

Minutes of RAC II Meeting—August 22, 2012

The RAC Region II conference call centered around planning for next year's AASHTO RAC conference to be hosted in Baton Rouge, LA.

Attendees: James Watkins (MS), Cindy Smith (MS), David Jared (GA), Darryl Dockstader (FL), Terry Swygert (SC), Mike Sanders (SC), Mark Morvant (LA), Joe Crabtree (KY), Elisha Wright-Kehner (AR)

Planning for 2013 summer meeting:

Using the Burlington agenda as baseline, we began discussing whether or not to follow it, in whole or in part. The goal is to have a final program by early March, which Skip Paul had discussed with RAC leadership. We agreed to have a conference call once a month to discuss program. Elisha, Joe, and Michelle are going to work on the program in-depth.

RAC leadership last had a conference call last Thursday, during which they said that the comments on the Burlington, Vermont, conference were positive overall, but we could improve on some things. Camille Crichton-Sumners gave input on what learned from received comments, and David emailed notes to us.

Specifically, the local lunch speaker was not rated very highly. The process for verifying attendance by signing in to obtain professional development hours (PDHs) management did not work well. Some felt that the TRB session could have been more interactive. There were 101 registrants total.

Next we discussed the overall theme and whether we should keep the agenda/program structure similar to what it was before.

Monday Agenda:

David and Mark raised the question of whether RAC101 should remain in the program or be a preliminary session, possibly on the Sunday before. This could cause issues with attendees' travel approval since TRB generally will not pay for Sunday travel. It was noted that 10-15 new attendees generally show up to RAC 101. The possibility of making RAC101 concurrent with RAC/CUTC was raised, but since many of the same people attend RAC/CUTC and facilitate RAC101, the group decided to leave them separate, possibly have RAC/CUTC for two hours, then break into RAC101 and continuation of RAC/CUTC concurrently.

After RAC in Utah, Region I tried to avoid concurrent sessions due to negative feedback. Skip, Amy, Barney, Moy, Chris Hedges, and Jack Jernigan are involved in RAC101 and in leadership. Mark says Skip believes strongly that RAC 101 should stand alone. Mark also pointed out that the more standard sessions and the less concurrent sessions we have, the fewer new sessions we have room for.

The next topic of conversation was whether to combine the high-value research (HVR) poster session with the welcome reception. Several thought that the reception detracted from the posters and their technical information. Mark and David suggested that we could still have the poster session, just perhaps at a different time. We could maybe have posters set up in lunch/dinner area, or out in the hall where vendors may be.

Mark advised that the hotel in Baton Rouge is set up, with the 3rd floor containing the conference area. We will have a ballroom to be partitioned in two parts: one for the meeting and one for meals. The big hallway outside is available for potentially housing the vendor booths. He would like to have the reception on the top floor of the hotel as the views of the city are great there. He also raised the question of how much, if any, vendor involvement we want for the reception.

We then discussed whether to bring back the rapid-fire HVR 4-minute presentations, and the consensus was that this is a good idea. We will have to find a time slot to put this in. Also, the Sweet 16 awards could possibly be done during lunch on Wednesday in lieu of a local speaker. We questioned whether the rapid-fire HVR would replace the state-of-the-state panel discussion, since many felt that this session in Vermont did not show many innovative ways of managing a program, but instead was more descriptive of budget/resources/program than educational to the audience. We also feel that program management is well covered elsewhere in the agenda.

Tuesday Agenda:

Most people agreed that the welcome session in Vermont was very good and having the right speakers is important. The speakers in Burlington were humorous yet professional. Mark will ask Louisiana's Secretary of Transportation or Deputy to give a welcome speech. Vermont had welcome speeches from the Region 1 chair, from the host state research administrator, the CEO from the host state, the SCOR chair, the RAC chairs, and TRB, and we can have something similar.

Leading in lean times—this was a very important session. 2 years in a row CEOs came in and gave takes on things. Do we want this to be a tradition?

Slogan/Theme for Conference: Freedom and unity was Vermont's slogan this year. *Road to new partnerships & possibilities* was Utah's last year.

David wants to have something about the research program of the future and what this might look like. What worker skills and tools (such as a database) are needed? Mark offered that we may want to include deployment, especially deploying SHRP-2. Managing and deploying research in the future was one suggestion. The group agreed to think about it.

Darryl suggested that we agree on content, then come up with theme name. What do we want to focus on? The conversation then went to topics such as we perhaps have sessions showing a cross-section of successful research programs and what tools (such as the Research Performance Measures database) they use and how they are structured; e.g., what their business model is. This could be a small program, a hybrid of DOT/university such as LADOTD, or a program such as KTC's which the university runs. We would need to figure out how to measure success and what core competencies the successful programs have in common. David pointed out that the 7 *Keys to a Robust Research Program* are out there, but we want to focus on making them practical and how they are implemented in different states. For example, Mark, Joe, and David attended Arkansas's peer exchange and were impressed with how implementation is built into their program structure. Mark and others pointed out that responsiveness to customer needs was a big determinant of a research program's success.

All agreed that we want to keep the regional meeting time frame that Vermont had added back to the agenda rather than the way of having these at breakfast.

Action items:

The group agreed to brainstorm on the following:

- overall theme
- topics for sessions
- how we want to do HVR (special recognition at Wednesday lunch) and where to fit HVR session in
- SHRP-2—where to fit discussion in

Next call date—last Wednesday of each month, with next one 9/26 tentatively. David will send invitation. The meeting was adjourned.