

## **STATEWIDE PLANNING AS A FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRAMMING DECISIONS**

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The main focus of this presentation was to report results of several surveys of statewide planning activities which provide a framework for programming decisions. Two of the surveys were undertaken by Wilbur Smith Associates on behalf of the U.S. DOT Office of the Secretary and relate to the National Transportation System. Two other surveys were undertaken for the Federal Highway Administration in connection with a Synthesis of Statewide Planning Practices and the development of a training course on statewide planning. The presentation contains only selected portions of the four projects.

The statewide transportation plans developed under provisions of ISTEA have, by their very nature, significant policy content which influences the type of transportation programs developed. Almost without exception, these statewide transportation plans define goals and objectives, some of which are a bit vague while others are more specific. In addition, some of the plans set forth strategies as a means of achieving these goals and objectives. In a limited number of cases, system plans are included which also set a policy type context for programming decisions.

Despite the general similarity in approach, the synthesis work undertaken by Wilbur Smith Associates has shown that there are significant variations in the way individual states presented goals and objectives in their statewide plans. This primarily deals with the level of detail. Some states have limited themselves to a very few goals statements (for instance, one state only has four goal statements). On the other end of the spectrum, considerable detail is presented in certain cases (one state included 31 individual goal statements).

Another variation relates to the structure of policy statements presented in the statewide plan. While a few states only adopted goal and objective statements, others chose to become even more specific by identifying the strategies and actions steps they intended to undertake regarding each objective. This approach has significant implications for a structured performance monitoring process.

There are some consistent themes that appear in the goals and objectives of statewide transportation plans. These themes include economic development, safety, environment, system preservation, intermodal efficiency, and multimodal alternatives. A number of other topics also received significant attention such as energy, mobility, congestion, new technologies, public/private partnerships, and land use/trans-

portation interactions. These goals should be reflected in the programming decisions of the state transportation agencies.

Another aspect of statewide transportation plans that has implications for programming relates to the systems planning activities undertaken as a part of this process. Some of these systems planning activities dealt with service standards, system designation, corridor needs, system needs, and finance. For instance, Florida included in its plan a policy regarding a maximum number of through lanes on the State Highway System. Ohio included the designation of macro corridors and hubs in the Access Ohio plan. Idaho is an example in which system needs were tabulated in dollar amounts. South Carolina also undertook a needs study approach as one element and tied this to a financing proposal that covers highways and transit.

Another aspect of statewide transportation planning relates to performance monitoring. The surveys undertaken regarding this aspect clearly show a wide range of different opinions about what the states intend to achieve with performance monitoring. Nevertheless, there is a general intent in many plans to use performance monitoring as a means of understanding how well the system is performing as well as determining how well the choices made in the programming process are affecting goal achievement. The surveys also found that program delivery issues were a significant aspect in some states' performance monitoring approaches. Typically, the state transportation agencies include program delivery issues in response to outside influences relating to the efficiency of departmental operations. On the other hand, others see program delivery issues as more appropriate for an agency's strategic planning process rather than a systems performance assessment.

The state-of-the-practice regarding performance measurement is quite varied. While almost all states use system condition indicators, very few have tied performance measures to the goals they set for their transportation systems. Nevertheless, there are some examples where this approach is being taken. Florida is one such state where the performance measures are linked to goals identified in the transportation plan and are primarily outcome based (as contrasted with output measures). Another example is Ohio whose process embodies four tiers or elements. The first tier relates to the issue being addressed, the second relates to the measures of performance, the third tier relates

to performance standards (including gradations of performance), and finally a scoring system that defines how difficult it would be to overcome the problem.

It has been said that if we keep doing things the same old way, we will end up with the same old problems. These surveys of state transportation planning processes lead to the conclusion that we are making significant progress in improving the way we go about our business. Most important, we seem to be focusing more than ever before upon the outcomes of our planning and programming process. The overall

conclusion is that statewide planning activities provide an excellent context for programming decisions. In turn, those programming decisions affect the performance of the transportation system and the achievement of objectives included in the plan. With this as a guiding principle, there are a variety of statewide planning approaches from which states can carefully select those which are most appropriate for the times and circumstances in which the planning and programming activities are undertaken.