

RAC Business Meeting
August 9, 2007
Seattle, Washington

AASHTO Report – John Horsley

Over the next two years, AASHTO will be setting the framework for the next reauthorization. Congress has recommended a \$.05 per gallon tax increase to identify and mitigate bridge deficiencies. AASHTO is calling for a \$.10 tax increase, \$.03 to sustain current programs, and \$.07 to address major funding deficiencies in the current highway bill and address a number of much-needed major projects, including high speed rail in the ten largest urban communities.

Research is a vital element in achieving AASHTO's vision for the future. NCHRP is a critical source of funding to implement AASHTO's plan for future transportation needs.

In preparation for the last highway bill, AASHTO laid out a very comprehensive proposal for research funding. The proposal was very successful, although somewhat hindered by a number of earmarks that resulted in an over commitment of funds in SAFETEA-LU that affected funding levels for programs such as SHRP-2 and FHWA's discretionary research budget.

Challenges for the next reauthorization include the following: 1) make sure SP&R is a fundamental component of the bill, and that the NCHRP takedown continues; 2) SHRP 2 may need to be extended to meet the program objectives; 3) FTA, FHWA, and NHTSA programs should be supported; 4) AASHTO should work in partnership with CUTC to identify appropriate funding needs for UTCs; 5) RAC/SCOR should work with John Conrad and the AASHTO SCOH Subcommittee on Systems Operations and Management to develop recommendations on ITS research needs.

RAC/SCOR should not be afraid of requesting an increase in research funding in line with overall AASHTO recommendations for an increase in transportation spending and a \$.10 per gallon tax increase.

There is an understanding in Congress that earmarks in the current bill were out of control in SAFETEA-LU. AASHTO will recommend a more systematic approach to identifying research funding needs and apportioning funding recipients in the next bill. RAC should work with other organizations such as ARTBA and APTA and attempt to develop consistent recommendations.

If RAC identifies important global policy issues that require new or increased research efforts, their recommendations should be provided to AASHTO.

Timeline: there are three major national meetings where legislative actions will be taken: AASHTO fall meeting in Milwaukee; spring meeting in Branson, MO in May; and fall

meeting in Hartford, Connecticut in about one year. RAC proposal should ideally be ready by the spring meeting.

CRP Report – Chris Jenks

SCOR met in March to select projects for the FY08 NCHRP program. Approximately 60 projects were selected valued at more than \$23 million. Panels are now being formed and RFPs being issued.

Solicitation for FY09 problem statements has been issued; they are due September 14. RAC and its member agencies are encouraged to submit problem statements for consideration.

Steps are now being taken to transfer the new Pavement Design Guide and software to AASHTO for approval and release. This was the single biggest NCHRP project ever undertaken.

TCRP has now been in existence for 15 years; the program is currently funded at \$9.3 million per year, and is expected to about \$10 million by end of SAFETEA-LU. 119 research requests have been received for FY2008, of which TCRP will be able to address 10 or 12. State DOTs are encouraged to provide nominees for TCRP project panels. About 30-35 publications per year are being produced by the transit program.

The Airport CRP is currently funded through the Aviation Bill at a level of about \$10 million from the FTA. It is managed by TRB in cooperation with four industry associations: the Airports Council International - North America (ACI-NA), the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE), the National Association of State Aviation Officials (NASAO), and the Air Transport Association (ATA). The governing board for ACRP recently received 136 problem statements, of which 14 were selected for FY08. Panel nominations for ACRP projects are due shortly. 85 projects have currently been authorized, and the first four publications have been released. An increase in ACRP funding has been recommended in the reauthorization of the Aviation Bill, which will be taking place this year.

Two newer programs were authorized in SAFETEA-LU: a Freight CRP (sponsored by RITA at \$2.5 million per year) and Hazardous Materials CRP (sponsored by PHMSA about \$900,000 per year). Ten initial projects have been selected in the FCRP, and RFPs have been issued for most. A solicitation for FY08 problem statements is underway, due in late September. In the HMCPRP, four projects have been selected for the first two program years. Contractors are now being selected for those projects and they should be under contract soon.

Randy Battey expressed concern that few of the nominees from his state are being selected for NCHRP panels. Crawford Jencks responded that NCHRP tries to appoint at least one nominee from each state. He also noted that each panel has representatives

from each of the four AASHTO regions, plus representatives of academia and the private sector, while trying to achieve diversity of ethnicity and gender. Many nominations are submitted by the nominees themselves; NCHRP currently does not give preference to nominees submitted by RAC members. Mr. Jencks will review the numbers of panel members appointed from RAC nominations versus individual nominations.

Ken Kobetsky noted that AASHTO committees who submit problem statements also submit panel nominees, and this may impact on the numbers of nominees accepted from individual DOTs.

SHRP 2 Report – Ann Brach

The SHRP 2 budget is about \$150 in total, and about half has been appropriated so far. Funding levels may increase if a technical corrections bill to SAFETEA-LU is passed.

29 expert task groups have been appointed to date (some for RFP development and proposal review; others for expert assistance to the technical coordinating committees). State DOTs account for about 30% of membership on the expert task groups.

15 projects are currently under contract, with a total of 68 contractors. Six new projects are under negotiation, and 12 new RFPs will be advertised on July 30.

A mechanism has been set up for contractors to express interest in the program. It is intended that this mechanism will facilitate the identification of qualified subcontractors for the formation of research teams.

Some of the early products will include case studies (Capacity Area) and Technical Memos on reliability performance measures and reliability strategies (Reliability).

An annual Safety Symposium features presentations from the SHRP 2 contractors and outside experts. Similar events are being considered for the other three SHRP 2 program areas.

The size and complexity of SHRP 2 has resulted in a number of management issues: management and QA/QC plans are required; contractor coordination meetings are held; multiple awards are often made for single projects; prequalification evaluations are being conducted, and the Institutional Review Board is involved with the use of human subjects.

Quarterly reports are available through the e-newsletter and the website. State coordinators are informed of opportunities for regular and loaned staff. Test sites will be sought for evaluation of road data collection technologies and areas for the naturalistic driving study.

Derek Sweet (loaned staff from Transport Canada) serves as international coordinator for SHRP 2, and there is a good deal of interest in the program from outside the US. A

meeting has also been held with vehicle manufacturers to involve them in the SHRP 2 Safety program.

Proposals for the next 12 projects are due in September.

An implementation report is due to Congress in February 2009. This report must describe products, customers, and barriers, along with recommended implementation methods. The report will estimate resource requirements for implementation, and requires a separate FACA-approved committee.

RAC members noted a need for their staff to be apprised of the difference between the procedures for SHRP 2 and those of other existing programs such as NCHRP.

Regional Breakout Reports

Region 1 – Steve Pepin

Steve Pepin is the new Region 1 Chair, succeeding Bill Carr. Dale Peabody has been elected the new vice chair. Region 4 was thanked for their work in this year's national meeting, which will be very helpful for Region 1 in their planning for next year's meeting. Previous chair Bill Carr was responsible for greatly enhancing the communication among RAC 1 members and with outside agencies and organizations. In the late fall, a "regional peer exchange" will be held to discuss topics and issues common to RAC 1 members. The 2008 national RAC meeting will be hosted by Maine DOT in Portland, ME at the Holiday Inn by the Sea from July 14-17.

Region 2 – Moy Biswas

The amount of time allocated to regional breakouts at this year's meeting was considered very appropriate. The 2009 annual meeting will be held in RAC region 2, hosted by Florida DOT. RAC 2 endorsed the value of the reports developed this year to identify research highlights in each region; it may be appropriate to post these documents on the RAC/SCOR website. More sessions involving UTCs are considered appropriate for future RAC meetings, and RAC 2 recommended the presentation of case studies on DOT/UTC success stories. Participation of FHWA regional staff in RAC 2 has been declining.

Region 3 – Sandra Larson

Three states reported a fair degree of success in integrating their research program with their UTCs. Others are struggling with issues including development of UTC strategic plan, matching funds, rules of integration, RITA responsibility and role, and the state responsibility. The new Pooled Fund procedures were

discussed at length and RAC 2 requested a clarification of state and FHWA division duties regarding Pooled Fund studies. States will need continued support from FHWA as they learn and adapt to the new procedures. RAC 3 also requested the development of a system to track funds for use by states. RAC 3 recommended doing away with regional bylaws, now that national bylaws have been developed and approved. Conference calls are being held every two months. A new Wisconsin representative has been appointed (Nikki Hatch) and a new Illinois representative will be appointed to replace Dave Lippert, who has been promoted within the agency.

Region 4 – Leni Oman

Pooled Fund issues and new procedures were discussed with FHWA staff. RAC 4 is seeking clear direction on the schedule for the next solicitation process. RAC 4 has identified a number of activities for next year: participation in RAC task groups; providing support for new RAC 4 members; increasing FHWA division office involvement; continuing to strengthen UTC participation; improving partnering on research activities; investigating ways to increase profile of research at WASHTO meetings; and evaluating training needs. Input to RIP was discussed, and some issues involving specific states will be addressed. Collaboration with UTCs was discussed in some detail. RAC 4 member states identified some of their specific research plans and needs in an effort to identify partnering opportunities.

Task Group Reports

Research Administration – Moy Biswas

The current mission statement was reviewed and retained without change. The main two responsibilities of the task group are to maintain the RAC bylaws and the RAC website. The bylaws are under review and some minor changes will be presented for review in the near future. A survey of RAC members is planned to determine needs for the RAC website. Other task groups are asked to send their revised mission statements to Skip Paul to be incorporated as necessary into the RAC bylaws. The task group will also offer their assistance to the Reauthorization planning group. The administrative task group will also be working with the RAC Officers to identify the best format for posting all task group activities on the RAC/SCOR website.

Value of Research – Dave Huft

The mission statement was reviewed and revised. The importance of both quantitative and qualitative measures of value was endorsed. Tools for the identification of the value of research were discussed, such as NCHRP 20-63. The task group will develop case studies and best practices for the use of the

performance measurement tool developed in 20-63. The task group recognizes that the value of research must be demonstrated to different audiences in different ways. The task group will also coordinate with the panel for NCHRP project 20-78 on demonstrating the value of research.

Education and Training – Gary Frederick

The first focus area for the task group is refinement and improvement of RAC 101. The task group will solicit input from new members that attended RAC 101 this year. A mentoring program will be set up for new members, and volunteers will be sought from the current RAC membership. The task group is also reviewing the NHI course on research management.

Research Funding – Monique Evans

The mission statement was reviewed and retained for the present. The main current focus activity is the provision of support for the SCOR reauthorization task force. The task group is working in parallel with the research team led by Pat Casey to update a background document prepared for the last reauthorization. The reauthorization recommendations need to be completed by mid-October for review by SCOR at their next meeting in Las Vegas. RAC members will be receiving a survey of research needs to help with the preparation of the recommendations.

Rod Diridon invited the task force to contact the CUTC reauthorization team to share information on their respective efforts.

Research Coordination and Collaboration – Sue Sillick

The mission statement was reviewed and retained. A number of initiatives are planned, beginning with three initial focus areas: 1) facilitation of research activity to address unmet research needs by developing a tool to search several existing databases of unfunded research problem statements; 2) development of training materials for RIP; and 3) preparation of TR news articles on successful collaboration efforts.

Program Management and Quality – Glen Roberts

The mission statement was reviewed and revised. Four priority focus areas were identified: 1) ensuring a balance of research activities, e.g. long term, higher risk vs short term applied research); 2) alignment with a national research agenda; 3) management of state RD&T programs, including use of performance measures, use of TRIS and RIP, the Pooled Fund program, and evaluating and maintaining the quality of research; 4) identifying appropriate mechanisms and funding levels for cooperative research programs. The task group will also assist in the

development of topics and implementation strategies for the upcoming international scan on research management.

Peer Exchange – Randy Battey

The task group will be surveying the RAC members to determine their issues, needs, and concerns regarding Peer Exchanges. Several priority areas were identified: identifying new topics for peer exchanges; use of pooled fund project funds to pay for peer exchange travel; additional training needs; identifying a pool of potential participants; guidance on frequency; FHWA participation and travel restrictions; value of a document on peer exchange successes; review and possible update of guidance material prepared by Barbara Harder.

Knowledge Networks – Leni Oman

A special charter for this new group was developed. They have participation from approximately 6 states, but membership hasn't been identified yet. The mission statement has not yet been developed. The task group will broaden some of the language to address issues in addition to libraries, and try to achieve a balance between the needs of information users and providers. The task group will work in cooperation with other groups such as NCHRP Project 20-75 on implementing transportation knowledge networks.

Future Needs – Darryll Dockstader

The mission statement was reviewed and revised.

This group is working with the Funding task group to assist the AASHTO reauthorization task group in development of research recommendations for the next highway bill.

Much of meeting spent providing feedback to Brian Hurt on initial work done on a project to update the background document prepared for the last reauthorization.

Meeting feedback

There were 133 registered attendees, including 13 guests, 63 from DOTs, and 28 from UTCs.

Very favorable comments were received on:

- The Microsoft speaker
- Inclusion of UTCs in the program
- RAC 101 state discussion panel

- Student presentations

Problems:

Some difficulties were encountered with conference calling facilities during meetings. It wasn't clear which sessions were open to all attendees and which were closed.

On behalf of Region 1, Dale Peabody invited all those present to attend the 2008 RAC meeting in Portland, Maine.

Leni Oman acknowledged Jennifer Fitch as this year's winner of the "Steadfast Award".

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:20 am on Thursday, August 9.