

MINUTES

Transportation Planning for Small and Medium Sized Communities Subcommittee ADA30(1)

Sunday, January 9, 2005, 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM
Washington, DC

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jerry Schutz, Chair
Stacey Bricka, Secretary
Michael Anderson
Jerry Everett
Jerry Faris
Jon Fricker
Paul Hershkowitz
Vicky McLane
Ron Poole
Thomas Schwetz
A. T. Stoddard
Montie Wade

BTC, WA
NuStats, TX
University of Alabama
University of Tennessee
Transportation Support Group, FL
Purdue University, IN
Wilbur Smith Associates, MI
North Front Range MPO, CO
North Carolina DOT (retired)
Lane Council of Governments, OR
LSC Transportation Consulting, CO
Texas Transportation Institute

FRIENDS PRESENT:

Katheryn Briscoe
Arun Chatterjee
Liz Fischer
Jeff Moore
Dan Pike

Minnesota DOT (retired)
University of Tennessee
FHWA
Kentucky Transportation Cabinet
Skagit Council of Governments

AGENDA:

Attachment 1

(Minutes are not necessarily in the sequence in which items were considered)

Note: This was Montie's last meeting as Chair of the Conference Subcommittee.
THANK YOU Montie for the many years of guidance and support!!!
We look forward to your continued role as an Emeritus Member of the Committee
and welcome Libby Rushley as incoming subcommittee chair.

1. Introductions

Montie Wade opened the meeting and attendees introduced themselves.

2. Colorado Springs Conference – Logistical Wrap-Up

a. **Attendance.** **AT Stoddard** indicated that final attendance at the national conference was 211 persons. Distributions by geography and affiliation are shown in Attachments 2 and 3. As noted on the map in Attachment 2, attendance from surrounding states was not as strong as for prior conferences. One reason is that the surrounding states do not have as many smaller MPOs, are larger in size and more sparsely populated than states surrounding Ohio or Arkansas (sites of the two previous conferences). Attendees discussed alternative approaches for 2006 to strengthen participation by states adjacent to Tennessee (although it was noted that current participation levels for the states surrounding Tennessee were high for the 2004 conference). These included:

- Increased involvement by the DOTs, both in terms of attendance as well as helping to communicate the conference opportunity
- Increased involvement by the regional FHWA Division Planning Staff
- Increased targeting by committee members and friends
- Determine how to best identify and target small communities that are not part of an MPO.

b. **Conference Evaluation.** **AT** summarized the conference evaluation form (Attachment 4). A total of 60 conference evaluation forms were turned in (28% response). Overall, the majority (93%) indicated the conference was good, only 4 said “fair”. In terms of length, 89% said it was “just right”, one said it was too long, and two said it was too short. The verbatim comments included:

- Prefer downtown hotel and on a transit route (this was the preference for Colorado Springs as well, but the downtown hotels wouldn’t work with us on hotel rates)
- Having powerpoint presentations available as handouts or on a website before the conference to preview and finalize session choices.

Note: The subcommittee members discussed this issue, and the comment appears to have resulted from inconsistencies between session moderators. The group decided AGAINST including the powerpoint presentations in advance in the notebooks (but to continue with the abstracts in the notebooks).

→ For the 2006 conference, moderators need to consistently encourage the presenters to bring 25-50 copies of the powerpoint presentations for distribution at the sessions. This needs to be added to the moderator checklist.

- Desired better weather or climate control in the rooms (too hot or too cold)
- Desired more vendors
- Wanted to hear more from the Federal Agencies (more presentations)

c. **Budget.** **AT** distributed the conference budget as of this week. On that report, expenses are showing higher than income right now due to the length of time it takes for the Colorado DOT to reimburse the committee for expenses. It is expected that we will break-even on this conference, perhaps net about \$2,000. It was also noted that two

honorarium would be paid through TRB since there were funds left in that account. **AT** noted the following differences between budgeted and actual:

- Honoraria – 44 were budgeted, 31 paid
- Keynote Speaker expenses were not originally budgeted, but the conference covered that person's travel expenses.
- Food – the food expenses were slightly lower than budgeted due to the difference between original attendance estimates (225) and actual (211)
- Printing came in much higher than planned but was paid out of in-kind contributions.

The group discussed how the shift in having a state DOT as a primary sponsor to more of a supporting sponsor has resulting in the need to change how we budget for conferences. In the past, the sponsoring DOT picked up more of the budget. Now, we're having to cover more costs out of the registration fees. This shift, which began with the Little Rock conference and has continued since that time, may require us to increase the registration fee for the Nashville conference. This will become clearer as **Jerry E.** works to finalize the 2006 budget in the next two months.

- ➔ **Kathy Briscoe** has the budgets for all conferences to date and will prepare a summary spreadsheet showing historical expenses and incomes.
- ➔ **Liz Fischer, Jerry Schutz, and Jerry Everett** will have a teleconference to discuss the timing of an official request for funds in terms of the federal budget process as well as the conference cash flow.

d. Proceedings. **Paul Hershkowitz** is finishing up the formatting and conversion of all papers to PDF format. He will send those to AT by **January 17, 2005**, so that AT can burn the CDs. The mailers and labels are ready, so the proceedings can be mailed by **early February**.

e. Other. The issue of whether to use a notebook or some thinner binder was discussed. All agreed that the information within the notebook was invaluable, particularly the ability to review abstracts in advance and other conference details. However, the current size of the 3-ring binder is bulky and hard to bring home after the conference.

- ➔ For the 2006 conference, the conference notebook details will be prepared in double-sided format (to the extent possible) so that slimmer notebooks could be used.

f. Concluding Thoughts from the Conference Debrief.

- Budget better
- Work adjacent states better – the committee needs to be more pro-active and not rely on mass mailings to attract attendees.
- Plan to use the registration information at 4-7 days prior to the start of the conference to inform several key decisions and help workshop coordinators.
- Track the actual meal count during the conference to help plan for the next conference.
- Try to plan the conference with other regional meetings to help encourage attendance.

3. Colorado Springs Conference – Technical Wrap-Up

a. **Session Evaluations.** **Paul Hershkowitz** indicated that all session moderators were provided their session evaluation forms at the conclusion of the conference.

→ **Moderators** are asked to summarize their session using the evaluation forms or their general thoughts/notes (including comments on speakers) and provide those to **Paul**.

b. **Final Papers.** We have 35 papers plus a summary of the MPO workshop held Wednesday am written by Liz Fischer. A summary of all speakers by session was provided by Paul and is included as Attachment 5).

c. **Advice for Tennessee.**

- Start early
- Follow the established procedures and schedule
- Form a steering committee early and hold regularly scheduled teleconferences
- Set firm dates, particularly when forming sessions, to avoid headaches later on
- Modify the moderator checklist to include the provision of session summaries to the technical chair.
- Stick to the deadlines on the schedule.

→ **Mike Anderson** will modify the author's agreement to let authors know that we do select "champion presentations" and ask those authors to present again at the 2007 Annual TRB Meeting. The form should also ask authors to indicate whether they are available to present if selected, with yes, no, and "not sure" response categories.

→ For all communications with authors and presenters, **Mike Anderson** should modify the forms to only reference his name. The current form includes both technical chair and moderator, and this caused some confusion and mis-communications.

The committee recognized AT and Paul with plaques, in appreciation for all their hard work and effort in making the Colorado Springs Conference a success!

4. 2006 Conference – Logistics

a. **Location, Hotel, and Dates.** **Jerry Everett** provided the committee with promotional details for Nashville, Tennessee. In addition, he confirmed that the Tennessee DOT Commissioner has formally notified **Jerry Schutz** of the DOT's commitment to sponsor the conference and requesting that Nashville be the conference site.

Given that request, Jerry E. has been scouting out the downtown Nashville hotels in order to identify a suitable location. Using the checklist from the committee's procedures manual, he has been focusing on meeting space, room prices, and availability for dates in mid to late September. He narrowed down the list significantly just on room price alone (which eliminated the Grand Old Opry Hotel). The best hotel in terms of location, price, and availability, as well as other amenities, was the Downtown Sheraton.

The Downtown Sheraton proposed September 13-15 or 20-22, 2006 as available dates for the conference. Given the federal funding cycles, as well as the TRB annual meeting deadlines, the earlier dates seemed to work better for the group.

- ➔ **Montie** nominated **Jerry Faris** to assist **Jerry E.** and **Arun** with hotel negotiations. **Jerry S.** will help as well.
- ➔ **AT** will send **Jerry E.** the hotel contract from the Doubletree in Colorado Springs. This will help with determining how many rooms to guarantee and other contract details.
- ➔ **Tom Schwetz** will be included in meetings and on teleconferences regarding the hotel contracting process, to help when he organizes the 2008 conference logistics.

VOTE: Jerry E. recommended, and the committee unanimously agreed to hold the conference in Nashville, for Jerry E. to pursue a contract with the Downtown Sheraton, and for the conference dates to be September 13 – 15, 2006.

- b. **Conference Fiscal Agent.** Options for this conference include the committee (opening a checking account for Jerry E. to manage funds from), using the University of Tennessee services, or using the contracts and purchasing division of the DOT. The DOT has agreed to facilitate the processing of federal funds, but felt that their purchasing system and processes were not conducive to accommodate the financial aspects necessary to run the conference. Specifically, they felt that their purchasing system was too cumbersome to process a conference-type account. The University of Tennessee can handle the registrations, but it was unclear whether UT would charge an administrative fee for these services.
 - ➔ By January 22, 2005, **Jerry S.** will submit an official letter to FHWA, requesting funding for the 2006 conference.
 - ➔ **Jerry E.** will talk with his DOT planning contact and obtain the name of the contracting person assigned to handle the conference details. He will also discuss the issue of overhead charges with UT officials to determine whether these could be waived.
 - ➔ **Jerry E., Arun, Jerry F., AT, Jerry S., Tom, Liz Fischer, Libby, and Montie** will meet to discuss and resolve the financial and contracting issues.
 - ➔ Depending on the fiscal agent, **Jerry E.** will determine if social security numbers are required to provide honorariums to paper authors. If so, **Mike** will modify the author's agreement accordingly.
- c. **Budget.** **Jerry E.** has not yet started a budget for this conference. Key budget assumptions will be the number of attendees and the number of mailings.
 - ➔ **Jerry E.** will draft a budget, using details from Cincinnati and Colorado Springs as well as costs from the Downtown Sheraton, and send this to **Libby** by **late February/early March**. He will present the budget, with supporting documentation, to the committee at the summer meeting.
 - ➔ **The Conference Steering Committee** will begin regular teleconferences in March 2005.

- d. **Opportunities for Combining this Meeting with Other Agency Events.** The MPOs in Tennessee do not meet on a regular basis. However, when Jerry E. discussed the idea of a joint meeting in tandem with this conference, the idea was well received.
 - e. **Vendors.** As with Colorado Springs, the group agreed that we should provide space for vendors and government agencies to have booths at the Nashville conference. Potential lists include all vendors at the TRB annual meeting as well as those on the TDOT vendor lists.
- **Vicky McLane** volunteered to serve as vendor coordinator again.

5. Conference in General

- a. **Schedule.** Attachment 6 is the schedule of events necessary for a successful conference in Nashville. These dates and activities were reviewed and discussed by the committee, and that schedule was accepted unanimously.
 - b. **Technical Chair.** **Michael Anderson** will serve as Technical Chair for the Nashville conference.
 - c. **FHWA support.** **Liz Fischer** and **Effie Stallsmith** will be our main contacts in this area.
 - d. **Conference Sessions.** Using Colorado Springs as a template, **Jerry E.** should plan for two workshops on Wednesday morning (the Census Data Workshop and the MPO Workshop), then four concurrent sessions on Wednesday afternoon, each lasting two hours. Thursday and Friday will have three concurrent sessions lasting 90 minutes each.
- Any committee member or friend desiring to organize a special session or workshop at the 2006 conference must submit an abstract before the conference planning meeting at the January 2005 annual meeting. This abstract should detail the purpose or focus of the session/workshop and indicate potential speakers (who are confirmed as available and willing). In addition, the organizer should plan to write a short summary of the workshop/session for the conference notebook and, if possible, provide a summary of the findings for the conference proceedings.
- **Mike Anderson** will email **AT** and **Stacey** the call for abstracts.
- **AT** will update the mailing list with the returns from the Colorado Springs mailings as well as on-site registrants and provide that to **Tom Schwetz**.
- **Committee Members and Friends** should anticipate a request from Tom Schwetz to help update the mailing list by state.
- **Tom Schwetz** volunteered to ask his graphics people to make recommendations on updating the conference logo. He'll provide his recommendations prior to the summer meeting.

6. 2008 Conference

Tom Schwetz indicated that ODOT has indicated fairly strong support for the 2008 conference. He will ask them to provide **Jerry S.** with a letter of commitment. He will investigate hotel and airfare options and propose a site at the 2005 summer meeting. Eugene, Salem, and Portland are all viable options.

7. Agenda Items for the 2005 TRB Summer Meeting of the Conference Subcommittee

- Final 2004 Conference Budget
- 2006 Conference Budget and supporting documentation
- Proposed Site for 2008 Conference
- Potential Changes to conference logo
- Discussion on whether to put Powerpoint presentations on the conference proceedings CD
- Discussion on whether final paper format should be full-justified.
- Discussion of whether we want to have a database or list of good and bad speakers and moderators, to help when assembling sessions for future conferences.