

RAC Leadership Teleconference
Thursday, March 9, 2017
1:30 – 3:30 pm, EDT

In attendance: Dale Peabody (Chair), David Jared (Vice Chair), Ken Chambers, Joe Crabtree Allison Hardt, Chris Hedges, Joe Horton, Cameron Kergaye , Rick Kreider, John Moulden, Keith Platte, Ann Scholz, Cindy Smith, Lori Sundstrom, Elisha Wright-Kehner.

1. Roll Call

2. Additions to agenda.

None

3. Notes from previous meeting

A MOTION (Kreider/Wright-Kehner) to accept the February 2016 meeting notes was APPROVED.

4. AASHTO Report – Mr. Platte

Mr. Platte summarized the new committee structure and next implementation steps. A new Strategic Management Committee will lead the process of implementing the new structure; they meet at the Washington Briefing and will meet at the Spring AASHTO meeting with committee chairs to discuss what's expected of their committees when they meet this summer to work on their charge statements. The Strategic Management Committee will ask the AASHT Board of Directors to reconfirm/appoint members for the 6 new Councils. The Knowledge Management and Data Management committees will be slower to form since they're new. Small task forces will be formed to stand these groups up – to develop their scope and charge – and then ask the DOTs to appoint official committee members to these groups. At least one RAC member should be on each of these task groups.

Governing documents will be reviewed to align with the new structure and funding to assist committees will be requested from NCHRP 20-24. The official switch to the new structure will likely occur at the Fall 2017 AASHTO meeting, and this is where the Data Management and Knowledge Management Committees should start to reveal their form. Mr. Platte reported that Marty Vitale (who since retired; her replacement has not yet been hired) sent a reminder email about AASHTO's technical services program. Members should let Mr. Platte know if there is any follow up needed. Lastly, AASHTO expects to announce the new SCOR Chair and other new Chairs next week.

5. TRB/SCOR Report – Mr. Hedges

At the December SCOR meeting, SCOR allocated \$100,000 for NCHRP to conduct a comprehensive business review. This is needed to prepare for an eventual replacement of now unsupported software used to administer the program. This review will help us take full advantage of technology tools to increase administrative efficiency and timeliness.

6. OSTR Report – Mr. Tim Klein (not present)

Mr. Klein via email reported that OSTR is waiting Secretarial approval of the grant solicitation for the recomplete of the UTC grants in Regions 1, 2, and 3.

7. FHWA Report – Mr. Moulden

Mr. Moulden asked if anyone was interested in writing an article for Public Roads on the Sweet 16 projects noting that this is an opportunity to showcase the good work that state research departments do. Mr. Jared reported that he has already submitted an article. Pat Casey and others are co-authoring an article that focuses more on the states themselves. FHWA is interested in improving coordination on an R&T agenda with others such as UTCs, and asked if the Collaboration and Coordination Task Force could contribute to this effort.

8. Region Chairs/Vice-Chairs Issues

Region 4 – Mr. Horton reported that they have created a list of NCHRP problem statements that are important to the region. They will be meeting bi-monthly. He asked if RAC has a position on the proposal to revise the AASHTO Committee Support projects. Mr. Hedges explained that SCOR is interested in providing equitable access to funding for smaller projects that SCOH, SCOE, SCOP and SCOPT now have while enabling SCOR to provide appropriate oversight of NCHRP funding. Some of the solutions under consideration include letting all committees submit funding requests along with problem statements, as opposed to simply requesting an amount of money annually and letting the committees determine what research to fund.

Mr. Horton noted that there is a lack of information about this and misinformation is being shared. Mr. Peabody explained that this is a work in progress, and that the SCOR work group includes a number of RAC members. Ms. Hardt noted that she provided comments from Region 1 to Messrs. Peabody and Bob Sack from NYSDOT. Mr. Peabody said he would provide the material developed by Jim McDonnell to RAC. (See Attachment A)

Region 3 – Mr. Kreider reported that they spent their last meeting talking about TKN.

Region 2 – Ms. Wright-Kehner: reported that they planning to finalize their bylaws next month and are otherwise focused on the summer RAC meeting.

Region 1 – Ms. Scholz: reported that Jon Williams provided a presentation on the Synthesis and IDEA programs. The Region also talked about the TKN Task Force and the AASHTO Knowledge Management Committee. Ms. Scholz also reported that Emily Parkeny is the new research manager is at the Vermont Agency of Transportation, and that Maine will be hosting a peer exchange soon.

9. TKN Task Force – feedback & discussion

Region Chairs were to have gathered feedback from their Regions:

Region 4: Mr. Horton said that while they recognize TKN’s importance, it’s not a priority. Region 4 probably will not volunteer to participate, noting that the recent PM&Q survey of priorities showed a distinct lack of interest. If there is not sufficient commitment and progress made, this should end.

Region 3: Mr. Kreider reported that they discussed whether it should it remain as TKN, be a different task force, or be eliminated. The consensus was that it remain in RAC because librarians and researchers have to interact. There is a terminology challenge, however; that can be corrected and the definitions on the website could be expanded and emphasized.

Region 2: Ms. Smith reported a mix of opinions on its importance, that they see the value but it isn’t a priority.

Region 1: Ms. Scholz reported that because the DOTs are smaller, and the library functions are smaller, the Region does not see this as a need.

Mr. Peabody said that he spoke with Renee McHenry from MODOT who is supportive of RAC continuing its involvement. Jen Harper from MODOT is willing to chair a subgroup, and perhaps this could be put under the Collaboration and Coordination Task Force. Mr. Kergaye agreed to talk with Ms. McHenry about moving forward, suggesting that a co-chair arrangement may be useful and giving some more time to see how far this can go. He noted that the new AASHTO Knowledge Management Committee may have a different focus, and involve different people. Mr. Peabody offered to participate in a call with Cameron and Ms. Harper and Mr. Kergaye offered to set up a call. He further noted that some “marketing” would be helpful if this goes forward since research managers don’t uniformly engage on this topic. There are some NCHRP research reports on this topic, e.g., [NCHRP Report 813, A Guide to Agency-wide Knowledge Management for State Departments of Transportation](#), and [Domestic 12-04, Scan Advances in Transportation Agency Knowledge Management](#).

10. **Summer 2017 meeting, Region 2:** Ms. Wright-Kehner, and Messrs. Crabtree and Siwula reported that they are looking forward to hosting RAC in July. The Planning Committee met Feb. 15th to develop the agenda and they have received input to the agenda from a variety of sources, including from the survey of participants at last year’s meeting. Topics have been identified topics and individuals assigned to develop them and line up presenters.

The Meeting webpage is up, and registration is open. The hotel block is open for reservations. A reminder was sent to RAC ListServ on Feb. 10th; additional reminders will be sent out monthly. Sponsors are being identified. The Planning Committee’s next meeting is March 15th.

Some RAC members are waiting for the TRB letter so that they can proceed with obtaining travel authorization.

11. Task Force Updates

Administration – Ms. Hardt

The RAC Winter Meeting survey had 31 responses. Respondents liked the format and length, and appreciated that presenters were given direction on their presentations. Respondents also liked the presentations on peer exchanges, and encouraging people to come early to the meeting to socialize. Ms. Hardt said there was very little negative feedback. The Task Force discussed new member on-boarding and she asked for ideas on things that should be done for new members so that they feel comfortable getting involved in RAC. A session at the TRB Annual Meeting for first-time attendees at the RAC meeting was suggested. Mr. Hedges noted that NCHRP has a meeting room reserved at the Annual Meeting that could be used for this; if there is interest, let him or Ms. Sundstrom know.

Coordination and Collaboration – Mr. Kergaye

Mr. Kergaye reported on their effort to look at practice-ready papers to encourage researchers to think more about implementation. A webinar is planned for later in 2017.

Value of Research – Ms. Smith on behalf of Mr. Stone.

Ms. Smith reported that TRB annual meeting poster sessions went very well. A suggestion was made for next year to use a banner or some way to distinguish the Sweet 16 group from the other posters. Mr. Hedges noted that there are restrictions on that sort of thing, and he would report back on what is allowed.

March 31 is the deadline for High Value Research; CTC and Associates will be compiling the Research Results document. Photos need to be high resolution and as clear as possible. States should submit even if they were not the lead state. The Marketing subgroup is updating the supplemental brochure process, and the Performance Measures group has submitted a Synthesis problem statement to update Report 300.

Mr. Stone is still looking for a chair; Ms. Smith is stepping down as Secretary.

Program Management and Quality – Mr. Horton

Mr. Horton reported that PM&Q will meet next week. He thanked everyone for responding to the survey of priorities, noting that 36 responses were received. PM&Q will update their Action Plan after reviewing the survey results.

12. Adjourned at 2:55 pm.

Next Conference Call: Thursday, April 13, 2017

Attachment A

Draft Revisions to AASHTO Committee-Support Research Projects funded through NCHRP

The AASHTO Standing Committee on Research (SCOR) invites your input on its draft proposal to consolidate four AASHTO committee-support projects, which are currently used to fund small, quick-turn-around research, into a larger, single funding pot accessible by additional committees.

Background

The AASHTO Standing Committee on Research is reviewing the way it provides funding through the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) for small, quick-turn-around research projects. Currently, four AASHTO Standing Committees receive sub-allocated funding that can be used at their discretion: Highways (NCHRP 20-07), Planning (NCHRP 08-36), Environment (NCHRP 25-25), and Public Transportation (NCHRP 20-65). Because of the success of these programs, SCOR has received requests from additional Standing Committees for dedicated funding to support their work as well. While SCOR's goal is to be fair and equitable to all committees requesting research funding, SCOR must also balance these needs with the larger research projects requested through the regular NCHRP program. Thus, SCOR has limited the set-aside funding for quick-turn-around research projects to 10% of its overall research budget and, consequently, has denied requests for additional sub-allocations. In March 2016, a task force was formed to conduct a full review of the AASHTO committee-support projects and to make recommendations regarding how to conduct the program in a manner that is fair and equitable to the full AASHTO membership. Recommendations were presented to SCOR at their meeting in December 2016, and are presented below for your review and comment prior to their next meeting in mid-March 2017.

It is important to note that any changes outlined below will not affect the current requests for FY 2018 committee support (i.e., 20-07, 08-36, 25-25, and 20-65) that were submitted in fall 2016. At the earliest, the new procedures would apply to the request for problem statements to be issued in July 2017 for the FY 2019 program year.

Draft Recommendations

The following is a summary of the draft recommendations for a new, consolidated program to fund small, quick-turn-around research projects.

- The goal of the program continues to be to fund relatively small projects that are critical to the mission and operation of AASHTO committees. Larger projects and synthesis projects should be submitted to the core NCHRP and NCHRP Synthesis programs, respectively.
- Any AASHTO Standing Committee may submit an annual request to fund small, quick-turn-around research projects.
- Each request should consist of one or more "tasks" (similar to the research problem statements currently developed for 20-07, 08-36, 25-25, and 20-65), prioritized by the Standing Committee and grouped into a single submission to NCHRP. These tasks may be independent of each other or they may build upon each other.

- Each task should include a brief description of the objective and subtasks to be performed as part of the research.
- Each task should have a budget of no less than \$50,000 and no more than \$150,000. The expected contract time should be no more than 12 months.
- There is no limit on the number of tasks that may be submitted in a committee's annual request, but the total amount of funding allocated for all small-project requests will be no more than 10% of the total NCHRP budget. (In FY 2017, the amount available was approximately \$3,150,000.)
- Depending on the availability of funds and overall AASHTO research priorities, SCOR will strongly consider the Standing Committee's expertise and priorities when deciding which and how many tasks will be approved.

Additional Funding Opportunities

For research requests that are urgent or time-sensitive, SCOR has set aside additional funds (\$2 million in each of FY 2017 and FY 2018) for off-cycle requests. Any AASHTO committee may submit a request to fund an urgent need at any time during the year and for any funding amount. SCOR will typically make funding decisions on these requests in one month or less.

NCHRP Program Improvements

In addition to the draft recommendations above, SCOR is pursuing improvements to facilitate the efficient management of these task-oriented projects and further expedite task completion. SCOR is also exploring means to more broadly and consistently disseminate the results of these projects.

Impact of the AASHTO Committee Restructuring

At some point in the coming year, the reorganization of the AASHTO committee structure approved by the Board of Directors in November 2016 will impact which committees will be allowed to submit funding requests for the reconfigured small-project research program. SCOR will work with AASHTO to determine which groups within the revised structure should be eligible for committee-support funding requests.

Questions or Comments

If you have any questions or comments on the recommendations above, please send them by March 10th to Chris Hedges, SCOR Secretary, at chedges@nas.edu, and to Jim McDonnell, SCOR Staff Liaison, at jmcdonnell@ashto.org.