

TRB Completes Nationwide Inquiry on Transportation Data Needs

The inquiry phase of TRB's special project on transportation data needs and flows was conducted during April-July 1980. In early April, 600 questionnaires were transmitted to selected members of the TRB constituency in state and local governments, academic institutions, consulting firms, transportation industries, and other transportation-related businesses and industries. By the end of July, 347 (or 58 percent) of the recipients had returned their responses to items concerning (a) most important and current needs for transportation-related data, (b) methods used to acquire needed data, (c) data sources used and problems encountered, (d) needs for improving data availability and data access, (e) needs for changes in data-collection and data-provision responsibilities, (f) data collection and data provision by respondent's organization, (g) alternatives for uniform definitions for data, (h) alternatives for data-collection mechanisms, (i) alternatives for expanding the census of transportation, and alternatives for the assessment, centralization, and financing of data programs.

In addition to the questionnaires, 41 in-depth interviews were held with selected respondents, who thus had the opportunity to elaborate and extend their questionnaire responses.

At the June meeting of the project Steering Committee (see photo), Chairman Alan E. Pisarski appointed subcommittees to study and report in three areas of the inquiry: (a) data needs, practices, and problems; (b) improvement of access and flows; and (c) innovations for data quality and data programs. The chairmen of the three subcommittees are T. H. May, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation; Carlton C. Robinson, Highway Users Federation for Safety and Mobility; and F. A.

Smith, Transportation Association of America, respectively. During August and September, the subcommittees have drafted conclusions and recommendations that are based on the inquiry responses. It is expected that the draft final report will be ready for review and completion during October.

The Steering Committee and staff, including project consultants, have been very pleased with the inquiry's high response rate and the quality of individual responses. Since an average of at least 1 h/respondent was required to give a complete response, it is clear that the total time spent by respondents was a sizeable contribution to the work of this project.

Distributions of respondents and response rates are shown below for the types of organizations

Type of Organization	Number of Respondents	Response Rate (%)
Government agencies		
State agencies	80	72
Regional and local agencies	68	61
Total	148	67
Private organizations		
Academic and research institutions	54	56
Consulting firms	36	56
Transportation industries	64	67
Other transportation-related business and industry	45	37
Total	199	53
Total	347	58

and for their geographic locations

Area	Number of Respondents	Response Rate (%)
Eastern United States (zip codes 01-33)	160	61
Middle United States (zip codes 34-69)	93	54
Western United States (zip codes 70-99)	94	57

Respondents were asked to respond on behalf of their organization units whenever appropriate and to indicate the type of work performed by the units. The resulting distribution of work types shows that nearly one-fourth are engaged in planning activities and that the work of the remaining respondents falls rather evenly into eight additional categories of work.

Type of Work Performed	Number of Respondents	Percentage of All Respondents
Administration, policy, finance	41	12
Economic research, marketing, forecasting	37	11
Planning, programming	83	24
Technology research and development	38	11
Design, construction, manufacturing, maintenance	42	12
Transport operations, shipping	31	9
Education and research	41	12
Safety and other consumer concerns	15	4
Provision of data or information services	19	5

Other responses indicated where the respondents' major data needs fall with respect to transport type, transport range, and transport mode.

Major Concern	Number of Respondents	Percentage of All Respondents
Transport type		
Passenger	104	30
Freight	54	16
Passenger and freight	189	44
Transport range		
Urban	43	12
Intercity (including international)	71	21
Urban and intercity	233	67
Transport mode		
One mode		
Air	20	6
Highway	96	28
Rail	11	3
Two modes		
Air and highway	17	5
Highway and rail	61	18
Other combinations	15	4
Three modes		
Air, highway, rail	44	13
Highway, rail, water	19	5
Other combinations	8	2
Four modes		
All but pipeline	17	5
All but air	12	3
Other combinations	4	1
All five modes	23	7
Single-mode totals		
Air	128	37
Highway	312	90
Rail	196	56
Water	89	26
Pipeline	48	14



It is apparent that every transportation category is well represented and that the preponderance of the respondents have concerns for more than one transport type, range, or mode. For example, although only 6 percent of the respondents are mainly interested in only air transport, 37 percent of all respondents have major concerns for air transport, either alone or in combination with other modes.

The project Steering Committee has expressed its satisfaction with the distribution of respondents among all the classification factors shown in the tables and believes that the collective inputs will lead to a substantial report on transportation data needs and on mechanisms for facilitating data access and flows among the various sections of the user community.

This special project is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Research and Special Programs Administration through its Transportation Systems Center at Cambridge, Massachusetts. Further background details were given in the January-February 1980 issue of *Transportation Research News*.