" to help "increase our service to the Board's present industrial members and hopefully to attract other industries to join with us in a common effort to achieve the finest possible highway transportation system" (2, p. 83). During Mickle's tenure, the Executive Committee also authorized creation of a Special Committee on International Activities to foster international research exchange and coordination.

Carey: Moving to Multimodal

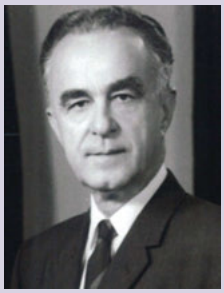
Mickle resigned in 1966 to return to the Automotive Safety Foundation as Vice President; a few years later, in 1970, he chaired the HRB Executive Committee as President of the Highway Users Federation for Safety and Mobility. Succeeding Mickle as Executive Director was longtime HRB staff member Carey.

A civil engineering graduate of the University of Minnesota, Carey had worked in cement research and on airport construction before joining the Board in 1946. After service as Executive Assistant to the Director, Project Engineer for the WASHO Road Test, and Chief Engineer for Research on the AASHO Road Test, he became HRB Assistant Director in 1962 and Deputy Executive Director in 1964.

New Scope

Early in Carey's tenure, a Special Committee on Long-Range Planning, appointed during Mickle's term, reported its findings and recommendations to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee approved a new statement of purpose and scope for the Board, which was subsequently approved by the Division of Engineering and the NRC Governing Board:

> Purpose—The purpose of the Board is to advance knowledge concerning the nature and performance of transportation systems, through the stimulation of research and dissemination of information derived therefrom.
>
> Scope—The Board will give attention to all factors pertinent to the understanding, devising,



D. Grant Mickle, Executive Director from 1964 to 1966.

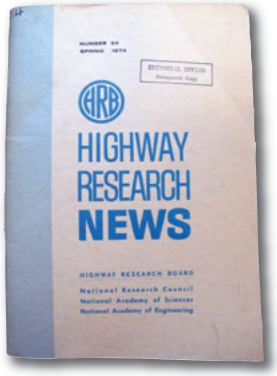
W. N. Carey, Jr., Executive Director from 1966 to 1980.

Carey (*center*), shown conferring at an HRB Annual Meeting, helped guide HRB through its transition to a multimodal organization.

Archive Photo

Thomas B. Deen, Executive Director from 1980 to 1994.

> and functioning of highway and urban transportation systems and their interrelationships with other aspects of total transportation. It will concern itself with the planning, design, construction, operation, maintenance, and safety of facilities and their components; the economics, financing, and administration of the systems; and their interactions with the physical, economic, legal, and social environment they are designed to serve. (2, p. 89)



In a 1974 edition of *HR News*, Carey wrote about the decision to change HRB's name—and mission— to the Transportation Research Board.

As Byrd noted, the new statement made clear that "the interests of HRB committees and sponsors were extending beyond highway transportation, and it signaled the Board's intention to ultimately become a multimodal organization" (*1*, p. 18). With his background and reputation in the highway field, Carey was well positioned to lead this charge.

Filling a Gap

In a spring 1974 *HRB News Brief*, Carey noted that the Long-Range Planning Committee had reported that "in the field of transportation outside of highways, there is no organization that performs the same functions as the Highway Research Board." Further, the committee had recommended that the Board attempt to fill this gap by changing its name to the Transportation Research Board and broadening its scope accordingly. Because of the concerns of highway sponsors, however, the change was delayed until funding from nonhighway transportation sources could be assured.

Carey cited a "major step forward": the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA)—now the Federal Transit Administration—recently had signed on as a financial sponsor, enabling the appointment of a staff transit specialist, the establishment of relevant committees, and the coverage of transit research in HRB programs, publications, and information services. In addition, support from UMTA and several other federal DOT agencies had allowed the expansion of the Board's computer-based information services to include maritime, railroad, and urban mass transportation.

Broadened Constituency

The transformation of HRB into TRB was propelled by the growing recognition among state highway agencies—and HRB committees—that their missions were becoming multimodal, as well as by internal developments at NRC. Almost half of the state highway departments already had evolved into or become parts of state departments of transportation, and in 1973, AASHO changed its name and its constitution to reflect that change.

That same year, NRC reorganized into four divisions, with HRB assigned to the new Commission on Sociotechnical Systems. Discussions explored the creation of a new transportation research division within the commission, including HRB along with separate maritime and air boards. The HRB Executive Committee and state and federal sponsors, however, expressed concerns about such a segregation of transportation activities and unanimously recommended a new name and expanded scope for the Board. In March 1974, NRC approved the change of name to the Transportation Research Board and

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Under Deen's tenure, the National Research Council elevated TRB to a major division; the Board also broadened its sources of financial support.

broadened the scope to include highway, rail, air, marine, and urban mass transportation activities.

During the remaining years of Carey's tenure, the focus was on consolidating the Board's new responsibilities; adding new sponsors, committees, and staff; and reaching out to the significantly broadened constituency.

Deen: Upping the Ante

When Thomas B. Deen was appointed Carey's successor in 1980, TRB was 60 years old, with an established mission, a respected parent organization and staff, engaged sponsors, and a large and growing body of volunteers who contributed to and relied on its functions and services. Deen was an outsider, president of the internationally known transportation consulting firm, Alan M. Voorhees Associates.

That Deen would relinquish a prestigious leadership position to take on the directorship of TRB as the capstone to an already distinguished career was a testimony to the stature that TRB had gained in the field. Deen has written engagingly about that decision in an article, "The Transportation Research Board at 90: Everyone Loves It, but No One Can Explain Why" (*3*).

A civil engineering graduate of the University of Kentucky, Deen had pursued advanced studies at the University of Chicago and at Yale University's Bureau of Highway Traffic. Before joining Voorhees Associates, he directed the Nashville Area Transportation Study and served as Director of Planning for the National Capital Transportation Agency, which developed the initial plans for the Washington, D.C., Metrorail system.

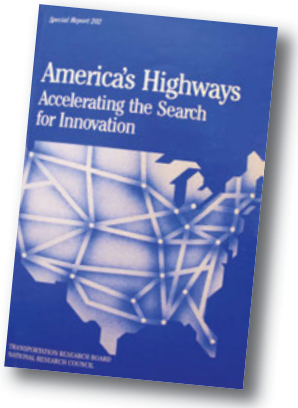
Early in his tenure, Deen implemented a set of measures to restore fiscal discipline during a period when rampant inflation was threatening the sustainability of TRB programs. He also worked aggressively to bring in new financial sponsors, as well as to maintain support from existing sponsors. Within NRC, Deen strove to gain increased respect from the Academies' leadership and support for TRB programs.

Introducing Policy Studies

These efforts paid off in 1982 with the elevation of TRB from a unit operating within a division into one of the major program divisions of NRC. As part of this move, TRB—like the other NRC program divisions—would be required to conduct policy studies. The TRB Executive Committee created two subcommittees to oversee these new responsibilities—a Subcommittee for NRC Oversight, to provide liaison between TRB and the NRC Governing Board; and to monitor the policy study process, a Subcommittee on Policy Review—later expanded in scope as the Subcommittee on Planning and Policy Review.

TRB's entry into the policy study arena required organizational changes and new hires and challenged volunteers, sponsors, and staff to see the Board's mission in a new light. Some believed that the conduct of studies on complex, often controversial, national transportation policy issues would alienate sponsors concerned about whether the outcome of a study might be prejudicial to their interests. As the program developed, however, such fears were put to rest; the move into policy studies helped attract new TRB sponsors and contributors.

From the first five policy studies mandated by Congress in 1982, the Board has conducted more than 130 on a variety of topics in response to requests from Congress, federal or state agencies, or the Executive Committee. An independent committee, appointed in accordance with rigorous NRC procedures, carries out each study. The Board's policy study work has enhanced its stature and influence within the national transportation community.



Deen's proposal for a highly focused research program—outlined in Special Report 202, *America's Highways: Accelerating the Search for Innovation*—led to the historic and productive first Strategic Highway Research Program.

Strategic Research

In 1982, Deen recommended a proposal, adopted by the Executive Committee, that TRB initiate a strategic study to assess the need for fundamental highway research in areas with the potential for yielding breakthroughs. The 1984 report, *America's Highways: Accelerating the Search for Innovation*, led to the establishment of the first Strategic Highway Research Program (SHRP)—a $150 million, 5-year program of highly focused research that yielded cost-effective innovations in areas including asphalt materials, pavement performance, concrete bridge protection, and snow and ice control. The U.S. Congress funded the program, which was housed within NRC.

Another strategic study recommended the creation of a cooperative research program for transit, modeled on NCHRP. The Transit Cooperative

The first SHRP, like SHRP 2, relied on close collaboration with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials and with the U.S. Department of Transportation.

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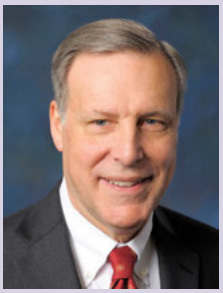

Robert E. Skinner, Jr., Executive Director from 1994 to 2015.

Research Program (TCRP) was established in 1992, toward the end of Deen's tenure. Several other similarly structured cooperative research programs followed. Under Deen's leadership, TRB also undertook the Innovations Deserving Exploratory Analysis (IDEA) programs, which support research into promising but unproved innovations for highways, transportation safety, transit, and more.

With his strong service orientation, Deen also initiated a strategic planning process that engaged members of the Executive Committee, other volunteer leaders, sponsors, committee members, and staff in a structured assessment of TRB's mission, goals, services, constituencies, and resources and in the identification of emerging challenges and opportunities. The strategic planning process, with many later refinements, continues and has led to many beneficial actions and activities.

Enhancements and Advancements

Beginning in 1988, Executive Committee members were engaged by another Deen invention—special policy discussion sessions during the semiannual meetings. Nicknamed "red meat" sessions, the discussions have afforded the opportunity to explore an emerging issue of choice with guest speakers and colleagues. The popularity of these sessions continues; some have led to TRB studies, conferences, and other activities.

The size and scope of TRB programs grew significantly during Deen's 14-year tenure. The Board's annual budget increased from $9 million to $35 million, and attendance at the Annual Meeting rose from 4,000 to 7,000. New sponsors came on board—including federal agencies and industry associations; committee and conference activities flourished; and the publications output surged. TRB accomplished this growth while enhancing its ties to its veteran partners—the state and federal transportation agencies and transportation research institutions.

Skinner: Building for the Future

Robert E. Skinner, Jr., became Executive Director following Deen's retirement in 1994. Skinner joined TRB in 1983 in the new division conducting the first round of congressionally mandated policy studies. He served as study director for the studies on geometric design standards for highway resurfacing, restoration, and rehabilitation projects and on the effects of twin trailer trucks.

In 1986, he was appointed Director of the Studies and Information Services Division, supervising the conduct of more than 30 policy studies, and overseeing the management of TRB's information services, library, and synthesis reports unit. Skinner earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the University of Virginia and a master of science degree in civil engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Before joining TRB, he was a Vice President at PRC Voorhees, directing planning and research studies for local, state, and federal agencies.

Strengthening and Sustaining

The size and scope of TRB continued to grow during Skinner's tenure—the annual budget rose from $35 million to $113 million, and Annual Meeting attendance climbed from 7,000 to 12,300. Under Skinner's leadership, TRB strengthened the multimodal and multidisciplinary range of its programs, inaugurated major communications initiatives, fostered international research partnerships and coordination, and

Skinner delivers his first Executive Director's report to the TRB Executive Committee in January 1994, flanked by Executive Committee Vice Chair Lillian C. Borrone and Chair Joseph M. Sussman. The size and scope of the TRB Annual Meeting expanded under Skinner's tenure—attendance grew from 7,000 to 12,300.

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Skinner was interviewed in 1995 by reporter Sylvia Chase for ABC's *Prime Time Live*. Skinner worked to promote transportation research and to raise the profile of TRB.

worked proactively to enhance the diversity of the Board's committees, programs, and staff.

In a period of constrained federal and state agency budgets, Skinner guided a TRB-wide effort to achieve cost efficiencies and raise additional revenue, while avoiding the need to cut vital services. He maintained strong relationships with longtime state and federal DOT sponsors, nurtured new relationships, and earned the admiration of National Academies' leadership for his effective management of the NRC's longest-continuing unit.

Portfolio of Achievements

Highlights of these and other accomplishments during Skinner's 21-year tenure as Executive Director include the following:

◆ Creation of the Airport Cooperative Research Program in 2005, with funding by the Federal Aviation Administration. This applied research program, modeled on NCHRP and TCRP, addresses problems shared by airport operating agencies. Reauthorized in 2012, the program has produced more than 250 reports in a variety of series and was funded at approximately $15.0 million in Fiscal Year 2014. Several smaller cooperative research programs—in freight, rail, and hazardous materials transportation—also were initiated during Skinner's tenure.

◆ Establishment of a second Strategic Highway Research Program (SHRP 2), authorized by Congress in 2005, to address some of the most pressing needs relating to the nation's highway system. Funded at more than $230 million and managed by TRB, the program includes the largest-ever naturalistic driving study, along with research focused on renewal, travel time reliability, and ways to speed the delivery of projects that can increase highway capacity. With the program's expected completion in 2015, additional work is focusing on ways to ensure timely implementation of the research results.

◆ Continuing strong support of TRB by state DOT sponsors, as contributors to the Board's core programs and to NCHRP, as participants on committees and panels, and as users and proponents of TRB products and services. In 2013, almost 800 state DOT employees were members of TRB standing committees, and some 1,550 were serving on panels of the Cooperative Research Programs.

◆ Initiation of the free, weekly *Transportation Research E-Newsletter*, which reports on transportation research and research-related events within TRB and beyond; the popular webinar series, which disseminates information on TRB reports, Annual Meeting sessions, and topics requested by TRB committees; a redesigned website; and a variety of social media activities. More than 50,000 subscribe to the e-newsletter worldwide.

◆ Signed agreements with prominent international organizations to coordinate research, cosponsor activities, and explore partnerships. In a multiyear project, TRB is partnering with the European Union to conduct a series of four conferences on transportation research issues of common interest. Professionals from several other countries have worked at TRB as loan staff for SHRP 2 and other programs. In 2011, TRIS records were combined with those of the International Transport Research Documentation to launch the TRID database of more than 1 million records available free on the web.

◆ Steadily increasing participation by women and members of minority groups in TRB committee activities and leadership, on staff, and in other roles.

In 2011, the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) awarded Skinner the Director's Research Champion Award; (*left to right:*) Dennis Christiansen of TTI, Skinner, Dianne Skinner, Herbert Richardson of TTI, and John Horsley of AASHTO.

PHOTO: TTI

With Skinner's leadership, staff and volunteers built on efforts begun during Deen's directorship to enhance diversity in all aspects of the Board's work. Of the 21 TRB Executive Committee chairs from 1995 to 2014, seven have been women and two have been African Americans (one also a woman). Recent initiatives that support this continuing goal include the TRB Minority Student Fellows Program and the Young Members Council.

◆ Continued growth in Annual Meeting attendance and paper submissions; initiation of a commercial exhibit at the meeting; and inauguration of web and electronic meeting apps. To accommodate growth, the Annual Meeting has moved to a new venue, the Washington, D.C., Convention Center, starting in January 2015.

◆ A reorganization of the Technical Activities Council in 2004 added the volunteer leaders of each of the modal groups—public transportation, rail, freight systems, aviation, and marine. Recently a state DOT representative and a representative of the Young Members Council were added. The Marine Board, transferred to TRB from another NRC division in 1999, has made significant contributions to TRB's portfolio—for example, an upswing in marine-related policy study requests from a variety of sponsors, some new to TRB.

Skinner will retire, after serving more than 20 years as Executive Director, at the end of January 2015.

Making a Difference

The nine men who led the Board from its beginnings in 1920 to the present have been at the center of the transportation research enterprise in the United States and beyond. Caretakers and change makers alike, they shared a vision of the difference that research can make. But as Skinner has observed in an article, "Ten Theses About Transportation Research," research is a means, not an end; the ultimate goal is innovation (*4*).

The implementation of better, more cost-effective materials and processes can enhance people's mobility, increase safety, benefit the economy, and improve the quality of life. But transportation rarely makes the headlines, and research is even less glamorous.

Effectively, and each in his own way, these nine individuals were spokesmen and champions for what transportation research can accomplish—and facilitators of the dialogue, coordination, fundraising, study, and dissemination needed to make good things happen. We celebrate their successes and look forward to the contributions that Neil Pedersen will make as TRB's tenth director in addressing this continuing, vital challenge.

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Pedersen Named TRB Executive Director

After a national search, Neil J. Pedersen, former Administrator of the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) and past Chair of the TRB Executive Committee, was selected as the 10th Executive Director of TRB, effective February 1, 2015. Pedersen has served as Deputy Director of the second Strategic Highway Research Program (SHRP 2) since 2012.

TRB's new staff leader has more than 38 years of experience in the transportation profession. For 29 years, he held management and leadership positions at the Maryland Department of Transportation's SHA, including chief executive officer for more than eight years. A native of Massachusetts, Pedersen earned bachelor's degrees in civil engineering and urban studies from Bucknell University and a master's degree in civil engineering from Northwestern University. He began his career as a consultant in transportation planning, working first for R. H. Pratt Associates and then for JHK and Associates. He managed projects ranging from travel demand forecasting to transit alternatives analyses and toll road feasibility studies.

Neil J. Pedersen

In December 1982, he joined Maryland SHA as Deputy Director of the Office of Planning and Preliminary Engineering; in 1984, he was promoted to office director. In July 2000, he was appointed Deputy Administrator for Planning and Engineering, with responsibility for SHA's planning, environmental, engineering, and real estate activities. In January 2003, he was named Administrator, serving as principal adviser to the Governor and the Secretary of Transportation on highway-related matters and providing strategic leadership to an agency of 3,200 employees who plan, design, construct, maintain, and operate Maryland's 5,200-mile state highway network and 2,500 bridges.

Pedersen also exercised oversight for Maryland's highway safety and motor carrier programs, and he led the delivery of the state's two megaprojects—the Woodrow Wilson Bridge and the Intercounty Connector. Throughout his tenure, Pedersen remained technically engaged in the science and art of planning and engineering while providing highly effective management and leadership, often in a politically charged context.

For the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), Pedersen chaired the Task Force on Context-Sensitive Solutions and served as Vice Chair of the Standing Committee on Highways and of the Subcommittee on Asset Management. He also was a member of AASHTO's Standing Committee on Research and the Standing Committee on Planning.

Before joining the TRB staff, Pedersen was active as a TRB volunteer for more than 30 years, serving on a variety of committees and panels. He is a past chair of the Technical Activities Council and of the SHRP 2 Technical Coordinating Committee for Capacity Research. He also served as a member of the Executive Committee's Subcommittee on Planning and Policy Review and on the National Cooperative Highway Research Program Project Panel on Research for the AASHTO Standing Committee on Highways. In addition, he is an Emeritus Member of the TRB Statewide Multimodal Transportation Planning Committee.

Among his honors, Pedersen has received the George S. Bartlett Award (2006), the Road Gang's Lester P. Lamm Award (2005), the Planner of the Year Award from the Maryland Chapter of the American Planning Association (1997), AASHTO's Intermodal Award (1994), and the Community Service Award of the Institute of Transportation Engineers' Baltimore–Washington Chapter (1992).

Pedersen will work closely with Robert E. Skinner, Jr., who is retiring at the end of January after more than 30 years of service to the National Academies.

"Neil has taken on virtually every volunteer leadership role TRB has to offer, with great success, and as a TRB staff member has helped move SHRP 2 products from research into practice," Skinner commented. "I will be leaving TRB in good hands."

"The Academies' Presidents—Ralph Cicerone, Dan Mote, and Victor Dzau—join me in congratulating Neil on his new position and in thanking Bob Skinner for his outstanding service to the National Research Council," said Bruce B. Darling, Executive Officer of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) and National Research Council (NRC) and chair of the search committee. "We look forward to Neil's leadership on critical transportation issues for the nation and for the profession."

TRB Executive Committee Chair Kirk Steudle noted that the members of the search committee "interviewed extraordinary candidates" and "concluded that Neil is the best choice to take TRB forward." In addition to Steudle, members of the search committee included Deborah H. Butler, former Chair of the TRB Executive Committee and current member; Susan Hanson (NAS), Executive Committee member and Chair of the Subcommittee for NRC Oversight; Jeff Paniati, Executive Director of the Federal Highway Administration; Mike Walton (NAE), past TRB Executive Committee Chair and former SNO Chair; Bud Wright, AASHTO Executive Director; Audrey Mosley, NAS and NRC General Counsel; Peter Blair, Executive Director of the NRC Division on Engineering and Physical Sciences; and Gregory Symmes, Executive Director of the NRC Division on Earth and Life Studies.