1. 2007 Urban Mobility Report Garners Massive Media Interest

On September 18, the 2007 Urban Mobility Report was released to an eager media audience anxious to report on our nation’s ever-increasing congestion problem. So popular was the study that mobility analysts Tim Lomax and David Schrank were interviewed by approximately 140 newspapers, radio stations and network television programs.

The Urban Mobility Report, funded in part by the University Transportation Center for Mobility at TTI, is an enormous undertaking for the authors who researched it. Promoting its findings presents another challenge, and TTI’s Communications Group worked for weeks prior to the release compiling lists of media contacts, arranging interviews, writing news releases and posting volumes of data to TTI’s website.
“When you see an article about the report or view an interview with us on ABC News, it represents years of data collection and weeks of work to make sure the information gets to the public,” Lomax said. “Overall, the process went very smoothly, but behind the scenes, things were chaotic at times. Meetings that Sue James arranged in the weeks prior to the release ensured that key decision-maker groups understood the new methodology.”

Lomax was in Washington, D.C., as part of a news conference sponsored by ARTBA (American Road and Transportation Builders Association) and APTA (American Public Transportation Association) announcing details of the report’s findings. Most of the network television news groups interviewed him for their evening broadcasts. Schrank was interviewed live on CNN Sunday, September, 23.

Historically, TTI’s Urban Mobility Report has been quoted for months after its release. The last report was issued in 2005, but members of the media were referencing it up until the 2007 version was released. “The report usually generates stories from both national and small-town publications alike. We put a lot of effort into the numbers and the process,” Schrank said, adding that Administrative Assistant Pam Rowe was vital in producing the report.

Members of TTI Communications that worked on the project included Richard Cole, Michelle Hoelscher, Tobey Lindsey, Rose Matejka, Mark Coppock and Rick Davenport. Bernie Fette of the Transportation Operations Group (TOG), who organized previous mobility report releases, assisted with this year’s project.

Read news release:
http://mobility.tamu.edu/ums/media_information/press_release.stm

Read 2007 Urban Mobility Report:
http://mobility.tamu.edu/ums/

See KBTX-TV coverage:
http://www.kbtx.com/home/headlines/9861421.html

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2. Annual TTI Council Meeting One to Remember

A crisp day in mid-September and the rolling hills of the massive Circle T Ranch set the stage for this year’s annual TTI Council meeting. The Council, comprised of 31 influential transportation leaders in Texas, met at the Perot family ranch located on a 17,000 acre, master-planned development called AllianceTexas.

Chaired by David Cain of DC Consulting, the meeting began with a welcome and introduction by Tim Ward, Council member and president of Alliance Air/Aviation Services. Ward introduced Ross Perot Jr., chairman of Hillwood Development Corporation, the firm responsible for AllianceTexas. The development features the world’s first 100% industrial airport, BNSF Railway’s Intermodal Facility (the 4th largest intermodal yard), the Texas Motor Speedway and the massive American Airlines Maintenance Base, which can accommodate up to six 777-aircraft wingtip-to-wingtip.

Council members were taken in groups of five on a brief helicopter flight to explore AllianceTexas and to see the interlink between air, rail and roadway transportation elements within the massive development. Members also took an afternoon tour of the American Airlines Maintenance Base.

TTI Director Dennis Christiansen introduced Council members and gave an overview of the Institute’s progress and future goals during his tenure in leadership. New funding initiatives, new leadership at the Texas A&M president and A&M System chancellor positions, and the new TTI state headquarters building were among the topics highlighted in his presentation.

Associate Agency Director Ed Seymour gave an overview of TTI international research endeavors, and Assistant Director Steve Roop discussed developments between TTI and Zachary American Infrastructure on the freight shuttle concept. The afternoon concluded with a roundtable discussion and brief talks about transportation issues in Texas and ways TTI can serve as a catalyst for economic growth.

Meet TTI Council members:
http://tti.tamu.edu/council/

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3. TTI Joins Consortium to Improve U.S. Infrastructure

TTI asphalt researchers are working on a multi-million dollar contract to improve the nation’s infrastructure as part of the Asphalt Research Consortium (ARC), which officially started this summer under the direction of the Federal Highway Administration.

ARC received funding of $27 million for five years through the last highway bill. The consortium is headed by the Western Research Institute, with TTI, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Nevada at Reno and Advanced Asphalt Technology as partners.

“Although the project is getting underway now, we’ve been working for the last five years to get involved in this type of group effort,” said Senior Research Fellow Dallas Little, who is leading TTI’s efforts along with Research Engineers Robert Lytton and Eyad Masad. “This research is imperative in order to improve our nation’s pavement infrastructure, which is predominately asphalt. I am very pleased that the work is beginning.”

TTI will focus on preventing two of the primary causes of pavement problems—moisture damage and fatigue cracking. “We have to find ways to make pavement last longer. It is a resource that should be cherished and preserved,” Little said. “Our consortium includes some of the best asphalt chemists, rheologists and performance modelers anywhere to address these problems.”

4. TTI Anniversaries

5 Years

Ceki Halmen, Research Associate (EDV)
Jim Kruse, Director, Center for Ports and Waterways (RPW)
Jonathan Tydlacka, Associate Transportation Researcher (JHO)

15 Years

Kevin Hall, Research Scientist (HTF)

20 Years

Emmanuel Fernando, Research Engineer (BSU)

30 Years

Ivan Lorenz, Research Specialist (FDV)
Katie Womack, Senior Research Scientist (TSR)

5. Language Barrier No Hurdle at TTI

From Afrikaans to Vietnamese, TTI employees are fluent in 23 foreign languages. So far, 64 people have taken a survey detailing their fluency in languages like Gujarati, Khmer and Kannada.

“Because of our international efforts, it’s great to know that we can communicate with people all over the globe,” says Associate Agency Director Ed Seymour, who heads up TTI’s international research initiative. “We want to thank those people who will volunteer to help on international projects or with foreign visitor interactions. Knowing their language will give us a big advantage.”

A foreign language skills survey was developed by the International Research Committee and distributed in September. Results are located on TTINet.

If you would like to help the Institute’s international effort by sharing your foreign language skills but did not take the survey, please contact your resume expert.
6. UTCM Opens Doors for Transportation Solutions

The newly formed University Transportation Center for Mobility (UTCM) at TTI is opening new doors for researchers and educators to pursue projects for mobility enhancement. Congestion management and mitigation, nationwide mobility, rural public transportation and infrastructure financing have far-reaching implications for every American. For this reason, the UTCM is specifically targeting solutions to problems in these four areas of mobility.

“The UTCM is well on its way, having already established seven significant transportation projects totaling nearly $400,000,” said UTCM Director Melissa Tooley. The UTCM, for example, helped fund TTI’s 2007 Urban Mobility Report, which was released September 18.

Tooley is convinced that the Center’s work will help provide positive solutions to the nation’s mobility issues. “These problems impact nearly every aspect of society, including health care, recreation, education, goods manufacturing and delivery and national security. We address mobility issues at national, regional and local levels to enhance the quality of life for all Americans,” she said.

Read full story: http://tti.tamu.edu/infofor/media/news.htm?news_id=4448

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7. Texas Transportation Hall of Honor Welcomes Class of 2007

The stately board room in the Texas Department of Transportation’s historic Dewitt Greer Building in Austin was an apt setting for the induction ceremony of three transportation visionaries into the Texas Transportation Hall of Honor September 25. The class of 2007 includes J.C. Dingwall, Ernest E. Howard and Marcus L. Yancy Jr.

Director Dennis Christiansen presided over the event, which included reflections from family members and transportation colleagues.

Marcus Yancy speaks about his career at his acceptance into the Hall of Honor.
Among the notable career achievements of Ernest Howard was being called upon by the Governor in 1914 to design the Congress Avenue Bridge in Austin. In his remarks, Howard Needles Tammen & Bergendoff (HNTB) Vice President Richard Ridings noted Howard’s extraordinary vision in “designing a bridge that was originally intended for carriages and Model T’s, but was so well built the original foundation was used when the bridge was refurbished in the 1980s.”

Former TxDOT State Highway Engineer J.C. Dingwall directed construction of the Gulf Freeway, the first urban expressway built in Texas. Under Dingwall, the department employed 20,500 people as it pushed to complete the interstate highway system. Don Dingwall, son of J.C. Dingwall, accepted the award on behalf of the Dingwall family. “I am grateful and humbled to know that my father’s contributions are being recognized, as the Texas Highway Department was his passion,” said Dingwall.

Marcus Yancy joined the Texas Highway Department in 1957, where he worked until his retirement in 1993. He was twice appointed as chairman of the State Agency Coordinating Council, and he was twice elected to the board of the State Employees Retirement System. In his acceptance speech, Yancy said “the joy of my career was my participation in the creation of our roadway system and the close network of friends that continues today.”

Other speakers included TxDOT Interim Executive Director Steve Simmons, Executive Vice President of the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC) Tom Johnson, Chairman of the Board of Williams Brothers Construction James Pitcock and Former Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration Ray Barnhart.

After the ceremony, AGC hosted a luncheon with speakers that included former chair of the Texas Transportation Commission David Laney, and former Executive Director of TxDOT Arnold Oliver.

The Texas Transportation Hall of Honor, established in 2000 by TTI, was set up to recognize in a formal and permanent manner those visionary leaders who have helped to provide Texas with an outstanding transportation system.

The Hall of Honor is located in the main conference room in TTI’s Gibb Gilchrist Building at the Texas A&M Research Park in College Station. Each individual inductee is
recognized by a plaque on permanent display.

More inductee info:

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8. Alberson Conducts First TRB Webinar

The Transportation Research Board (TRB) is getting into the webinar business, sharing information about transportation subjects with interested parties over the Internet. Assistant Agency Director Dean Alberson agreed to host the 90-minute inaugural webinar detailing cable barriers, which are growing in popularity across the country.

Two-hundred and fifty people nationwide, mostly Department of Transportation employees, tuned in for the webinar. “It was a bit strange because although I knew there was an audience, I could not see them to gauge their reaction,” Alberson said. “But, it was fun and they asked plenty of questions afterward.”

“This pilot webinar went well,” says TRB Senior Program Officer Chuck Niessner. “We hope to do one of these each month. Information about price and topics will be released in our weekly TRB newsletter.”

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9. TTI in the News

There have been numerous mentions of TTI and our experts in recent media reports. Here are links to some of the stories.

Bicycling alternative to traffic delays (Houston Chronicle) Oct. 1

Teen driving tragedy (El Paso Times) Sept. 23

Medium-sized city traffic (Charlotte Observer) Sept. 23
Austin drivers fed up (News 8 Austin) Sept. 19

Funds short for congestion fix (Land Line Magazine) Sept. 19

Denver traffic toll (Denver Post) Sept. 19

Fifty-seven hours of delay (San Diego Union-Tribune) Sept. 19

Congestion the worst in L.A. (Los Angeles Times) Sept. 19

Chicago gridlock (Chicago Tribune) Sept. 19

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10. Stockton Introduces Students to TTI Border Security Work

The efforts by TTI to improve wait times at Texas/Mexico border crossings were the topic of Associate Agency Director Bill Stockton’s seminar for civil engineering students, September 19. Stockton’s seminar was the third in a series of presentations about transportation issues for the CVEN 681 Transportation Seminar class taught by Associate Professor and TTI Research Engineer Gene Hawkins.

“CVEN 681 is a seminar class for graduate students. It exposes them to real-world information that they might not learn about in the classroom,” said Hawkins. “The presenters are top-notch professionals that help bring purpose and focus to engineering principles and theories.”

Upcoming seminars will include topics on Texas transportation policy, airports, railroads, expert witness testimony, and reconstruction of motor vehicle crashes. “Right now there is a huge demand for civil engineers. I think these seminars will help bring a new perspective and interest to their education,” Hawkins said.

The seminars are open to all students, faculty and professional staff.

View seminar schedule:
http://www.civil.tamu.edu/seminars.html

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11. HEART™ Reality: First Crash Cushion Produced

It was seven years between concept and production, but on August 15 the first HEART™ (Hybrid Energy Absorbing Reusable Terminal) roadside crash cushion, designed by TTI, came off the assembly line at the Trinity Industries plant at Ft. Worth.

“The HEART is a next-generation crash cushion and is designed for use at high-accident locations,” says Dean Alberson who, along with Lance Bullard, designed the roadside safety device. “When a crash happens, energy is absorbed from the impact, and under most conditions the HEART will return to its original length.”

The HEART is a high-end device that is reusable and therefore can be more cost-effective than other crash cushions. “Although the HEART can be initially more expensive than one-time use types of crash cushions, the HEART can actually be more cost-effective because, for nuisance hits, the unit may not have to be replaced like many other models of cushions,” according to Bullard.

TTI has a long history with crash cushions, designing and testing early models in the 1960s. Those early crash cushions were essentially 55 gallon barrels with cut out sections or containers filled with water or sand.

The HEART has already been accepted by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for use on the National Highway System and by TxDOT on an experimental basis. Trinity Industries is in talks with individual districts and other states for implementation.
12. Employees Can’t Donate with Bread Alone…

As part of this year’s State Employee Charitable Campaign (SECC), TTI SECC coordinator Susie Catalina organized the first of three bake sales September 27 at the Gilchrist Building. If you missed out on the brownies, pies and cheesecake, Susie is bringing new goodies to Riverside, Wells Fargo and CE/TTI over the next few weeks. (Watch your email for dates and times).

Last year, the statewide SECC campaign raised $9.3 million for charity. “We are hoping to have 100 percent TTI participation,” says Catalina. “It’s very easy to sign up online at https://sso.tamu.edu/main.aspx or send me your pledge sheets at MS 3135 for a one-time donation or even a small monthly donation that comes right out of your check. There are so many worthwhile charities that are deserving of your consideration.”

In addition to the bake sales, TTI will have an online auction October, 31 of items donated by employees. If you would like to donate items for the auction, please contact Susie Catalina or bring them to the Gilchrist Bldg., Rm. 270, by October, 26.

The deadline to give to the charity of your choice through SECC is October, 31.

Employees who helped with the first bake sale were Lauren Bohler, Dolores Hott, Susan Brown, Michelle Jones, Marla Richardson, Nancy Stratta, Rhonda Brinkman, Brenda Lichti, Nancy Pippin and Nancy Coppock, wife of Mark Coppock.

SECC information: http://www.tamus.edu/secc/coordinators/forms/directory.pdf
13. Miller Departs TTI, Stays in Family

After more than 13 years with TTI, Kim Miller is leaving to become creative director for the Division of Marketing and Communications at Texas A&M. Her last day will be Friday, October 12.

Most recently, Kim worked as manager of visual media in TTI Communications. In addition to directing the graphic design and video production staff, she worked directly with TxDOT in planning research implementation projects.

TTI Communications serves as a primary resource for the Division of Marketing and Communications, Kim noted, so she still will be working with TTI staff on projects throughout the year.

14. Editor’s Corner: Blank Screen/Blank Paper Syndrome

Do you occasionally have trouble starting a report for your project? Sometimes a blank computer screen staring you in the face, or a blank piece of paper waiting to be written on, can be a little intimidating. Maybe you’re just a little too close to your material, or possibly even a little tired of it? While lots of reasons might delay your beginning to write, once you’ve started it gets easier page by page. Here are a few techniques you might use to help you get over that first big hurdle.

Write an email to a family member or friend. Oh, you don’t need to send it—just write it. It’s surprising how much easier it is to get started when you begin with, “Hi, Mom. Guess what I just finished working on…..”

Try fill-in-the-blank starters. Write a few sentences that give you the gist of content without requiring much mental energy. You’ll be tempted to fill in the blanks right away. Don’t do it!
Leave them open-ended until you finish eight questions, and your mind will begin stirring up all sorts of answers for you to fill in. You might come up with sentences such as:

- When I started this project, I thought I would _______________________.
- The toughest part of the project has been _____________________________.
- The biggest surprise during this project was that _________________________.
- The most interesting outcome from the project is _________________________.
- And so on and so on and so on.

**Use sticky notes.** Put one single thought about your project on each sticky note. When you’ve gone through one pad of sticky notes—or before, if you run out of thoughts—put them up on a blank wall (or easel if you want to get fancy) in logical groupings. You’ll be surprised how quickly your report outline emerges. If you’re adept at a similar computer program, you could use it instead—but I find those bright-colored pieces of paper prompt my little gray cells to get going.

**Call in a friend.** If you’re really stumped and putting words down in any kind of order has just thrown you for a loop, ask a friend or coworker to stop by in person. Tell them about your project, and their questions will begin to help you develop the skeleton of your report.

I hope some of these ideas help you get your report started. Once you get the first draft written, second draft revisions usually go smoothly (and third draft revisions, and fourth draft revisions…but we won’t talk about those!).

*Editor’s Corner is written by Rhonda Brinkmann, research editor in TTI Communications. Rhonda is happy to take requests for column topics.*

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### 15. Calendar/Reminders

Oct. 16-17—81st Annual Transportation Short Course

[http://tti.tamu.edu/conferences/tsc07/](http://tti.tamu.edu/conferences/tsc07/)
Nov. 4-7—2007 National Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety Conference,
San Antonio
For more information, registration:
http://tti.tamu.edu/conferences/rail07/

Nov. 7—Support Staff Retreat

Nov. 6-8—RMC Meetings, San Antonio

Nov. 22-23—Thanksgiving Holiday

Dec. 24-Jan. 1—Christmas—New Year’s Day Holidays

Jan. 13-17—2008 TRB 87th Annual Meeting
Washington D.C.
For more information, registration: