

**TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH BOARD
Business Meeting – ADC30
Committee on Ecology and Transportation (ADC30)
Business Meeting
At the Northeast Transportation and Wildlife Conference
Sunday, September 21, 2014
3:00 PM – 5:30 PM EDT
Minutes**

Prepared and Submitted by:

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Secretary ADC30**



Marcia Bowen

**September 2014
TRB ADC 30
Committee on Ecology and Transportation
Ecology and Transportation Committee
TRB Committee ADC30 - Business Meeting**

- 1) **Introduction of Members, Friends and Guests:** Those present included Jeff Lidicker, Michigan Technological University; Scott Marler, IDOT; Jonathan Rubin, U Maine; Sarah Barnum, Normandeau; Alex Levy, Arcadis; Lars Carlson, Jacobs; Jeff Simmons, Stantec; Marlys Osterhuse, FHWA; Joe Burns, USDA-FS; Iliana Ivanciu, Dewberry.

Alex thanked Chris Slesar, Jens Hilke, and Cindy Sherwood for facilitating this meeting.

- 2) **Review/Acceptance of Minutes of January 14, 2014 Business Meeting**
Alex asked for any additions/corrections; they are on the committee's website.

- 3) **Remarks of the Chair- Alex Levy, Arcadis.**

Alex said that early registration ends in early November. He said that the TRB website has a map showing hotels near the convention center. Scott heard that the rooms are selling out quickly. The Marriot Marquis is completely booked. Many hotels are still available that are on the METRO red line but not at the convention center. Alex indicated that you can register at one of the outlier hotels and waitlist for the main hotels. The conference will be much more accessible via public transport than in previous years.

- 4) **TRB Updates and Remarks by Jonathan Rubin, U Maine, Environment and Energy Section Chair**

Jonathan apologized for not being at the meeting, as a professor he cannot miss many classes. He is former chair of Energy Sector and timed out, so has taken on the Environment and Energy Section Chair role. Non-DOT chairs are becoming more the norm at TRB, but it is a challenge for participation when they have allegiances to other organizations. He said that the committees in our section are a "grab bag" so the challenge is finding ways to work together when we are such a diverse group. The change in TRB policy where a committee can co-sponsor as many sessions as they want means that "chit trading" is less common and creates more opportunities for non-traditional nexuses. Our section includes the following committees: Environmental Analysis, Air Quality, Noise and Vibration, Historic and Archeological Preservation, Alternative Fuels and Technologies, Waste Management, and Transportation Energy. Jonathan wondered about the nexus of this committee and the Alternative Fuels committee. Alex agreed that there are probably connections that could be expanded. Low volume roads is one committee that we have worked with in the past. Marcia mentioned marine environment committee and their focus on air quality and alternate fuels. Climate change and infrastructure resiliency is another potential nexus area. Resiliency is one of those co-opted terms because its meaning differs depending on whether you are referring to ecology or infrastructure.

Our two joint sessions for the annual meeting are: 'Meeting Environmental Commitments in a Design/build Project', proposed by the Noise and Vibration committee, and 'Evaluating Environment and Energy for Alternative Fuels' proposed by the Alternative Fuels Committee. Jonathan said one of his roles is to help us negotiate the TRB maze and find commonalities among committees. He also wants to help us initiate and maintain best practices. He said that we have been nominated for a Blue Ribbon Award for our outreach efforts, much of this due to our newsletter. Alex said that the easiest alliances are those that are the usual alliances but we need help with developing the less

customary alliances. For example, the alliance with energy and noise committees could be developed more.

5) Sub-Committee Reports/Discussion

a) **Mid-Year Meeting/NETWC host update** – our hosts were busy hosting but we heard that there were almost 170 registrants.

b) **Communication/Newsletter & Web Site - Marcia Bowen, Normandeu Associates**

Marcia thanked everyone who submitted articles to the newsletter. Her next task is to try to synchronize the mytrb database with the friends list. Jonathan recommended sending reminders to self populate. Marcia acknowledged that keeping up the email list is a chore, and ultimately mytrb will make the communications process much easier.

c) **Liaison - Lars Carlson, Jacobs Engineering-** Lars keeps a list of potential liaison committees and requests feedback to be submitted to Marcia for inclusion in the newsletter. He rarely gets any information. Given the various committees in our section, perhaps this should get more attention. Alex suggested that perhaps liaison chairs within the section should meet. Jonathan will bring it up with Christy. Joe liked the idea and thought a regular conference call would work. Jeff L said that we could push the ecological aspect of the environment and “infiltrate” the other committees to think about ecology. Also we can interpret resiliency the way it makes sense to us. Alex thought that it is a challenge to bring up natural resources as assets that can be traded. Jeff L thought we could craft an ecological statement that could be brought up at other committee meetings. Jonathan brought up that one of the alternative fuel concerns is the use of biofuels, which is a perfect example of a nexus.

d) **Paper Review – Bridget Donaldson, VDOT/VCTIR** could not attend. Alex reported that we received no papers; last year we got 12 papers, the highest ever. Other committees are noticing a decrease in the number of paper submittals. It is unclear whether it is because of competing forums and organizations. The poster session seems to be where our members and friends want to present their findings. So there may be a shift in what is submitted. Sarah was under the opinion that it is more difficult to get a paper prepared and submitted than a poster. Marlys has the sense that some committees are mainly composed of academics so publishing a paper is the customary mode and required. But when the committee is more practitioner-based, a poster is much more feasible to create. The TRB Energy and Environment Transportation Record is the thinnest ever but contained two papers from our committee. Last year, 2 papers were assigned to posters and the authors opted out perhaps because of the perception is that the poster is not as prestigious as a paper. Alex emphasized that is not true. He said that you can fill a room with papers but a ballroom with posters. Jeff asked whether the late timing of this conference has had a bearing on the lack of submitted papers. Alex said that the timing likely has a bearing, because last year ICOET was held before the call for papers, which may have resulted in the high number of submittals. Next year, members and friends will probably choose to attend ICOET, which will have the same late timing. Also, folks that went to the Sweden IENE conference are probably not at this conference. Marlys said that she did not go to Environmental Analysis mid-year conference, but others in her group went. Going to conferences is also challenging for FHWA. Alex thought that two meetings in the southeast (Environmental Analysis this year and ICOET next year) would have created travel difficulties so the decision was made to have this

meeting in Vermont. Marlys wondered if the source of papers last year was from conferences or from the call for papers. Alex said that he does not know. The papers are submitted to TRB and they may not mention our committee. It would be worth looking at the authors of the 12 papers to try to figure out the source. Also Alex said that the call for papers has a limited TRB-based distribution, so it is incumbent on members and friends to widen the circle of distribution.

- e) **Annual Meeting Program – Julianne Schwarzer, USDOT Volpe Center** was not able to attend the committee meeting. The 2015 TRB 94th Annual Meeting will be held, January 11-15. Alex said we have had a robust response to our posters including 4 countries (South Africa, China, Canada, US). At least one submitter cannot be present, so we will need to find someone to stand by the poster. There were a number of posters from ADC10 that were ecological in focus, and vice versa. Julianne has been hard at work on the program. We should review her call for presentations and speakers. The Committee has two full podium sessions that we can leverage. The other session we are sponsoring “cross cutting session” that Amanda Hardy and Marcia developed with the help of Alex and Mark Kross. Marcia said the session will focus on the environmental impacts of expanding marine transport in the arctic.

Alex brought up the topic of our committee meeting. He said that we had a “truncated” committee meeting in 2014 and it was difficult to cover everything in that time frame, particularly the SHRP2. Marlys thought that there would be less SHRP2 discussion this year. Alex said that Christy told him that she thought we might be able to get an additional ½ hour added to the truncated time frame Marlys thought that 3 hours might be too long but we need more time than we had in 2014. Alex also mentioned we could include presentations to enliven the meeting. Please give suggestions to Alex. Alex will also try to have a conference call before the annual meeting to get some of the more mundane business taken care of.

- f) **Research – Patty Cramer, Utah State University.** No update was available. Alex mentioned the TRIS database as a resource for learning what research is in progress, avoiding redundancy.
- g) **Wildlife & Vehicle Collisions (ANB20-2) – Fraser Schilling, UC Davis.** No update was available.

6) Updates

- a) **FHWA:** Marlys provided the update. FHWA is looking to make its long standing program on better transportation/conservation planning, Eco-Logical, truly operational. FHWA is working closely w/AASHTO to make sure the program is implemented in collaboration with end users. The program includes implementation funding and additional grants; organizing workshops; and peer-peer information sharing. FHWA is developing a “starter kit” to help the beginning user. More information will be presented on Tuesday.

FHWA continues to expand programmatic agreements, most at the state level. They have 500-550 programmatic agreements, but at the federal level they are also implementing regional agreements, one for the Indiana bat and a second for the

northern long-eared bat, that encompass 39 states. This is a huge undertaking and participants met at Volpe last week. She hopes this will be a model for future endeavors. They hope to complete formal consultation early next year. FHWA is working with NMFS on a programmatic approach for east coast species such as sturgeon species (presentation on Tuesday).

FHWA's planning rulemaking comment period closes at end of month. Programmatic mitigation plans are a tool for state DOTs and MPOs. She recommended looking at the rule and providing comments. Information can be found on the FHWA Map21 website. FHWA is working on updating the Red Book, which synchronizes the Corps permit process with FHWA's NEPA process. There is an interagency working group to identify all of environmental and other regulations that could be better aligned. It will be completed sometime next year. FHWA continues to liaison with USFWS, EPA, USCG, and NMFS to better share information. Marlys also mentioned that pollinators are a new focus since the presidential memorandum. She wondered if there is more federal and therefore state focus on this issue? The Center for Biological Diversity has sued to list monarch butterflies as an endangered species. Alex remembered a conversation after the last annual meeting. Sarah said that after she finished the FHWA study on mowing practices, she was contacted about monarchs and mowing practices. Alex said that at ICOET that there is more focus on roadside management so there may be information coming out at their next conference.

b) Agencies– State DOTs, FHWA, USFWS, USFS, USEPA, Others

Joe provided an update on USFS. The planning rule for their endangered species program has just been updated and they are now publishing directives. Their endangered species rule will be updated to align with those directives.

Scott mentioned that he submitted a poster on critter crossing for turtles on a major Iowa project and hoped to be at the annual meeting.

Alex mentioned that he has been monitoring bats at mitigation banks in Georgia. Mist netting has not yielded a lot of the long eared bats but they are finding white nose syndrome in cave bats. The disease is not as devastating for these southern species because when they are roused in winter, they are able to find food, unlike their northern counterparts. Alex is also learning a lot about agency perspectives on adaptive management approaches for creatures like beaver.

Joe mentioned a geospatial workshop that is being held on Tuesday/Wednesday with the goal of nominating tools and people to talk about them. Anyone who has a cool tool to share should contact Joe. Alex asked if Eco-plan is going to be part of that conversation. Joe will ask. Marlys said that FHWA would like to be included in the conversation, Mike Ruth specifically. Joe will send out an email.

- 7) **Wrap-up** – The 2015 TRB Mid-Year Meeting will be held September 20-24, 2015 at ICOET in the Raleigh Convention Center, Raleigh, NC. Those present provided updates on what they were working on. Jeff Simmons is doing incidental takes for rare plants for a ConnDOT bridge. There are also a lot of invasives. It is a state process. Sarah Barnum mentioned working on long transmission project which has every type of species: birds, bats, herps, and mammals. They are looking at programmatic bat approaches as a model. Alex has also been working on linear utility projects that are very similar to transportation. There are other agencies and

practitioners that could add to the conversation. Marlys mentioned that there are tools to be shared, particularly at the federal level. Julianne is working cross-agencies on this topic. The Indiana bat programmatic agreement started with an example from another sector. It takes time to trickle down to practitioners and move across sectors. Lars has a poster here on turtle and other wildlife crossings on a commuter rail and is developing the mitigation plan for another project. Iliana said they are working on coastal restoration and stormwater projects. Alex also reported a SE region candidate conservation agreement on the Georgia aster, which was a candidate for federal listing but the agreement allowed it to be taken off the list. He said that this is an under-celebrated success story. Now the challenge is to bring NEPA commitments in line.

Be on the lookout for an email from Alex and Julianne requesting recommendations for podium session speakers.

Alex thanked participants for taking time out of their weekend for attending. The meeting was concluded at 4:50.