NEW FORMAT FOR PROJECT SUMMARY REPORTS

The following is an excerpt from a letter received from Paul Krugler, TxDOT. The instructions begin on page 2.

“A new format for Project Summary Reports (PSRs) was discussed at the June 1999 Research Management Committee (RMC) meetings, and examples were shown. This letter officially announces the new format and provides instructions for universities preparing these reports. The attached instructions will be incorporated in our Research and Technology Transfer Manual in the future.

The new format for PSRs may be used, at the option of the researcher, for any currently outstanding research report of this type. Should the project agreement require only one report, however, the new format may not be used to fulfill that requirement. For research projects continuing into FY 2000, all PSRs will be in the new format.

Most PSRs will be two pages, front and back, but projects with multiple products may require the maximum three-page length. Hard copies of the two PSR examples that were shown at the June RMC meetings will be mailed to you in the near future. We will also be providing a revised process for PSR submittals.

It is important for researchers to recognize that the PSR is a key project deliverable and deserves considerable attention. It must be concise yet informative, as it will usually be the sole report from the project distributed throughout the department and to other states.”
A project summary report (PSR) does exactly what its name implies – summarizes a research project. The ideal project summary report should be a clear, concise, readable statement of what the research accomplished, why the research is important, and how the research can best be put to use. The PSR is a vital link between TxDOT’s ongoing research program (academic inquiry) and the implementation program (practical applications). It guides the user from one to the next.

**Purposes**

The project summary report serves several purposes:

♦ To facilitate implementation of research results
♦ To further continuing education and professional development
♦ To elicit interest among audience members in more detailed information about the research
♦ To satisfy requirements that TxDOT report research results to state DOTs and other transportation entities

**Requirements**

A project summary report is to be a formal deliverable requirement for every TxDOT-sponsored research project.

Each project summary report will contain the elements listed below. Item 7, “Related Research,” is optional, and item 6, “TxDOT Implementation Status,” is prepared by CSTR. The researcher is responsible for preparing items 1 through 5.

1. A brief statement of the purpose and scope of the project and the need giving rise to the research
2. “What We Did”
3. “What We Found”
4. “The Researcher Recommends”
5. “For More Details . . .”
6. “TxDOT Implementation Status” – prepared by CSTR
7. “Related Research” – optional

The desired length for project summary reports is between 1500 and 3000 words, not to exceed 6 pages total (continuous paper printed double-sided and folded to a maximum of three 8-1/2 by 11 sheets). To ensure readability, a font size no smaller than 10 point should be used. Project summary reports should contain at least one illustration or graphic, because information presented visually can be more readily grasped. For this reason, photographs and figures (bar charts, pie charts, graphs, etc.) are generally preferable to tables. Appropriate use of color is also encouraged.
Irrespective of author, length, or subject matter, all project summary reports should be:

♦ Written by the researcher, except the section entitled “TxDOT Implementation Status”
  -- Communicate essential information about the project
♦ Easy to read
  -- Provide clear and useful material that potential users can easily understand
♦ Quick to read
  -- Include illustrations
  -- Highlight what is most important about the research and its potential uses
♦ Pleasing and professional in appearance
  -- Make effective use of both color and illustrations
  -- Follow the prescribed format of elements
  -- Be arranged on paper so as to maximize readability

Because project summary reports will be given wide distribution both within TxDOT and nationally, they are significant documents despite their brevity. Not only do they set forth research achievements, but their timely dissemination will facilitate implementation of research results in Texas as well as elsewhere.