

2006 MEETING MINUTES

Research Subcommittee ADA30(3) Transportation Planning for Small and Medium Sized Communities

Monday, January 23, 2006, 8:00 to 10:15 AM
Washington DC

ATTENDEES

Michael Anderson, University of Alabama at Huntsville, Subcommittee Chair
Jerry Schutz, Balanced Transportation Concepts, Chair of ADA30
Stacey Bricka, NuStats, Secretary
Jay Witt, COMPASS (Boise, ID)
Jo Laurie Penrose, City of Destin (FL)
Jody McCullough, FHWA Office of Planning
Ming Lee, Utah State University
Ron Poole, NCDOT-retired
Tom Schwetz, Lane Council of Governments (Eugene, OR)

1. Mike Anderson opened the meeting and attendees introduced themselves.
2. Purpose of the Research Subcommittee
To gauge research needs from potential users, identify topics, seek funding venues (NCHRP, TCRP, Synthesis Projects)
 - a. **Jerry S.** recommended that we develop a mission statement and plan. He encouraged those available to attend the Access Management research subcommittee to see how they were organized and functioned, as they have been very successful in getting research needs funded. He also suggested we pursue a list of “best resources” to post on the website.
 - b. **Stacey** asked whether we could leverage the 2006 Nashville conference to identify research needs of small and medium-sized communities. Several action items resulted from this discussion:
 - ➔ As technical chair of the conference, **Mike** will coordinate with the caucus moderators to ensure that research needs are discussed.
 - ➔ **Stacey** will coordinate with **Jerry E.** to have a question regarding research needs placed on the conference evaluation form. This same question can become our standard for the website as well.
 - c. **Tom** recommended that a mission of our research subcommittee should be to ensure that the research being done is accessible to our community. Finance was a starting point. Other topics might include public involvement. The attendees also discussed where to begin – do we focus on research for communities with populations under 50,000, 100,000+, etc.?

3. Research Needs. The representatives of small and medium-sized committees present at the meeting were asked to discuss their research needs.
 - a. **Jo** – As the transportation planner for a small city in Florida, the most pressing research needs are where to find the funding to carry out the needs identified through the planning process and whether there was a better process for regional coordination.

In terms of funding, **Jerry S.** informed the group that the most recent TR News had a spotlight on funding. **Tom** agreed with **Jo** about this being a critical issue and asked if the research question was “Why do we have a shortage of funds?” particularly given the legislative requirements the MPO must carry out.

For the discussion on regional coordination, **Ron** talked about the NC model for regional coordination, particularly with regard to plan implementation. Here the question might be more of what can we do to implement the transportation plans in a coordinated fashion and the group discussed the possibility of this being approached through a “blue ribbon” best practices question, as the political and legislative mandates differ across the US. In addition, **Tom** noted that the underlying issue might be the inability of local governments to generate sustainable sources of funds to build and maintain the infrastructure for which they are responsible. There is a general lack of trust by the citizenry on implementation and transportation is not the only area where this is occurring.

The consensus of the attendees was the funding issues for small and medium-sized communities was often addressed briefly across multiple reports, which meant that for our constituency (with limited funds to purchase all those reports), the research is not reaching them. The group agreed that one potential research statement was to develop a compendium of this research by community size to help reduce this information gap.

- b. **Jay** brought up a new issue. In Boise, they are not a big city but are struggling with identifying the funding for public transportation. The citizens want it, but there is not a critical mass (density) and there are still road problems to address. Here the question is what information is applicable? Portland is too large, Boise is medium-sized so research for the smaller communities doesn’t apply. Compounding this issue is the growth in the region – there is no guidance staff to engage local officials in designing good ordinances. It’s the developers saying their developments are what the public wants vs. the public saying they don’t want the developments.
4. Researching Client Base. How do we determine the needs of small and medium-sized communities? How do we communicate to them relevant research?
 - a. **Ron** – NC DOT, SC DOT, and Texas all have statewide MPO associations. We can communicate through those organizations.
 - b. **Judy** – FHWA has research money for regional MPO conferences. We can use those venues to identify issues. Some MPOs seem to do okay with their current level of funding, for others, they are floundering. These conferences are good opportunities to share ideas.
 - c. **Jerry** suggested an electronic newsletter to small and medium sized MPOs and communities.

- **Judy** will investigate whether this is something that FHWA can support with these funds. She will also look into whether this effort could be linked to the AMPO list serve
- d. **Jo** reminded us that small and medium-sized communities have the same research needs as MPOs, particularly regarding funding and implementation. Tom suggested that the processes for MPOs as identified through the research might be the same for the communities as well (transferable). Also, COGs often serve as planners for smaller non-MPO cities. These groups might help in disseminating information.
5. Generating Research Statements and getting them funded. The group identified the following strategies:
- Review the project selection criteria and mold the statement to fit.
 - Review successful submissions from other committees.
 - Identify and appoint to the research subcommittee members with connections (who stay current with decision-makers and the funding process).
 - Identify a list of research needs and post it on our website. Communicate this information as well to universities with transportation programs (who have master's and PhD students that need research topics for their reports).
6. Next Steps:
- **Jerry S.** will (did) submit a project synthesis proposal that consolidates research as it applies to communities of less than 50,000, 50,000 to <150,000, and 150,000 to 250,000 in population. The focus is on what's been done, hot button issues, pertinent case studies.