

Chapter 1

Introduction and Executive Summary

TRB's Committee on Statewide Multimodal Transportation Planning has previously sponsored 5 major conferences on the subject of statewide transportation planning over the past 25 years. The most recent prior conference was held in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, in 1996. This conference examined the state experience with ISTEA-mandated statewide planning requirements and discussed potential changes to the planning requirements in the forthcoming Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) reauthorization.

Following the passage of the ISTEA reauthorization, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), in 1998, the 6th Conference on Refocusing Statewide Transportation Planning for the 21st Century was held from July 21 through 24, 1999, in Girdwood, Alaska. Since TEA-21 kept in place most of the basic statewide planning requirements, the focus of the conference was on the state of the practice of statewide planning and preparing to meet the challenges of the 21st century. More than 90 people attended the conference, with over 30 states represented. The conference brought together a mix of state planning officials, representatives from the federal transportation agencies, and members from the private sector, academia, national organizations, and local planning organizations in an interactive dialog on current and future issues in statewide transportation planning.

CONFERENCE FORMAT

The conference was organized to provide the opportunity to both present papers on the state of the practice on a number of topics related to statewide planning and to then provide an opportunity for the participants to discuss each topic in a workshop setting. Each workshop was asked to identify the critical issues and questions related to each topic and to formulate areas for research over the next 6 years leading to the next federal transportation reauthorization. A reporter was designated to gather the results of the five concurrent workshops on each topic and to present a summary of the issues, questions, and research needs at the end of the conference.

REPORT FORMAT

- Chapter 1 presents the purpose, structure, and format of the conference. An executive summary of the conference is presented here.
- Chapter 2 contains the presentations from the opening session.
- Chapter 3 includes a number of keynote presentations that occurred throughout the conference. These presentations provided the broad challenges to statewide transportation planners for the 21st century. The challenges were presented by several high-ranking federal and state officials, and when grouped together, they represent the challenges from several viewpoints. The

discussion issues raised by the attendees during these presentations also are presented.

- Chapter 4 contains the papers presented on land-use and environmental considerations, discussion topics, and the results of the workshops on this topic.
- Chapters 5 to 8 present information in the same format for:
 - a) performance-based planning, asset management, and management systems (5);
 - b) statewide goods movement and intermodal planning issues (6);
 - c) current trends in transportation planning (7); and
 - d) the changing statewide transportation planning process (8).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The issues, conclusions, and research needs emerging from this sixth Conference on Refocusing Statewide Transportation Planning for the 21st Century reflect the broad agenda for transportation in this country since statewide planning in most departments of transportation (DOT) is encompassing more and more issues and processes. Comparing the agenda and issues from this conference to the previous conference, which was held in 1996, we can see many similarities but also some significant differences.

Policy Agenda for Statewide Planning in the Future

The keynote addresses at both conferences were presented by Gloria Jeff, Deputy Administrator at FHWA and former state planner for the state of Michigan. Jeff provided her “Top 10 Issues” facing statewide planning at each conference (Table 1). Several observations are appropriate.

The first rated issue, the need for leadership from statewide planning in leading change within the DOT, remains the same. The conference dealt with many of the issues that require change within the DOT, including:

- environmental streamlining;
- transportation’s role in smart growth initiatives;
- integrating state planning with systems management and operations;
- involving all stakeholders in the process at all the different levels of planning;
- the globalization of transportation, especially in the freight area;
- changes in demographics and lifestyles that affect transportation; and
- additional areas of concern regarding the equity impacts of transportation programs and projects.

Table 1. Gloria’s Top 10 List

1999	1996
10. Planning will be multimodal and intermodal.	10. Transportation is not alone.
9. This is not your father’s state DOT.	9. All the low-hanging fruit has been picked.
8. Planning will be outcome-driven.	8. Travel growth is good.
7. Partnerships	7. Immigration
6. Technology	6. Integration is a key.
5. The sphere of influence will expand.	5. Equity
4. Changing skills	4. System performance
3. Transportation planning at the statewide level is more than a preconstruction activity.	3. Skill sets
2. Planning will be involved in politics.	2. Politics
1. Leadership in leading change.	1. Proactive leadership

The second rated issue again stayed the same; planning will be involved in politics. Many of the presentations at this conference talked about openly engaging those individuals responsible for making and influencing decisions in the political arena in a dialogue or planning process dealing with the role of transportation in the larger context of land use, economic development, and social equity. The results reported at the conference revealed several instances where state, local, and private sector stakeholders became aware of the transportation issues and actually recognized the importance of state transportation systems. In some cases this resulted in set-asides for statewide projects.

The need for changing skill sets and for training not only DOT employees but also employees of other agencies whose actions affect transportation projects is still listed as a top priority by Jeff and was reinforced throughout the conference, particularly as recommendations coming out of the various workshop sessions.

The other issues listed were all covered to some degree in the conference.

The conference also heard from heads of several state DOTs, federal agencies, and national organizations. Their issues of concern for statewide planning were remarkably consistent and included:

- environmental streamlining;
- transportation and smart growth;
- globalization impacts on transportation;
- expanding transportation planning into rural areas; and
- changing demographics and life-style impacts on transportation.

The TRB Committee on Statewide Multimodal Transportation Planning, the sponsors of the conference, prepared a paper, “Transportation in the New Millennium: A Look Forward,” . . . put forth the notion that planning is moving from focusing on facilities to dealing with policy issues, system management and preservation, system operations, system performance, customer needs and issues, financial and fiscal constraints, and the role of transportation in broader societal goals such as economy, efficiency, environment, and livability.

So the agenda is set and there is a remarkable consensus on the agenda from both the policy leaders as well as the practitioners.

Context or Baseline for Statewide Planning in 1999

The baseline for statewide planning has moved forward significantly since the last conference. The first years after the ISTEA were a learning experience for both the federal agencies and the states. The federal agencies went from proscriptive regulations to increased flexibility. The states went from meeting federal regulations by producing a round of state plans and State Transportation Improvement Programs (STIP) to a second round of improving on those products in ways that make sense to each individual state. The baseline set at the 1996 conference was

- ISTEA is a good first step.
- Planning is a decision support process.
- The context of planning is important.
- Partnerships are important.
- Private sector role is important.
- Public involvement is useful.
- Focus on systems preservation.
- There is no one best way.

That baseline is still relevant and this conference extended the baseline to include:

- TEA-21 continues the best of ISTEA and provided additional flexibility to the states.
- The context of planning has greatly expanded to include land-use planning coordination, economic development, sustainability, and social equity.

- Partnerships are becoming routine, but the scale of planning has expanded to include rural areas, substate areas, multistate initiatives, international corridors, and multipurpose planning activities such as access to parks and federal lands, etc.
- Public involvement has evolved to methods of determining and dealing with customer or user needs.
- Systems preservation issues have expanded to systems management and operations.
- The consideration of multimodal and intermodal concerns has greatly increased in state DOTs.
- State planning processes are becoming more diverse, recognizing the different conditions in each state.

How well is the current planning process doing regarding this baseline? The conference was fortunate to have a presentation from David Rose, “Improving the Business of Statewide Planning” (Chapter 8). Rose has conducted a number of training courses on statewide planning for FHWA around the country and has been in contact with most of the states’ statewide planning processes. He provides the following report card on the different aspects of statewide planning (Figure 1).

In summary, the baseline has moved forward since 1996, and statewide planning has received a fairly high grade in 1999.

What’s Happening Currently

ISTEA-Inspired Research Is Becoming Available

Following the passage of ISTEA, there was a large number of conferences dealing with many of the new subjects and requirements in ISTEA regarding planning. This was followed by the initiation of a number of research studies through NCHRP, Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP), Urban Transit Research Cooperative (UTRC), and other research programs. Many of these research projects are now being published and results, new tools and techniques, and new data sources are becoming available for statewide planning. The use and implementation of the research results is greatly improving the state of the art of statewide planning.

**Statewide Planning Today
Score Card**

Policy Planning	A– <i>and improving</i>
System Planning	C–
Sub-Area Plans	B+
Corridor Plans	A <i>and improving</i>
Long-Range Programs/Project Lists	B– <i>and improving</i>

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Figure 1

The National Agenda for Transportation Research

Following the passage of TEA-21, a two-stage conference was held, Refocusing Statewide Transportation Planning for the 21st Century. One of the outputs of this conference was the development of the National Agenda for Transportation Research. Currently the agenda contains some 106 research needs statements that were developed during the conference. This agenda is available to all technical committees and research agencies at the federal, state, and local levels for augmentation, refinement, and implementation. Discussions at this conference concluded with the need to carry this agenda several steps further, including:

- Characterizing each research topic into one of four categories:
 1. enabling research;
 2. tools, techniques, and methods;
 3. process; and
 4. implementation.
- Where appropriate, suggest a sequencing of research within a topic.
- Encourage the various TRB committees to review, augment, and modify the research agenda from their viewpoint.
- Create a better mechanism for monitoring current research and for dissemination of the results.

In addition, through the joint efforts of the AASHTO Standing Committee of Planning (SCOP) and the TRB Committee on Statewide Multimodal Transportation Planning, a quick response planning program was established in 1998 with \$500,000 available to do quick response planning research. Five projects were identified in 1998 and an additional program was recently selected for 1999.

Regulations for Implementing TEA-21 Planning Requirements

Regulations for implementing TEA-21 planning requirements have not come out from DOT. However, there has been a continual dialogue with the federal agencies including the dialogue at this statewide planning conference.

New Programs and Processes

The states reported on many new programs and processes currently underway. There was a consensus that the peer review process undertaken by the TRB Committee on Statewide Multimodal Transportation should continue and that the next round should focus on some of the issues raised at this conference.

Current Federal Guidelines

Different from conferences in the past, the focus of the discussions in Alaska was, "It's not the Feds, it's us." There is recognition that the current federal guidelines and the simplification of the planning requirements in TEA-21 clearly place the responsibility for

improving the planning process on the state. The federal agencies continue to provide valuable technical support, but it is currently up to each state to develop a statewide planning process that fits the conditions and culture of that state.

Training and Employee Resources and Skills Are Still a Problem

The ever-increasing agenda for statewide planning continues to point out the need to upgrade the skills and amount of resources available for planning. There is a consensus that current training programs are inadequate and that employees of the future will need additional training, not only in the basics of planning but in the new skills needed to accomplish the new agenda cited previously.

Future Challenges

The future challenges generally follow the agenda of the conference.

Land-Use Considerations in Statewide Planning

There are many different approaches being used in states to consider the impact of land-use development and there are different roles for state DOTs in these efforts. Common among each effort is an increase in the dialogue between transportation agencies, land-use agencies at both the state and local level, and the private sector. There were presentations on the spectrum of approaches and specifics in some states. There are two central questions: how do transportation and land use interact and how can they interact within a planning process? The conference recommended continual peer group reviews on the successes and shortcomings of each effort.

Environmental Integration with the Planning Process

There were several examples presented where the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) considerations have been moved into the planning process and the various resource agencies have become part of the entire project development process. The development of an agreed-upon process with all the permitting agencies with specified time frames and a conflict resolution process was been helpful in developing projects that meet multiple objectives and also reduce overall project development schedules. Sharing staff, loaning staff, and hiring staff in resource agencies has also expedited project review. Peer reviews were also recommended for this issue since there is still some skepticism that early agreements will be honored throughout the process.

Performance-Based Planning

This issue was one of the new challenges raised at the previous conference. In Alaska, participants heard presentations on several attempts to do performance-based planning. The results of ISTEA NCHRP research was viewed as helpful in moving an agency along the path toward performance-based planning. There is still a lot of experimentation on different types of performance measures. The issues continue to be outputs versus

outcomes, multimodal measures and measuring outputs, and outcomes for facilities and programs not under the responsibility of the DOT.

Asset Management in Statewide Planning

The participants heard two presentations on asset management, including the results of a recent AASHTO survey on the state of the practice. This fairly new approach was the subject of considerable discussion. While many embrace the concepts of asset management, there are still others who question the need for a formal asset-management process within the DOT. The expansion of asset management to multimodal issues is still in the very formative stages. This subject is another candidate for peer reviews as the application of asset management principles expands.

Goods Movement and Intermodal Issues

There has been a great deal of progress in dealing with goods movement issues since the last conference. However, the future trends in freight transportation as outlined by several speakers place continual pressure on states to have a better understanding of the rapidly changing dimensions and impacts of freight demand and supply. An example was presented on the impact of a major railroad merger on state transportation planning issues. Conversely, there is still a need for the private sector to understand federal and state policies, programs, and planning procedures. A continual dialogue by all parties continues to be the best practice in most states to at least start efforts in this area. Better freight data and analysis tools continue to be needed. There are examples of the need to focus on global transportation issues under the international corridors efforts.

Safety Issues in Statewide Planning

There is a requirement to consider safety in statewide planning. There were several examples presented where states are beginning to integrate safety considerations at the statewide planning level while some states have continued to develop safety management systems. The systematic evaluation of safety is still developing. New terms such as *inherent safety*, *sustainable safety*, and *safety conscious planning* are on the planning horizon. Planners must recognize that safety considerations are important in the planning process.

Planning at Many Different Levels

Planning in rural areas, integration with metropolitan planning organizations, substate planning in non-MPO areas, tribal nation planning, multistate planning, international border and corridor planning, and access to parks and public lands were mentioned as different levels or contexts of statewide planning programs. The integration and coordination of these various efforts were of concern to the participants and presents a future challenge. All these types of planning efforts are expected to continue and, in fact, increase. There were examples presented on how states have successfully moved into some of these areas and how the activities are integrated. The creation of real

partnerships and an expanded support role for the federal government were recommended.

Integration of Management and Operations into Statewide Planning

This was another issue raised at the previous conference. Progress has been made in framing the issues, identifying the barriers and coordination points, and identifying opportunities for sharing information. There is evidence that there is greater attention to performance service and customers within the state DOTs. However, there are few specific examples of successful integration that were discussed. This continues to be a commonly accepted challenge, but much work remains to be done. Institutional issues continue to be the toughest to reconcile. Getting senior staff involved and committed is a key step. The inability to measure the impact of systems operations and management strategies also is seen as an impediment.

Incorporating Environmental Justice and Related Issues into Statewide Planning

This is another work in progress. The definitions and requirements, while several years old, are now just starting to be understood and appreciated by the planning community. There are several test cases regarding environmental justice that will be closely monitored. A significant research agenda has been suggested in this area.

Technical Issues in Statewide Planning

A separate conference, Statewide Demand Forecasting Models, was held in December 1998. There is renewed interest in this topic. Technical issues were broken down into three categories: technical process improvements, data issues, and resources and tools for communications. Within each category, a number of specific issues were identified and current practices were presented. Again training needs were emphasized.

In addition to the issues and challenges that were on the agenda, there were several crosscutting, or additional, issues that emerged from the conference.

Organization Implications for State DOTs

On Jeff's Top 10 List was "This is not your father's state DOT." The organizational implications of implementing the new challenges identified at the conference are not well understood or even identified at this time. AASHTO recently has completed a study called the Changing State DOT (1998). Changes that are customer-driven, partner-driven, workforce-driven, and activity-driven were identified. There were several features of the 21st-century DOT that were postulated, many resulting from challenges presented at this conference. If statewide planning is going to accept the challenge of "leadership in leading change," consideration of organizational change must be on the agenda.

Institutional Issues

The trends mentioned at this and many other conferences is for increased integration of activities, including all stakeholders, sharing of information, multimodal and intermodal

considerations, planning at many different levels, etc. Again at most conferences, we hear that the technical issues are really not the issues but that it is the institutional issues that are creating the problems. Yet with the exception of only a few states, the responsibilities for transportation are as fragmented as before ISTEA. Institutional issues need to be at or near the top of the planning agenda for the next century.

Staying on Top of the Changing Technology

Changes in technology will change the nature of transportation as well as the potential solutions to transportation problems. Technology was mentioned in almost every presentation and every workshop. The effects of technological innovation is very evident in the movement of freight. There is no one place where there exists agreed-upon estimates of the impacts of technology on transportation demand that can be used in transportation planning. Some information is now coming out on ways to measure the transportation impact of transportation technology projects.

Measuring the Impact of Changing Demographics

In almost every session there was mention of the changing demographics that will affect transportation demand, including immigration trends, aging of the population, leisure travel, and temporal distribution. Again, there is no single source available to provide transportation planners with guidance on how to measure these impacts and integrate the results into the various statewide planning activities.