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## MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING

Task Force on Understanding New Directions for the National Household Travel Survey (ABJ45T)

August 24, 2015 8:30 AM  
Room 201, Keck Center, Washington DC

1. Agenda (Appendix 1)
2. General Items for the Record
  - **Task force outlook and review of strategic plan:** The attendees discussed the task force outlook for the future and came up with the following conclusions:
    - Circular info. Revise based on Adella's suggestions to incorporate other research that is going on.
    - The Task Force will keep abreast of data collection efforts and efforts to merge the NHTS with other data sources. It was also suggested to consider various TRB committees to work with to enhance the NHTS development of new tools. Focus on other transportation issues.
    - Enhancing usability of data and emerging issues inside & outside TF scope.
    - Historically NHTS has been used with other relevant data sources. Framing in the context of overall travel behavior.
    - Confidentiality issues
      - Use categorical variables and preserve confidentiality.
      - Release NHTS at census block group
      - Eliminate identification information. Disclosure proofing is standard practice.
      - Commuting in America – CB turned down requests that were accepted previously.
    - NHTS collects so much data that it can be problematic, and there is too much availability of data.
    - Users have the expectation that questions asked will be current and will include variables that help answer future questions.
    - Badge it as 2016 NHTS – reference it as 2016 in all documentation
    - In order to increase relevance and usage of data and to make the user community more supportive, the TF members came up with the following suggestions and research opportunities:
      - Demonstrate linkage of the NHTS with other data sources to broaden potential impact & usefulness; visualization can be employed
      - Demonstrate policy relevance.
      - If this information does not satisfy needs, provide cover to the NHTS: Carshare, bikeshare, TNCs and tremendous information – Refer those needs to USDOT, TRB etc. as information needs that are not addressed within the tool.

- Travel surveys issues can bring a panel together due to evolving technologies and other data sources.
  - Data fusion with other data sources.
  - Data hacking/competition on the fusion.
  - Tools for combining big data with NHTS
  - National dataset whether people have a cellphone when you traveled – demographics of people who have a cellphone when they travel
  - Cellphone data for Evacuation modeling
  - Protect households on blocks with sparse information.
  - Maintain the communication links between TF and others that inform our needs.
  - Publicize Methodological advances
  - Workshop on trends/cycles that can inform NHTS data collection.
  - Think through what NHTS can offer to people who are engaged in it. How conducive are trips for Autonomous Vehicles (AV). Emerging models on using those modes. Interdependence of travel issues within households. Emerging critical issues and what information NHTS does and does not collect.
  - Many of the historical issues such as race, ethnicity etc. will drop by and will focus more on occupation, jobs, where is the demography going? – over the 65 and under 35 issues? What are the new determinants of travel?
- How to solve these issues?
  - NHTS problem statements. Engaging with community on an ongoing basis. Vacuums the ideas from all fields to inform and use the NHTS.
  - Figure out a role of NHTS on Long Distance.
  - Identify funding from other sources. The following workshop topic was suggested: Future mobility data: Needs and Opportunities.
  - Involve add-on partners to make the pitch for funding.
  - Pooled funding becomes large enough via AMPO. Or have a lead state.
  - Timing in the context of the NHTS.
  - Data needs for policy. Does NHTS want to embrace the broader role for goto source for travel behavior issues.
  - Use 2016 to plan for future. Small effort for 2016, build into 2017
  - Focus methodology and broad context of next NHTS.
  - Really important to define objectives and break into pieces and start it small.
- **FHWA Update:** Adella Santos (FHWA) gave an update about the 2015 NHTS.
  - FHWA expects response rates to be between 30% to 65%. Historically, overall response rate was 42% in 2001 & 18% in 2009
  - One key to success is to set user community expectations
  - With the OMB review ongoing, 4 to 6 months is the upper bound to get approval
  - A question was asked about if the mode categories in the NHTS will look at the new mode categories being put out by the CB for the rail mode.

- Susan Liss gave an overview of the expert panel (Appendix 2) and the panel had no issues with ABS
  - A suggestion was made to make the NHTS on an ongoing basis to capture redesign effects so as is not to put all eggs in a single basket. FHWA's rationale is to spread out the funding.
  - The panel spent time on Incentives and how to use the survey
  - Concern about 100% HH participation and throwing it away.
- FHWA is exploring using the data. Two files – one with 100% and other one will include 100% and 50%.
- Future surveys rely on panels
- Model development seems to drive survey
- Data cleaning and reconstruction of partial trips is a tremendous effort. Separate weighting also required.
- The survey will use a visualized map for retrieval
- Panel concerned about retrieval not done on a smartphone. Logistically might be tough to overcome.
- Panel report will be distributed.
- Data usage
  - Weekday weight and seven day weight
  - Weighting accounts for differential availability of mode options
  - Unknown if weighting will be geography specific.
  - A suggestion was made to do the NHTS in modules
  - Weighting scheme – components of weighting not given separately. Each add-on will be getting a 7 day and 5 day weight.
- Task Force members had the following suggestions regarding the data:
  - Tolls should not be deleted
  - Develop a guidebook on how to use and not use data
  - Income should complement ACS categories
  - Parking costs and tolling costs/usage be considered
  - Respondent burden should be considered with respect to adding questions
    - High # of people doing recreational trips using tolls
    - How many trips do you take in a day
  - Task Force members suggested that long distance trips be set in in context since what is a long distance trip is never clear to respondents.
- Does not distinguish between personal & commercial trips and record as many trips as they took
- Long distance trips are never clearcut to respondents therefore TF members mentioned the need to put long distance trips in context
- **Breakout Groups Summary:** The TF members broke into different groups to discuss the contents for the second circular based on the write-ups sent by TF members. The discussion is summarized below.
  - Group 1:
    - ABS vs RDD: Add something about trendline, recommend analytical piece, not get overly concerned about changes in methods
    - Recruitment – writing on social exchange theory, challenges in recruitment effort (held in election year), issue of govt

intrusiveness, outreach efforts for NHTS, especially in add-on, talk about websites to give respondent information about legitimacy of survey – Westat, NHTS, USDOT

- Reminders – Comfortable with language, assign personal rep – please clarify, remove paragraph on 3 & 4% response rate.

- Group 2:

- Incentives – Add some information on how individual vs household incentive compares. More explicit statement about how incentive plan works. Future research on incentives.
- Travel data retrieval – Experiment on affects in change in methodology and methods to retrieve.
- Trip diary – Travel day diary & travel day data retrieval. More general but what is needed is more information on diary. Illustration of diary. How PIN is implemented and screens as well as use of pull down menus. Helpful if somebody familiar with ABM writes up the diary section.

- Group 3:

- Trip Reporting – Move to introduction. Include screenshots for people to work through the process. Reference to regional travel survey.
- 2nd generation HTTP under implementation and ability to read across various platforms.
- Weekend/Weekday – Provide list of states that are doing 7 days vs add-ons doing reduced weekends. Might not capture weekend work trips. FHWA adjustment factors.
- Proxy collection – Needs major revision. We really don't know who is answering the question. Separate notion of proxy – research question on web vs non-web. Bias wrt self-reporting. Checks are in place
- Confidentiality – Edit is needed and no need to mention to Snowden. More references to phishing and data breaches. Confidentiality issues do impact response rate. Measures to safeguard information. Will confidentiality assurances hamper response rates.

- **2015 Annual Meeting Activities**

- Talking about the data and other sources. National transit append to NHTS.
- Session on scoping the future of the NHTS conference. Rectify facts – Fusion or Confusion. What is society going to be like? What does it mean when barriers to sharing disappear. NCHRP 750 on pushing us beyond what we do?
- What are the policy questions to answer in the next 20 years? Research results that feed into the policy decisions? What are the behaviors that feed into this research. What do we use the data to support in the broader sense.
- How to use this data for decisions. Systems that are robust and resilient. Go to more frequent data collection.
- Will NHTS move to collect other data such as bike/car share, TNCs etc.

3. Action Items

- a. Develop second circular
- b. Finalize Annual Meeting Plans

Meeting adjourned at 4 PM.

Distribution of Minutes

- (a) Committee Members
- (b) Section Chair (if applicable)
- (c) Group Chair
- (d) TRB Staff Representative

## **ABJ45T – 2015 Mid Year Meeting**

**Meeting Date:** August 24, 2015

**Meeting Time:** 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM (Continental Breakfast at 8 AM)

**Meeting Location:** TRB HQ – Room 201, Keck Center, 500 Fifth Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20001

**1. Please join my meeting.**

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/646085933>

**2. Join the conference call:**

**Phone Number: 866-528-2256 Access Code: 4314459**

### **Agenda:**

AM

- 1) Task force outlook and review of strategic plan – 8:30 – 10:00
- 2) Update from FHWA on the 2015 NHTS – 10:30 AM to 11:30

PM

- 1) Second Circular review – 11:30 to Noon and 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM
- 2) Annual Meeting Planning – 3:30 PM to 4:30 PM

### **Information about the next NHTS**

We will hear from FHWA about status of the 2015 NHTS. It will be an opportunity to learn more about process for the data collection, the contents of the next NHTS survey, including what data will be collected and how the next (2015) NHTS is coming along.

### **Call for posters for the 2016 Annual meeting**

For the annual meeting in January, we sent out a call for posters on innovative applications of the NHTS data. The call for posters is attached. **We need your help to review poster proposals.**

### **Second task force circular**

The materials for the second circular are in. We will be working on putting together the circular together and aim to get it TRB before the Annual Meeting rush starts. **Please let us know what you think.**

### **Annual Meeting Planning**

We will be spending time putting the agenda for the annual meeting together. We have proposed a workshop (Attached) and waiting to hear from TRB on the acceptance of the workshop proposal. **We will need help putting the workshop together – topics, attendees etc.**

## SUMMARY of NHTS EXPERT PANEL MEETING – April 28, 2015

### PANELISTS:

**Mick P. Couper**, PhD, Research Professor, Institute of Social Research, University of Michigan;  
**Don A. Dillman**, PhD, Regents Professor, Department of Sociology, Washington State University;  
**Laura P. Erhard**, Senior Economist, Bureau of Labor Statistics;  
**Paul J. Lavrakas**, PhD, Research Psychologist and Senior Methodologist, and Fellow, NORC at U-Chicago, Office of Survey Research at Michigan State University, and Senior Research Advisor at the Social Research Centre (Melbourne);  
**Steven Polzin**, PhD, Director of Mobility Policy Research at the Center of Urban Transportation Research, University of South Florida;  
**Guy Rousseau**, Models & Surveys Manager, Atlanta Regional Commission, MPO, Atlanta, Georgia;  
**Clyde Tucker**, PhD, Principal Survey Methodologist, American Institutes for Research (AIR)

### Panel Feedback Recruitment Phase

- NHTS should go with the official government survey approach to be more effective i.e. take off NHTS logo and use DOT logo.
- “Stop working to make it pretty, make it official.” A brochure is too marketing oriented.
- The recruit strategy in Hispanic areas/for Spanish materials should downplay the role of the government in the survey.
- More clarity is required on what the respondent needs to do to participate in the survey. Define who the “you” is that is being addressed- who should fill out the recruit.
- It must be made clearer that the travel of each household member age 5+ is required. This is particularly important due to the completion incentive.
- Put forth a clear reason why they should participate, something along the lines of ‘the survey provides information needed for planning transportation improvements in your area.’
- Use of the terms ‘trip’ and ‘travel’ implies out-of-town travel to the average member of the public. Getting respondents to understand and use our definition of ‘trip’ and ‘travel’ is a major obstacle.

### Panel Feedback Retrieval Phase

- Not being able to complete the retrieval on a smartphone or tablet will likely result in a lower response rate for young people.
- Make it clear that the travel log is to be used as a memory-jogger, it is not the full retrieval survey.
- Instructions need to more clearly convey expectations – e.g., each household member keeps a log, each household member reports their own travel.
- Issue of one login code per household means that every household member can access every other member's Travel Day record, with no privacy of what was reported.
- The NHTS retrieval website has provided for closing out each member's Travel Day record when complete, but members who partially complete their record should be provided an individual password when partially closing out, providing privacy until they re-enter and complete.
- The requirement of 100% participation by household members 5 and older will result in a skewed sample without adequate representation of larger households and other Hard to Reach groups – without appropriate adjusted sampling and follow-up protocols as the survey proceeds.
- The survey materials have a lot of wasted space and should be redesigned.

## Panel Feedback on Response Rates

- The NHTS may achieve a 30% response rate on the recruit, but probably not a 65% rate on the retrieval.
- Our response rates will suffer from the demands of the NHTS:
  - complex, 2-stage questionnaire
  - defining 'trip' and 'travel' in a manner not used by general public
  - many specific instructions (a lot of 'moving parts')
  - switch from mail recruit to web or phone retrieval
  - 100% of household members 5+ must participate
- Need to have ongoing monitoring of who is responding, especially for Hard to Reach, low-income, households larger than 2 people—and adjusted sampling and follow-up procedures in place. Otherwise a very skewed sample is risked.
- Follow-up reminder calls to households will not be effective since the American public generally only answers calls from numbers they know.

## Other Panelist Comments

- A 500 household pretest is not large enough.
- Can FHWA spread the survey over multiple years to transition to a continuous sample? In addition to other benefits, this provides time to adjust elements of the redesign that are not working.
- NHTS has lots of complexity, lots of burden, and lots of specific instructions—all of which impact participation, and thus impact getting a representative sample.
- Any trend analysis over time will be difficult and fraught with complications. Asking if the household has a landline and analyzing that subset of households against earlier surveys is not an answer for trend data. It will only get us partially there. If know landline demos have shifted, perhaps within like demographics can be compared for 2009 and 2015/16.