

Transit Cooperative Research Program

Creation of New Program Is Culmination of Efforts To Meet Demand for Transit Research

A major new transit research undertaking, the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP), has now been established. Proposed by the U.S. Department of Transportation, TCRP was authorized as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). On May 13, 1992, a memorandum agreement outlining TCRP operating procedures was executed by three cooperating organizations: the Federal Transit Administration (FTA); the National Academy of Sciences, acting through the Transportation Research Board (TRB); and the Transit Development Corporation, Inc. (TDC), a nonprofit educational and research organization established by the American Public Transit Association (APTA).

Need and Purpose

Some parts of the transit system in the United States are showing the effects of heavy use, aging, and limited operating capacity. At the same time, the nation's growth and the need to meet environmental, energy, and mobility objectives place added demands on its transit system. TCRP will serve as one of the principal means by which the transit industry can develop innovative near-term solutions to meet these demands.

The need for TCRP was originally identified in TRB *Special Report 213—Research for Public Transit: New Directions*, a study sponsored in 1987 by FTA. A report by APTA, *Transportation 2000*, also recognized the need for research.

*"This is an historic moment
for the transit industry.
For the first time, transit
operators and suppliers will
have the resources and
institutional support needed
to meet their needs
independent of the Federal
Government, through their
own research program."*

—Brian W. Clymer
Administrator
Federal Transit Administration

TCRP, modeled after the longstanding and successful National Cooperative Highway Research Program, will undertake research and other technical activities in response to the needs of transit service providers. The focus of TCRP will be a variety of transit research fields including planning, service configuration, equipment, facilities, operations, human resources, maintenance, and administrative practices.

Program Participants

The primary participants in TCRP are (a) an independent governing board organized by TDC and designated the TCRP Over-

sight and Project Selection (TOPS) Committee; (b) TRB as program manager and secretariat for the TOPS Committee; (c) APTA as a vital link to the transit community; and (d) FTA as program sponsor. Other important participants in TCRP include transit professionals, state and local government officials, equipment and service suppliers, and research organizations. Each one of these participants has a different interest and different responsibilities; however, each will be an integral part of the cooperative research effort.

Program Management

TRB will provide day-to-day program management including the following tasks:

1. Appointing and coordinating expert technical panels to guide research,
2. Developing and distributing requests for proposals (RFPs),
3. Processing and evaluating proposals to select the best qualified research agency,
4. Executing contracts with the selected researchers,
5. Reviewing research reports,
6. Preparing for publication and disseminating research reports, and
7. Promoting the application of research results.

Selection of Research

Formulating the research program by identifying the highest priority projects to be researched is the responsibility of the TOPS

Committee. Projects selected for research will be based on candidate research problem statements submitted to the TOPS Committee for evaluation. As part of the evaluation, the TOPS Committee will define funding levels and expected products.

Research problem statements for TCRP will be solicited periodically but may be submitted to TRB by anyone at any time.

Selection of Research Contractors

The process for selecting TCRP researchers has been used by TRB in managing cooperative research programs for more than 30 years. This open process allows all potential research agencies to compete on the basis of technical merit, and ensures that all proposers are treated fairly and that the program has access to the best talent available for each project.

Proposals from prospective research contractors will be evaluated by well-balanced and broadly based project panels composed of experts from throughout the transit industry and others knowledgeable in the problem area. The evaluation will consider (a) the proposer's demonstrated understanding of the problem, (b) the merits of the proposed research plan, (c) the probability of success in meeting the project's objectives, (d) the qualifications and experience of the investigators, and (e)



Signing of memorandum and creation of Transit Cooperative Research Program. From left: Thomas Deen, TRB Executive Director; Frank Press, President, National Academy of Sciences; Andrew Card, Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation; Brian Clymer, Administrator, Federal Transit Administration; William Millar, Director, Port Authority of Allegheny County; and Jack Gilstrap, Executive Vice President, American Public Transit Association.

the adequacy of the research agency's facilities.

Funding

TCRP funding is derived from a formula-based drawdown from federal appropriations for transit. Up to \$88 million was authorized by ISTEA through fiscal year 1997. Some \$8.92 million has been appropriated for TCRP in fiscal year 1992.

Products

Primary emphasis is placed on disseminating TCRP results to the intended end users of the research: transit agencies, service providers, and suppliers. APTA will play a key role in both conventional and innovative means of making research information available and will make maximum use of its committee structure. TCRP will provide an ongoing series of research reports to transit operators, local agencies, FTA, and other interested parties, and APTA will arrange for workshops, training aids, field visits, and other activities to ensure that results are implemented by transit industry practitioners.

Status

Project panels, responsible for the first program of TCRP research projects, will solicit proposals during the fall and winter of 1992; following review of proposals and selection of contractors, some projects should be in progress by the end of 1992.

More information on TCRP may be obtained by writing to Program Officer, Transit Cooperative Research Program, Transportation Research Board, 2101 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20418.

Transit Cooperative Research Program Projects Selected for Funding by TOPS Committee

Fare Structures and Collection Technology	Standard Wheelchair Restraint System for Transit Vehicles
Service and Delivery Systems for Rural Public Transportation	Applicability of Low Floor Light Rail Vehicles in North America
Aids for Car Side Door Observation	Reliability-Based Procedures for Maintenance of Transit Vehicles
Transit Operations for Disabled Passengers	Fitness-for-Duty Testing in the Transit Workplace (Phase I)
Transit Consumer Market Research	Innovative Labor-Management Practices
Demand Forecasting for Rural Transit	Total Quality Management
Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Effectiveness	Transit Planning and Urban Form
Valuing Transit Intangibles	International Transit Outreach—Learning from Abroad

Project statements inviting proposals for research on these projects are scheduled to be issued during fall 1992. Prospective proposers may be added to the mailing list by writing to Program Officer, Transit Cooperative Research Program, Transportation Research Board, 2101 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20418.