

Financing and Organization

The TRB Executive Committee proposes to raise an endowment of \$5 million to support self-initiated studies of major, national transportation issues. This endowment should generate sufficient income to support the conduct of two or three major policy studies at any one time. When study topics demand a larger funding level, the TRB endowment income could be supplemented by other NRC internal funds. For example, the Kellogg Foundation recently awarded a \$20 million endowment to the National Academy of Sciences for studies on health (including transportation safety), education, and other topics. Public or private funds might also be used to match the endowment funds, but only if use of these funds would not be perceived to bias the study.

The selection of studies and the expenditure of funds by ISTS would be subject to the review and approval of the Executive Committee of TRB and the governing board of the NRC. The ISTS itself would likely be under the authority of a special subcommittee of the Executive Committee or the Subcommittee for Planning and Policy Review, which is charged with oversight of TRB policy studies.

Coordinating Highway Research

Highway Research Coordinating Council oversees highway-related research programs throughout the United States

The nation's highway research programs, headed in almost as many directions as the highways themselves, need a coordinator, a research program "traffic cop" to direct major research activities. With this in mind, AASHTO passed a resolution in July 1987 that established the Highway Research Coordinating Council to oversee coordination of highway-related research programs throughout the United States. At AASHTO's request, TRB was chosen to help organize the HRCC.

In addition to coordination, the function of the HRCC is to identify gaps in research, prevent duplication of programs, and explore opportunities for interagency cooperation. AASHTO also recommended the formation of a related Industry-HRCC National Committee to advise the HRCC on the most effective role for private industry in national highway research.

The HRCC concept grew out of an AASHTO study of the highway research arena, prompted by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget proposal to turn the FHWA Turner-Fairbank Highway Research Center over to the private sector. The study results revealed the fragmentation of highway research programs and signaled the need for greater coordination.

Formation of HRCC

Following AASHTO's request, TRB set up the HRCC and convened the first exploratory meeting in October 1987. In attendance were representatives of AASHTO, APWA, FHWA, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, the National Association of County Engineers, the National Bureau of Standards (renamed the National Institute of Standards and Technology in October 1988), NCHRP, the National Science Foundation, SHRP, TRB, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Participants agreed that it would be useful for the heads of the several agencies who manage or fund highway-related research activities to meet periodically and discuss their programs, with meetings covering particular components of highway research. Topics suggested were highway safety, traffic operations, pavements, structures, materials, and highway operations. Although many technical personnel already meet through TRB and other organizations to discuss specific research topics, there is little interchange among leaders responsible for overall research programs. Periodic meetings would

- Provide managers with an overview of highway research trends and indicate how their individual projects relate to the total program;
- Stimulate feedback from leaders of the user community on the needs and views of the ultimate users of research;
- Furnish a forum for the proposal and discussion of opportunities for cooperative research projects;
- Pinpoint duplication of, overemphasis on, or neglect of specific areas of research; and
- Deliver a measure of reassurance to oversight agencies such as Congress, OMB, and others that the conception, relevance, and organization of the overall highway research program meets high standards.

The second meeting of the HRCC, held in April 1988 at the National Bureau of Standards, focused on the use of advanced technology for quality assurance, facility condition assessment, and computer-integrated construction. Representatives of the groups attending agreed to host future meetings on a rotating basis.

Next Steps

HRCC participants recognize that meetings alone will not accomplish the goals planned for the organization. Although full-time staff support would be desirable, budget constraints preclude this option in the short term. Conse-

quently, three of the groups participating—AASHTO, FHWA, and the Corps of Engineers—have begun a modest consultant study as a practical alternative to provide preliminary data and analysis for use by the HRCC.

The purpose of this consultant study is twofold. First, it will provide background material on the nature, scale, and direction of highway research programs; analyze program activities to specify duplication or subjects that are over- or underemphasized; and develop proposals for HRCC consideration for correcting these deficiencies, particularly identifying areas where coordination and cooperation might be beneficial. Second, and perhaps most important, it will develop recommendations for struc-

turing and operating the HRCC itself, including strategies for establishing an Industry-HRCC National Committee. As part of this plan, the study will also develop a methodology to enable the decision makers responsible for directing major highway research activities to compare their programs, planning processes, and methods of operation. The results of this study will be presented at the next HRCC meeting.

If it is successful, the HRCC should go a long way toward helping to improve the cohesiveness and coherence of highway research programs and dispelling the perception of highway research as decentralized and fragmented.

Charting New Waters

TRB to expand activities in marine and intermodal transportation

Containers have revolutionized worldwide freighter operations and attendant portside services and land connections, and deregulation of the rail and trucking industries has spurred the development of truly multimodal transportation companies. Shippers can now contract for single-rate, multimodal transport instead of dealing with individual modal carriers as they did in the past.

U.S. systems for commercial navigation, which include both deep-draft ports and inland waterways, have been developed with public and private funds from a variety of sources. Port authorities are quasi-public agencies that are expected to make a profit. They develop facilities for public use, but more than 90 percent

of the docking facilities represent private-sector investments. This is especially true of facilities for bulk cargoes such as coal, oil, and grain.

New Environment

Traditionally the federal government was responsible for constructing, maintaining, and operating the navigation channels, harbors, and locks that make up the commercial navigation system. Since the passage of the Inland Waterways Revenue Act of 1978 and the Water Resources Development Act of 1986, some of these costs have been shifted to commercial users and port authorities.

The new environment created by legislative and regulatory changes has generated questions and problems that are difficult for organizations that are primarily concerned with a single mode to address. TRB's experience with multiple modes of transportation puts it in a position to help. The Board's involvement in marine and intermodal transportation is growing. The TRB Exec-

utive Committee has created a Task Force on Marine Transportation to conduct a comprehensive assessment of how TRB can best serve the marine and intermodal transportation community. Currently TRB is conducting a study to help the Maritime Administration Office of Technology Assessment examine technological and institutional issues that result from changes in government regulation of intermodal marine container shipping. The Board is also negotiating with MARAD for multiyear funding of a marine transportation program.

TRB Task Force

The Marine Transportation Task Force of the TRB Executive Committee will identify activities and research programs that would be appropriate for TRB. Potential areas of involvement include

- Intermodalism and the use of containers not only for marine transport but also as a substitute for truck trailers

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