

November 30, 2002

Ms. Mary E. Peters
Administrator
Federal Highway Administration
Room 4218
400 7th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Administrator Peters:

The Research and Technology Coordinating Committee (FHWA) met on November 7–8, 2002, at the National Academies building in Washington, D.C. The enclosed meeting roster indicates the members, liaisons, guests, and TRB staff in attendance. On behalf of the committee, I want to thank FHWA for its continuing interest in the work of the RTCC. I also want to thank and commend the FHWA staff—especially Deputy Administrator Richard Capka and the agency’s research and technology (R&T) goal owners—for their participation in the meeting. In particular, the committee recognizes the participation of the following individuals: Cindy Burbank, King Gee, Monica Gourdine, Peter Markle, Chip Nottingham, Jeff Paniati, Joe Toole, and Rudy Umbs.

The opportunity to meet with them and discuss how the agency is addressing the recommendations from the committee’s recent report (TRB Special Report 261: *The Federal Role in Highway Research and Technology*) was very useful and very much appreciated.

This letter is an intentionally brief summary of the meeting; information about the committee’s future activities and meetings is also provided. The report is organized under three main topics: review of FHWA activities related to R&T program management and stakeholder involvement, FHWA plans for laboratory assessments, and committee plans for a symposium on the national highway R&T program.

Review of Recent Activities Related to FHWA R&T Program Management and Stakeholder Involvement

FHWA staff, led by Rick Capka and Dennis Judycki, described two key activities aimed at improving agency processes for R&T program planning and priority setting. In addition, each of the R&T goal owners reported on how individual program offices are supporting these activities. The first activity is the development of a corporate master plan for R&T. FHWA is engaging a wide range of internal and external stakeholders to

generate suggestions for improving agency processes for R&T needs identification, program planning, and priority setting. The agency also is reviewing how other federal agencies involve stakeholders, review proposals, evaluate research outcomes, and deploy research products to establish benchmarks for its program.

The second activity—described as raising the bar for highway R&T—includes the development of multiyear R&T program plans, or “roadmaps,” for each of the program offices. While previous FHWA attempts at roadmapping R&T program plans were primarily internal exercises, this new initiative, by including external stakeholders, responds to previous committee suggestions. Including external R&T stakeholders in its processes can help FHWA focus its R&T program on research addressing national issues and requiring significant resources. It can also help the agency identify potential research partners and collaborators. Both outcomes can mobilize support for the agency’s program and strengthen the national highway R&T effort. The committee is encouraged by these two key initiatives and their early accomplishments; we look forward to future reports on these activities.

FHWA Laboratory Assessment Plans

FHWA staff presented information on plans to conduct assessments for each of the laboratories at the Turner-Fairbank Highway Research Center. The committee commended FHWA staff on the draft handbook that has been prepared to guide expert panels in the assessments. The agency is currently planning to undertake a pilot assessment of the human factors laboratory. It was noted that the 3-day assessment warrants some compensation—an honorarium or similar financial award—for the assessment team members, even if those employed by public agencies are likely to be unable to accept any compensation. At the request of FHWA, the committee agreed to consider assigning an observer to the pilot assessment.

RTCC Plans for a Symposium on the National Highway R&T Program

As noted in our previous letter report dated August 20, 2002, the RTCC is planning a symposium that examines the roles and responsibilities of the various highway R&T programs and explores opportunities for greater stakeholder involvement and collaboration. The symposium planning task force met on November 7, 2002, to discuss potential symposium themes and organizational options. The task force presented its preliminary proposal to the full committee later that day. After considerable discussion, the committee asked staff to prepare a revised proposal and timetable for consideration by the task force. A task force meeting via telephone conference call will be held on November 25, 2002, to finalize plans for the symposium.

For planning purposes the symposium is scheduled for April 3–4, 2003.

Meeting Plans

The committee's next meeting will be organized in conjunction with the proposed symposium in Washington, D.C. We will continue to work with FHWA staff on the preparation for the symposium. The committee also plans to meet on June 18-19, 2003.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Michael Walton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

C. Michael Walton
Chair
Research and Technology Coordinating Committee (FHWA)

Enclosure

**Meeting Attendance: Committee, Liaisons, Guests, and Staff
November 7–8, 2002**

Committee

C. Michael Walton (NAE), Chair	Timothy Neuman
Joel Anderson	Sandra Rosenbloom
Dennis Christiansen	Michael Ryan
Frank Danchetz	David Spivey
Irwin Feller	Paul Wells
Karen Miller	Kevin Womack

Liaisons and Guests

Cindy Burbank, FHWA	Tom Krylowski, FHWA
Richard Capka, FHWA	Chris Lawson, FHWA
Joe Conway, FHWA	Peter Markle, FHWA
King Gee, FHWA	Chip Nottingham, FHWA
Monica Gourdine, FHWA	Jeff Paniati, FHWA
Dennis Judycki, FHWA	Dave Smith, FHWA
Tony Kane, AASHTO	Joe Toole, FHWA
Marci Kenney, FHWA	Rudy Umbs, FHWA

TRB Staff

Walter Diewald
Stephen Godwin
Neil Hawks
Robert Reilly
Robert Skinner