

Workshop Summary- A "Work in Progress" Environmental Stewardship in Transportation Program Execution

Conducted at the
80th Annual Transportation Research Board Meeting
Washington, DC
January 7, 2001 (1:30 - 5:00 p.m.)

Introduction

On Sunday, January 7, 2001, a workshop was conducted at the 80th Annual Transportation Research Board Meeting in Washington, DC, titled "Environmental Stewardship in Transportation Program Execution." A "room capacity" attendance of about 75 individuals (see Attachment 2) attended the half-day session, which was sponsored by the TRB Environmental Analysis in Transportation Committee (A1F02) in cooperation with the Center for Transportation and the Environment (CTE) at North Carolina State University. The workshop served as a follow-up to the September 29, 2000, national satellite broadcast *New Paradigms for Transportation and Environmental Management*, co-sponsored by the A1F02 Committee and CTE. (The Sept. 29 program description and link to the archived webcast are located on CTE's teleconference Web site at <http://www.itre.ncsu.edu/cte/2000teleconferences.html#Sep29>.)

The workshop provided a forum for continuing the national dialogue about environmental stewardship and transportation, and for discussing the results of a pre-workshop survey. The purpose of the survey was to capture current perspectives about the meaning of the term "environmental stewardship" and to examine its relevance to transportation program management and execution. The survey was distributed via email and posted electronically on the A1F02 committee website at <http://itre.ncsu.edu/A1F02/survey.htm>. The results were posted at <http://itre.ncsu.edu/A1F02/surveyresponses.htm>. In addition, the website contained a working draft paper on "Stewardship and Streamlining (<http://itre.ncsu.edu/A1F02/McVoy-draft.pdf>).

The subcommittee received 31 responses to the survey: 14 from state DOTs; two from Federal Highway Administration Division offices; two from universities, two from state environmental agencies, one from a transit agency, two from consultants, two from international transportation officials, and four from anonymous sources.

This paper presents the results of the workshop, where participants fine-tuned a draft summary of the survey. The 11 survey questions were re-cast as 10 statements on environmental stewardship, under which participants added several supporting and clarifying phrases.

It was agreed that this would be a "work in progress" for ready use by participants and interested transportation professionals in developing individual agency models for environmental stewardship. Also, it includes valuable perspectives that can be further refined and used by USDOT, AASHTO, AASHTO, and TRB committees. Suggestions are also offered for "next steps" for further consideration by the A1F02 Committee, workshop participants, survey respondents, and other interested parties.

The following underlying assumptions, a "preamble," establish a context for this paper:

- As one of the largest builders and landowners in the country, transportation departments execute programs and projects that have broad and visible impacts on communities and the natural landscape. Accordingly, DOTs have the unique opportunity and responsibility to

manage and execute these enormous programs in a manner that leaves the environment in a better condition for future generations.

- DOTs have many partners and represent a subgroup of the transportation sector overall. Accordingly, this paper refers collectively to DOTs and their partners as the "transportation sector." This is to recognize the fact that achieving an environmentally sound approach to management and execution of transportation programs and projects depends upon strong partnerships between DOTs and those organizations and agencies that share a vested interest in balancing environmental protection and transportation development.
- Public transportation agencies, as branches of government, have a responsibility to its citizens for demonstrating leadership in taking care of the environment as they carry out their mission.

Survey/Workshop Results

(See Attachment 1 for original survey questions.)

I. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP IS:

1. Improving environmental conditions and quality of life when possible, not just complying with regulations.
2. Careful management of environmental resources and values through partnerships among public and private entities.
3. Attitude, ethic, and behavior by individuals.
4. Wise choices based on understanding consequences to natural, human-made, and social environment.
5. Fulfilling responsibilities as trustees of the environment for succeeding generations, moving toward a cost-effective and environmentally sustainable future.
6. Integrating environmental values with partners within all transportation work as a "core business value."

II. AGENCY-WIDE COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE IS IMPORTANT:

1. Because it's the right thing (i.e., environmental ethic) to do; it's the smart thing (i.e., efficient/effective program delivery) to do.
2. Public perceptions of all actions by the transportation sector speak louder than declarations of intent.
3. Environmental record of the transportation sector can best be assessed by its customers.
4. Can demonstrate commitment to environmental excellence from planning through construction/maintenance.
5. Quality of daily performance by collective transportation operations and their impacts on environment sends strong message to customers.
6. To achieve regulatory flexibility through environmental excellence we must maintain the "excellence" through all actions and decisions.

III. IMPROVES PUBLIC & REGULATORY ATTITUDES:

1. Sends a message of shared commitment to protecting and enhancing the environment.
2. Communicate and show positive environmental performance to enhance public perception of the transportation sector.
3. If the transportation sector practices environmental stewardship as daily business, public attitudes will be more positive.
4. It can improve quality of media coverage of the transportation sector's work.
5. Strong stewardship ethic contributes to effective partnering with environmental community and shared values/mission.
6. Transportation sector should set example for others.

IV. IMPROVED TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS & SERVICES THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP:

1. Integrating transportation and environmental issues broadens benefits of transportation work.
2. With increased trust, regulatory agencies will be more willing to try innovative regulatory flexibility.
3. Reduce costs of project development.
4. Produce better transportation solutions for users, community, and environment.
5. Seize opportunities through transportation to enhance environment.
6. Safety goal of transportation extends beyond “transportation accidents” to improved health, safety, and quality of life attributed to improved environment.
7. It makes our infrastructure “better neighbors” and makes our customers more satisfied with what we do.

V. MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP IN TRANSPORTATION:

1. Large procurement, research, planning, design, construction and maintenance functions present many opportunities over a very large “footprint.”
2. Environmental management programs like ISO 14001 environmental management systems.
3. Staff can evaluate own work functions to find opportunities to enhance environmental performance.
4. Opportunities identified and implemented through partnerships with community, environmental groups, regulators.
5. Ranges from basic activities to programmatic impacts.
6. “The sky is the limit; we are limited by our own imaginations...”

VI. INCLUDE COST OF ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP IN PRICE OF TRANSPORTATION BUSINESS:

1. Environmental “costs, benefits, enhancements” should be considered legitimate and necessary components of public project and program budgets.
2. Be accountable for environmental investments, translate them to public benefits, and make transparent the environmental cost in the transportation sector budget.
3. Failure to be stewards of the environment can result in substantial costs and negative impacts to society/taxpayers.
4. Enhanced relations with stakeholders can streamline the process, save time, reduce costs, and enhance the environment.
5. Cost of correcting avoidable impacts during construction, maintenance, and operations can be avoided.

VII. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP CAN HELP ACHIEVE TEA-21 STREAMLINING GOALS:

1. Visible commitment by transportation sector employees to share responsibility for protecting environment can build trust with public/regulators, hence, less process, faster decisions.
2. Helps narrow the gap between the transportation sector and environmental community.
3. Stewardship can bridge the perception gap that “Streamlining” means weakened environmental law.
4. To the extent that relationships control speed of reviews and decision-making processes, it will help “streamline.”
5. Streamlining goals cannot be achieved without commitment to stewardship.

VIII. THE TRANSPORTATION SECTOR CAN DEVELOP AN ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP ETHIC BY:

1. Progress & publicize environmental enhancements.
2. Becoming environmental leaders: “modeling the way.”
3. Providing environmental managers with authority and accountability and/or integrating environmental managers into executive decision making.
4. Top management commitment to environmental stewardship as a core value in all agency functions.
5. Establishing and monitoring environmental stewardship performance measures, benchmarking, and systematic improvements in cooperation with environmental community.
6. Expecting staff to share in responsibility for protecting environment during the course of daily work.
7. Measuring/communicating/publicizing progress.
8. Environmental enhancement training can help.
9. Showcase/reward good examples.
10. Empowering employees.

IX. THERE ARE BARRIERS TO OVERCOME:

1. The "us vs. them" attitude between transportation and environmental professionals.
2. Ability to integrate stewardship principles into programmatic agreements.
3. Fear of precedent and implications to future programs.
4. Lack of available stewardship models/information and resources to develop/implement them.
5. Perception by managers and staff that protection of environment is the responsibility of environmental regulatory agencies, and not a transportation sector responsibility.
6. Perception that environmental enhancing choices cost too much money and take too long.
7. Myth that environmental decisions and transportation decisions are separate.
8. Lack of awareness by employees of environmental consequences and available choices.
9. A "compartmentalized" organizational structure in the transportation sector for environmental responsibility.
10. Narrow interpretation of transportation mission and public “safety.”

X. OTHER ISSUES TO CONSIDER...

1. How to “personalize” environmental stewardship?
2. Can it be linked to “pride in work or place of residence”?
3. Can benefits be measured? How?
4. How can we hear from others (agencies, environmental organizations, public) on what they expect from us?
5. Consider original role of environmental staff hired by transportation sector (obtain environmental approvals for projects) and what lies ahead with environmental stewardship.
6. Sustained environmental stewardship needs to be part of continuous quality improvement.
7. Stewardship supports NEPA rules, context-sensitive design, sustainability, ISO 14001, environmental justice, community impact assessment, and other initiatives.
8. Management by stewardship is better than management by litigation. Stewardship reduces the likelihood of failed litigation.

Next Steps

The workshop participants suggested the following "next steps" for consideration by the A1F02 committee and other interested parties:

- Distribute a revised draft of this workshop discussion; be sure to clearly identify the intended audience and desired outcomes.
- Explore the role of FHWA on this issue.
- Examine the need for research problem statements regarding environmental stewardship.
- Consider how this supports AASHTO's initiatives.
- Explore the potential for creating a support group to champion the cause. Where would this support group be established (e.g., TRB, AASHTO, etc.)? How would it be structured?
- Don't forget transit and others.
- Integrate environmental stewardship responsibilities into NEXTEA.
- Schedule another meeting to continue the dialogue.
- Partnership with ECOS?

Workshop on Environmental Stewardship in Transportation Program Execution

For online version of the survey and announcement,
please see <http://itre.ncsu.edu/A1F02/survey.htm>

A "Pre-meeting" Event at the 80th Annual Transportation Research Board Meeting
Sunday, January 7, 2001, 1:30 to 5:00 p.m.
Georgetown West Room, Washington Hilton Hotel and Towers
Washington, D.C.

What lies ahead for future professionals who must integrate transportation development with environmental excellence? As a follow-up to the joint TRB A1F02 and CTE teleconference of Sept. 29, 2000, the TRB A1F02 Environmental Analysis Committee is sponsoring the "Workshop on Environmental Stewardship in Transportation Program Execution."

The session will be open to interested professionals in the transportation and environmental community. The overarching goal is to define environmental stewardship and its relevance to transportation program management and execution.

Please complete as many questions in the following survey as you can: your responses will be used as a basis for discussion during the workshop. Please respond whether or not you plan to attend - your input is valuable. To complete the survey by email, forward this message to afekete@cpm.dot.state.nj.us, and type your responses immediately after each question. Or, go to <http://itre.ncsu.edu/A1F02/survey.htm> to complete the survey online.

1. What is environmental stewardship? (Please provide your definition/interpretation)
2. How does total transportation agency performance, not just new projects, reflect on DOT commitment to environmental excellence?
3. How does environmental stewardship shape regulatory/resource agency and public attitudes towards DOTs?
4. What are the consequences of environmental stewardship to transportation program management and delivery?
5. What are opportunities for environmental stewardship in transportation "on the job" throughout all agency functions?
6. What does environmental stewardship cost?
7. How can environmental stewardship help DOTs achieve their transportation missions?
8. Can environmental stewardship advance the streamlining goals of TEA21?
9. How can transportation agencies develop an environmental stewardship ethic among staff?
10. What are organizational and policy barriers to achieving a commitment to stewardship?

11. Please indicate any additional issues, questions or points-of-view you want to bring to the discussion on environmental stewardship.
12. Do you plan to attend the workshop in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 7, 2001? _____ Yes _____
No
13. Please provide the following contact information so that we may send you the results and follow up with you. (Optional)

Name:
Title:
Agency:
Address:
City:
State:
Zip Code:
Telephone:
Email:

Thank you!

Your responses will be summarized and used as basis for discussion at the open forum. A brief consensus document will be produced for use in shaping future transportation policy and to identify "next action steps."

We want to have a diverse group representing transportation modes and jurisdictions, environmental agencies, environmental advocacy groups and other stakeholders. We want this to be an open opportunity to participate in exploring ways to make environmental stewardship part of the business of transportation. Please join us. If you have any questions on the workshop or would like to participate in shaping it, please contact:

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See you there!

TRB ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP WORKSHOP**ATTENDANCE ROSTER**

1/7/01

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