Chair’s Message

2012 was an exciting year for ADC10. We started off with the Annual Meeting where we were involved in sessions that ranged from NEPA in Rail projects to better integration of transportation and public health. In the spring we went through our latest committee rotation – we welcomed eight new members, one new international member and three new young members. In the summer we held a tremendously successful Mid-Year Workshop in Little Rock as our first opportunity to get together with our new committee members. And just a few days later, we got a new federal transportation bill approved – something that is likely to dominate the discussion and sessions at this year’s Annual Meeting. You will find a lot of information in the newsletter regarding the Annual Meeting and I encourage you to use it to help you get the most out of the experience.

I look forward to 2013 as another year of important change and an opportunity for ADC10 to be involved in the ever changing world of environmental analysis. We plan to hold our Mid-Year workshop in New Jersey this summer to focus on urban environmental challenges and opportunities. I look forward to seeing our members and many of our Friends in both Washington DC and New Jersey this year.

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Chair, TRB Environmental Analysis in Transportation Committee (ADC10)
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Committee Website
Transportation: Driving a Sustainable Urban Environment

The 2013 Mid-Year Workshop
New Brunswick, New Jersey

It seems like it’s forever away—not even winter yet—but summer and the mid-year workshop is just around the corner.

This coming summer, we will be meeting in New Brunswick, New Jersey...thanks to another member of our committee, Ilona Ivanou who developed the idea and partnerships. Both the NJDOT and the NJTPA (New Jersey Transportation Planning Authority)—the MPO for the upper half of the state—are our hosts for the event. Both agencies have been very helpful in planning our workshop.

New Brunswick is a great place for our summer workshop. The city is centrally located between New York and Philadelphia—and an hour by train to either city. The Atlantic Ocean is even closer: as are many unique natural settings. New Brunswick boasts a substantial Hungarian population, a thriving Hispanic community, and a rich heritage reaching back to the first European settlement at the site of the present day city in 1681.

Our preliminary agenda (which is still subject to change) has eight sessions which strongly support the theme and sure to generate vigorous discussion.

The preliminary session topics are:

**Session A: Benefits and Challenges of Data Sharing-Consistency, Use, Collection, Meaning and Maintenance**

We have worked with the hotel to set a limited number of guest rooms aside for people attending the workshop. These rooms are at the substantially reduced rate of $129 per night. Please let the hotel know that you are with the “TRB ADC10 Summer Workshop” to get the discounted room rate.

We are currently looking for moderators and presenters for the sessions and sponsors for the workshop. If you would like to participate in any of the above mentioned ways or have questions, please contact either Meredith Krebs at krebs@pbworld.com or Martin Palmer at palmera@wsdot.wa.gov.

**Session B: Assessing tools—is Interagency collaboration better or worse?**

**Session C: Assessing effectiveness and abilities in MPO planning processes and what it means to people and the environment**

**Session D: Community needs and the environment—is there a conflict?**

**Session E: Public Health and especially HIA within and outside MPO planning processes**

**Session F: What is research missing? What is missing research?**

**Session G: MAP-21 Update and Implications**

**Session H: What is the latest from federal agencies?**

The 2013 TRB Environmental Analysis in Transportation mid-year workshop will be at the New Brunswick Hyatt Hotel. Registration for the workshop is open. The early bird registration for the workshop is $300.

After 2/15/2013 registration is $330 per person. One day and student rates are $160 (restrictions apply).

The 3-day workshop includes a research symposium, keynote speaker, continental breakfast, vendor booths, refreshment breaks, plenary and technical breakout sessions, panel discussions, and an optional transportation tour. We will be seeking ACP Certification Maintenance Credits for the workshop sessions.

Please go to our registration site for details and to view the workshop agenda.

http://2013adc10trbsummerworkshop.whindoo.com

We are open to and have been working to include other TRB committees in this coming year’s workshop. While our sister committee have yet to make a firm commitment, we hope to have several committees join us.

You will see the Save-the-Date message in the very future. We hope to see you there.
Health Impact Assessment: An Emerging Issue for Environmental Analysis

Written and Submitted by Harold Draper, Project Manager, Burns & McDonnell Engineering Company

During the summer of 2012 in Little Rock, Arkansas, the Transportation Research Board committees on Environmental Analysis, Air Quality, Ecology, and Environmental Justice met for a mid-year workshop. One of the big items on the agenda was Health Impact Assessment (HIA), including what it is, how to do it, and whether it should be included in an environmental impact analysis. Although since 1978 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations have included health among the impacts required to be assessed, the general assumption among practitioners has been that individual analyses of such topics as air quality, noise, and safety sufficiently cover the health implications of a proposed project. However, increased awareness of the health impacts of city planning and the role of transportation projects in making residents car-dependent has refocused this more narrow definition of health. It is becoming apparent that a wider look at the benefits and costs of transportation on health may need to be part of the NEPA analysis.

Transportation indirectly affects health by influencing the way communities are designed and built. Transportation policy in recent years has provided enhancement monies for bikeways as well as walking paths. Whether a community has transit, sidewalks, pedestrian crosswalks, traffic circles, and pedestrian-friendly areas downtown and at shopping centers affect public health. Access to green spaces is also part of broader sustainability discussions, including those about ‘nature deficit disorder.’ Thus, while poor air quality and high levels of traffic accidents continue to be part of ‘health impacts’, new concerns about reduced physical activity are related to poverty, inequality, employment, health care access, and urban food deserts. Communities without public transit, bicycle paths, and places to walk are less healthy. This is a broad list of concerns, and this broad list will likely make HIA difficult to integrate into project-level NEPA. In an attempt to assist in this effort, the National Academy of Sciences published a book in 2011 that focuses on integrating HIA into NEPA.

The TRB committees heard from communities and practitioners that have addressed HIA as part of their transportation project reviews. Examples are the 1-710 project in Los Angeles, a light rail line in St. Paul, and the SR-520 project in Seattle. Because they are conducted at the planning stage, HIs offer an opportunity to ensure that broad health concerns are considered when the design of projects is being shaped. Some of the areas considered in an HIA, in addition to air quality and noise, are environmental justice, green space, physical activity, mental well-being, and social services. For transportation projects, an important area can be maintaining connectivity of communities by installing walking and bicycle trails. In addition, green space can be added by covering sunken urban freeways with a lid and landscaping of the freeway lid. This has been done in Seattle. Finally, design features can add to the visual character of transportation projects.

Following the review of projects, discussions focused on the best time to do an HIA. There was some feeling that HIA is best done at a higher level of transportation planning, rather than at the project level. For example, at the long-range transportation planning level and even the short-term transportation improvement plan level, there is still discussion on the transportation mode, such as transit or highway. Also, most DOTs, which are primarily involved at the project level, do not have land use or planning authority. Also, some of the discussion involved the importance of focusing on the beneficial aspects of transportation projects on health rather than only the negative impacts.

For now, the use of HIA will probably be a puzzle for many NEPA practitioners. Most practitioners engaged in project-level NEPA will only occasionally see the need for HIA, perhaps only when it is raised as an issue by the public. However, it is likely to increasingly be a concern of transportation planning organizations, such as Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and, like environmental justice, will eventually be integrated into most NEPA documents.

Further Reading:


This committee is concerned with issues relating to the environmental impacts of transportation projects and systems. Emphasis is placed upon planning, decision making, and mitigation strategies, policies and processes, as well as multidisciplinary impact considerations.

Follow ADC10 [here].

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