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Transformational Technologies in Transportation

Impacts on Traditional Research Processes and Programs

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TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH CIRCULAR E-C253

Transformational Technologies in Transportation

Impacts on Traditional Research Processes and Programs

Report from Workshop 3 Forum on Preparing for Automated Vehicles and Shared Mobility May 3, 2019

> Mark R. Norman *Rapporteur*

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Preface

In an era of rapidly evolving transformational technologies, can our research projects and processes provide needed answers in a timely manner while still protecting the credibility of our research, and if so, how? That is the basic question that was the focus of this TRB Forum workshop and earlier discussion groups conducted by the TRB Standing Committee on the Conduct of Research.

The National Academies–TRB Forum on Preparing for Automated Vehicles and Shared Mobility was officially launched in early 2018 to facilitate evidence-based research needed to deploy these technologies in a manner and timeframe that informs policy to meet these long-term goals. The Forum has held six meetings since then, promoting discussion among its members and the public, creating white papers, developing research priority lists, and engaging in workshops dedicated to specific questions around automated vehicles and shared mobility. This paper was developed as a summary of one such workshop held for this Forum. Mark Norman authored the paper, and it was reviewed by the following Forum members: Abbas Mohaddes, Ed Seymour, Susan Shaheen, Tammy Trimble, and David Yang.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The views expressed in this e-circular do not necessarily represent the views of all Forum participants or members; the Transportation Research Board; or the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. This e-circular has not been subjected to the formal TRB peer review process.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Hau Hagedorn	TRB Conduct of Research Committee
Katherine Kortum	Transportation Research Board
Catherine McGhee	Virginia Department of Transportation
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Mark Norman (Co-lead)	Transportation Research Board
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Susan Shaheen	University of California, Berkeley
Susan Sillick	TRB Conduct of Research Committee
Tammy Trimble	Virginia Tech Transportation Institute
Prachi Vakharia	TRB Subcommittee on Emerging Ridesharing Solutions
David Yang	AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

A small volunteer group of Forum members and TRB staff planned and organized the miniworkshop described in this report. Members of this working group are listed below.

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Summary of Key Takeaways

Key takeaways from participants' discussions and panelist members' presentations at the workshop, and also from the preceding discussion groups conducted through TRB's Standing Committee on the Conduct of Research on this topic, include the following.

- Automated vehicles, shared mobility, and other transformational technologies in transportation provide a unique opportunity to make significant advances in meeting societal goals.
- Success is far from assured—we have more questions than answers. Research is the key.
- Time is short, as these technologies and deployments are advancing, and often changing, rapidly.
- The "need for speed" in the associated research depends on the issue and/or situation.
- Answering a series of questions can help researchers to determine a targeted time frame appropriate for the specific research in question.
- Options do exist to enable our research projects and processes to provide needed answers in a timely manner while still protecting the credibility of our research.
- A number of these options have been employed by others, but more models are needed.
- Collaboration among the public, private, and academic sectors is key to meeting the twin objectives of providing needed answers in a timely manner while still protecting the credibility of our research.
- There are a number of steps that TRB can take, including providing more opportunities for collaboration among the stakeholders through TRB convening activities such as this Forum, conferences, standing committees, and research panels.

Why Is This Important?

Abbas Mohaddes, Econolite/CAVita, posed the following guiding question in his opening remarks: In an era of rapidly evolving transformational technologies, can our research projects and processes provide needed answers in a timely manner while still protecting the credibility of our research, and if so, how? That is the basic question that was the focus of this TRB Forum workshop and earlier discussion groups conducted by the TRB Standing Committee on the Conduct of Research. Mohaddes' comments are as follows.

In recent years, the public has become less confident in the ability of our institutions, processes, and leaders to achieve broad societal goals. Numerous polls show that many are frustrated with continuing gridlock in Washington, D.C., and also at the state and local levels. They are tired of small scale steps being taken to address large scale problems, and have become more cynical regarding politicians' claims that they have the solutions to these problems. At the same time, voters have rebelled against revenue increases, complaining that their current tax dollars are just being wasted. Many believe that things are getting worse, longing for a time when we took bold actions to make things better.

The transportation profession is caught in this vortex. Our problems are not unique in this regard. We are operating in the same skeptical environment as other public policy issues— education, economic development, health care, immigration, safety, security, and others. Many think that bold new directions will therefore be needed to capture the public's imagination and rekindle their hopes.

For the transportation profession, there is good news. Unlike other policy issues, we have the foundations for moving in bold new directions. Policy makers and the public are enamored with the prospects of connected/automated vehicles, shared mobility, and other transformational technologies. Legislation is being considered in Washington. The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) is issuing guidance on testing and deployment, and states are passing laws and regulations on when and where these technologies can be tested and operated. Numerous cities competed for USDOT Smart City grants. Every day, the media runs stories about "driverless cars." Everyone seems to be talking about these new technologies and services.

So the first step has apparently been accomplished—capturing the imagination of the public and policy makers. However, success is far from assured. Predictions of positive and negative outcomes currently cover a broad spectrum. For example, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) 2017 report on "The Transforming Mobility Ecosystem"¹ offers the following range of outcomes.

- A combination of automated vehicles, shared mobility systems, and electric/zero emission vehicles can reduce energy consumption and related emissions by 60% over the next 30 years.
- Conversely, a combination of automated vehicles, zero-occupancy vehicles, increased vehicle miles traveled (VMT), access for new user groups, and continued reliance on fossil fuels could increase energy consumption and related emissions by up to 200%.

The goal for the transportation profession therefore is to proactively identify and pursue policies that will push the needle to outcomes that are positive. However, these technologies and deployments are advancing, and often changing, rapidly. The recent replacement of new dockless bike services with even newer e-scooters in urban areas over a one-year period is a prime example.

There are obviously more questions than answers at this point. Providing answers through evidence-based research is therefore more important than ever.

Ensuring Quality Science *Getting It First Versus Getting It Right*

Susan Shaheen, University of California, Berkeley, stressed the need for ensuring quality science. This was followed by a discussion among workshop participants regarding the trade-offs between quality and speed. The following points were made during the discussion.

We are at a key juncture. The private sector is investing billions of dollars in research to facilitate the deployment of these technologies. Just as these technologies are disrupting transportation, they may also disrupt the research processes traditionally followed by the public sector and academia.

Some have paraphrased the issue as "getting it first versus getting it right." While these are not always the same, they are also not mutually exclusive. Following traditional research processes, including research transparency and stating assumptions and limitations of the analysis, has helped to ensure quality science over many years. At the same time, research results are often not made available until after the need has passed, the policy decisions have been made, and those responsible for making policy have moved on.

During the discussion, workshop participants emphasized that the "need for speed" depends on the situation. For each research question or situation, individual participants listed the following considerations to help researchers address the question of achieving the right balance.

- What is the ultimate objective of the research?
- What is the urgency?
- What is acceptable risk?
- How much evidence will we need to move forward?
- What are the barriers?
- Can we provide transparency and balance stakeholder influence?
- Can we ensure that the research results are objective, without necessarily being neutral?

Another point made during the discussions was that traditional research processes can too often rely on one set time frame for most research projects. Answering the above questions can help researchers to determine a targeted time frame appropriate for the specific research in question. Once that is determined, the applicable research process can be designed and implemented.

Pursuing New Approaches to Our Traditional Research Processes

The typical life cycle for a research project is shown in Figure 1. The checklist that follows offers options to help research organizations and researchers in producing results that are timely while still protecting quality science. Tammy Trimble from Virginia Tech Transportation Institute presented a list generated from individuals who participated in a series of discussion groups organized by the TRB Standing Committee on the Conduct of Research. The list shown below incorporates additional suggestions from participants at the workshop.

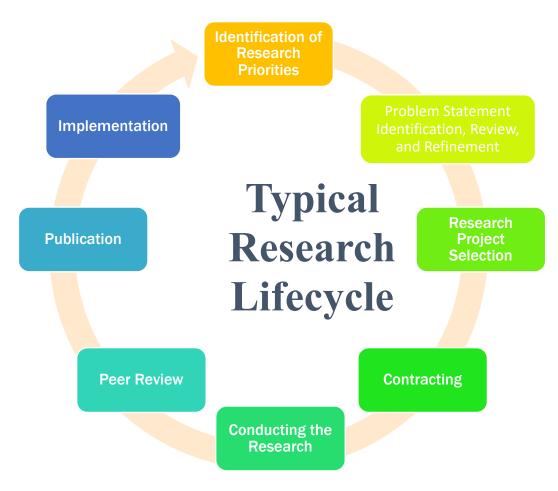


FIGURE 1 Typical research life cycle.

GENERAL RESEARCH PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

- Continuously build and nurture leadership support.
- Look for, and take advantage of, any and all opportunities to reduce administrative burdens.
- Test rapid response models used by others (e.g., National Science Foundation²).

IDENTIFICATION OF RESEARCH PRIORITIES

- Develop and rely on dynamic research roadmaps to establish priorities and to generate individual problem statements.
- Rely on scenario planning to consider emerging needs.
- Employ continuous calls for proposals.
- Seek approaches that will result in a process that is more continuous and more visible, e.g., a research needs dashboard.
- Seek input from stakeholders and the public to understand what is needed in the "real world."

• Prepare meta-analyses of research done on a policy topic to date, targeted to specific audiences.

PROBLEM STATEMENT IDENTIFICATION, REVIEW, AND REFINEMENT

- Pursue strategic level research—focusing more on broader research program areas rather than just on individual discrete projects.
- Align the need for more applied research (e.g., in smaller states) with desired objectives and outcomes.
- Clearly define the objective of the research at the outset of each project.
- Break research questions into smaller pieces or phases.

RESEARCH PROJECT SELECTION

- Prioritize and select individual discrete projects from broader program areas or roadmaps.
- Balance larger, complex projects with other smaller, shorter time frame projects.

CONTRACTING

- Prepare Requests-for-Proposals (RFPs) that focus more on the outcomes rather than on prescribed, specific research processes.
- Consider relying on Requests-for-Qualifications (RFQs) as opposed to RFPs.
- Prequalify contractors in defined subject areas.
- Employ indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity contracts.
- Award projects with shorter phases.

CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH

- Accomplish tasks in parallel rather than in series, and bring together at the end.
- Enhance the flexibility of the researchers and the staff to achieve the desired outcomes.
- Use interim reporting periods to determine if directional changes are needed.
- Enforce deadlines.
- Avoid scope creep.

PEER REVIEW

- Create and maintain a standing pool(s) of peer reviewers.
- Peer review phases of the research as they are completed, rather than waiting until the end of the project to review all at once.

PUBLICATION

• Release phased results of the research as they are completed.

- Release interim results and/or pre-publication findings in advance of final editing.
- Work closely with public affairs and communications experts to package the findings for specific audiences.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Include technology transfer as an integral part of the research project life cycle.
- Take advantage of scheduled field tests and demonstrations when scheduling and designing research projects.
- Use pilot projects to test "laboratory" results.
- Identify and involve a community of stakeholders and partners to deploy the results.

Fostering Collaboration Among the Public, Private, and Academic Sectors

Individual workshop panelists repeatedly stressed during the Forum workshop that collaboration among the public, private, and academic research sectors is key to meeting the twin objectives of providing needed answers in a timely manner while still protecting the credibility of our research. The potential action items that were listed along these lines by panelists include the following.

- Take steps to strengthen our research partnerships among private, public, and academia, and supplement with significant input from the end user—the public:
 - Identify common goals, such as improving safety or alleviating congestion;
 - Involve the public and stakeholders in an advisory role to help define the purpose of the research;
 - Form advisory groups and bring them together frequently;
 - Form non-traditional partnerships for collaborative research (e.g., public sector and industry);
 - Pursue collaboration through tools such as pooled fund studies and shared research roadmaps; and
 - Enlist a community of stakeholders and partners who are ready to deploy the research results.
- Use this opportunity to work with universities to attract the best and brightest into the transportation profession.
- Address the misperception on the level of "duplication" of transportation research. Note that in transportation there are often not enough resources to validate earlier research.
- Reduce competition among researchers that can result in barriers to sharing early results:
 - Encourage academics and public sector researchers to share their results as widely as possible;
 - Form collaborations with private sector stakeholders and partners early on to achieve common goals;
 - Use confidentiality agreements to facilitate the sharing of data; and

- Pursue complementary research among and across sectors to validate and fill gaps from earlier research.
- Communicate accurate research results with the media and general public:
 - Work closely with public affairs and communications experts;
 - Package evidence-based research information targeted to specific audiences; and
 - Ensure communications experts' messages are accurate.
- Foster collaboration between state DOT research offices and other state DOT divisions:
 - Build and/or enhance relationships between the research office and other divisions to facilitate the sharing of ongoing and completed research efforts across the agency;
 - Facilitate pathways for state DOT research offices to work with other DOT divisions to identify and address emerging issues on an ongoing basis;
 - Engage divisions DOT-wide to prepare for the implementation of research results; and
 - Inspire all state DOT research offices with a sense of responsibility for policy research.

What Can TRB Do?

Hau Hagedorn, Portland State University and Chair of the TRB Conduct of Research Committee, presented a number of potential action items, which were supplemented by individual Forum workshop panelists. The resulting list of potential action items for consideration by TRB is shown below.

- Test some of the new approaches to traditional research processes listed above.
- Provide more opportunities for collaboration among the stakeholders through TRB convening activities such as this Forum, conferences, standing committees, and research panels.
- Continue conducting the research and disseminating the results of NCHRP Project 20-102, "Impacts of Connected Vehicles and Automated Vehicles on State and Local Transportation Agencies."
 - This series of research projects is employing pre-qualified research teams, a research roadmap, and pre-publication dissemination of some research results.
- Consider what options exist for pursuing a strategic research program in these areas.
 - More dedicated funding may be needed to address these issues, especially public policy issues.
- Provide a clearinghouse of information linked to a research roadmap for automated vehicles and shared mobility.
- Solicit input from the TRB Standing Committee on the Conduct of Research on additional steps that can be taken by TRB to address the issues raised above.

Appendix A Workshop Agenda

Forum Workshop 3

Impacts on Research Processes and Programs

Friday, May 3, 2019 12:15 p.m.–1:45 p.m.

- Welcome and Introduction (Abbas Mohaddes, Econolite/CAVita)
- Transformational Technologies: Can Our Research Processes Keep Up? (Tammy Trimble, Virginia Tech Transportation Institute)
- The Value of Quality Science (Susan Shaheen, University of California, Berkeley)
- Research Best Practices: Resources Available from TRB and Conduct of Research Committee (Hau Hagedorn, Portland State University and Chair of the TRB Conduct of Research Committee)
- Presenter Q&A
- Panel Discussion
 - Panelists: Abbas Mohaddes (Moderator), Cathy McGhee (Virginia DOT), David Yang (AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety), Sue Sillick (Montana DOT, and TRB Conduct of Research Committee), Chandra Bhat (The University of Texas at Austin), Jim Sayer (University of Michigan)
- Closing and Next Steps (Abbas Mohaddes)

Appendix B Forum Participants

TRB Forum on Preparing for Automated Vehicles and Shared Mobility May 3, 2019

FORUM MEMBERS

Paul Ajegba Director Michigan DOT

David Anderson Program Manager Energy Efficient Mobility Systems U.S. Department of Energy

James Barna Assistant Director Transportation Policy Ohio DOT

Steve Bayless Vice President Regulatory Affairs and Public Policy Intelligent Transportation Society of America

Chandra Bhat Director for Center of Transportation Research The University of Texas at Austin

Daniel Blais Senior Analyst Innovation Centre Transport Canada

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Annie Chang Project Manager, Technical Programs Global Ground Vehicle Standards SAE International

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Miriam Chaum Head of Public Policy Self-Driving Cars Uber Steven Dellenback Vice President Intelligent Systems Division Southwest Research Institute Kevin Dopart Program Manager Vehicle Safety and Automation U.S. DOT: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology King Gee Director of Engineering and Technical Services American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials Reema Griffith Executive Director Washington State Transportation Commission Art Guzzetti Vice President for Policy American Public Transportation Association Robert Hazlett Senior Engineering Manager Maricopa Association of Governments Larry Head Acting Dean College of Engineering University of Arizona Patricia Hendren **Executive Director** I-95 Corridor Coalition Roger Huff President HGLC, LLC

George Ivanov Manager Policy Development and Regulatory Affairs Waymo

Gregory Krueger Program Director for Emerging Technologies in Transportation HNTB

Jane Lappin Director of Government Affairs and Public Policy Toyota Research Institute

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Catherine McGhee Director Virginia Transportation Research Council

Abbas Mohaddes President Econolite/CAVita

Jessica Nigro General Manager and Head of Technology and Innovation Policy Daimler North American Corporation

Timothy Papandreou Founder Emerging Transport Advisors

Faisal Saleem ITS Branch Manager and SMART Drive Program Manager Maricopa DOT

Jim Sayer Director University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute

Scott Schmidt Manager of Vehicle Safety Regulations Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers

Carol Schweiger President Schweiger Consulting Ed Seymour Executive Associate Agency Director Texas A&M Transportation Institute Susan Shaheen Adjunct Professor and Co-Director, TSRC University of California, Berkeley Steven Shladover Program Manager Mobility at California PATH Institute of Transportation Studies University of California, Berkeley Scott Shogan Vice President WSP USA Bryant Walker Smith Assistant Professor School of Law University of South Carolina Patrick Smith New Mobility Policy Analyst New York City DOT Bernard Soriano **Deputy Director** California Department of Motor Vehicles **Daniel Sperling** Professor Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering University of California, Davis Prachi Vakharia Affiliate Steer Greg Winfree Director Texas A&M Transportation Institute David Yang **Executive Director** AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety Lawrence Yermack Strategic Advisor Cubic Transportation Systems Inc.

Notes

- The Transforming Mobility Ecosystem: Enabling an Energy-Efficient Future; U.S. Department of Energy, January 2017. https://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2017/01/f34/The%20Transforming%20Mobility%20Ecosystem %20Report.pdf.
- 2. National Science Foundation Grants for Rapid Response Research (RAPID). https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf09_1/gpg_2.jsp#IID1.

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