

Minutes from WHRP Steering Committee Meeting

November 4, 1998

Present: Bosscher, Gruendler, Kuemmel, McComb, McMullen, Paddock, Porter, Van Sistine, Waelti, Walker

1. Bosscher described the historical setting for the beginning of the Wisconsin Highway Research Program. Gruendler described the WisDOT aspirations for the Wisconsin Highway Research Program.

Comments: Having a strategic plan for the highway research program could lead to greater mutual support by the various academia, industry groups and DOT, and provide more opportunities for the Program to receive additional research funds from other sources beyond DOT.

2. Bosscher provided an overview of the Agreement between WisDOT and UW-Madison. This document describes the program structure, the program personnel, the technical oversight committee function, and the budget.
3. Bosscher described some long-term goals for the WHRP including: Linkage of Northern-tier states, Linkage of Wisconsin Universities, Garnering more federal funding, and Formation of Wisconsin Transportation Center or Institute.
4. Gruendler described the purpose of the Highway Research Steering Committee including: Program oversight, Policy decision making, and Budget decision making.

Comments: It was suggested that the Steering Committee set broad program direction for the standing TOCs. The TOCs would work on detail objectives for the program plan.

5. Bosscher described the annual timeline of the WHRP showing key decisions needed by the steering committee – December for the Strategic Planning Review, April for Approval of Projects, and September for budgeting decisions.

6. Open issues identified

- a) Restructuring of the Council on Research: When the Council is restructured, WTBA would like to be involved in those discussions. There are a number of non-engineering issues that have impacts on the highway program.
- b) Budget for the Highway Research Program: Annually, the overall program budget for the Highway Research Program should be reviewed by the Steering Committee to determine if the program level is adequate to meet Wisconsin's research agenda. If not, other sources of funding could be redirected to the Program.
- c) "Fast Track" Research: Through what process will the HRSC or TOC's be able to handle research needs or issues that arise outside the annual Request For Proposal process and need a more immediate answer?
- d) District Input: How will district research needs be addressed in the new process?
- e) Activities eligible for SP&R funds: What types of activities within the area of "research, development and technology transfer" are eligible to use SP&R funds? There is no specific federal regulation defining this aspect of the research program in detail. General guidance should be given to the standing TOC's, as they identify specific problem statements and the related RFPs. (Ex: Are *technology* efforts an allowable activity to use SP&R money?)
- f) Competitive awards: Through what type of process will investigators be selected, given a "competitive award" process will be utilized? There are two types now used in research - the NCHRP (TRB's National Cooperative Highway Research Program) type model, or the more informal NOI (Notification of Interest) model. Bosscher stated the NCHRP process is preferred, whereby the TOCs identifying the basic tasks desired before the principle investigator is selected.