

**Proposal For
Transportation Pooled Fund
Federal Highway Administration and State Departments of Transportation (DOTs)**

**TPF-5(XXX)
Transportation Library Connectivity**

Summary

Accessible, reliable, and timely information is central to quality performance for all transportation agencies and stakeholders. Yet, a vast amount of transportation-related information is neither collected nor made available for use by others. Technology transfer activities—converting information into knowledge—are crucial for getting information in the hands of decision-makers. Library and information services currently are an underutilized piece of the technology transfer process. Library services are integral because they capture needed information and enable customers to access it when needed. Without these services, the information is simply irretrievable.

This document proposes a new pooled fund project on Transportation Library Connectivity, with the goal of making the transfer of information and knowledge an integral part of transportation library and information services. This technology transfer effort will support the systematic organization of state, federal, academic and private sector libraries to institutionalize the best practices of the Midwest Transportation Knowledge Network (MTKN), a regional network of transportation libraries.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) will be the lead agency, responsible for administration of the pooled fund and dissemination of results. Project partners who contribute funds to the study will appoint representatives to serve as members of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC will identify library information and knowledge network needs and review technology transfer progress. The pooled fund study will be ongoing with the prospect of new transportation information/knowledge management initiatives.

This information and knowledge management/technology transfer initiative will result in the following benefits to participating organizations:

- Access to a vast and diverse pool of transportation-related information, much of which is not currently available on the Internet.
- Reduced costs through sharing of resources and reduced service fees.
- Better coordination with regional and national entities for effective distribution of information.
- Cost savings through avoiding the duplication of research efforts.
- A better informed workforce at each of the participating transportation institutions.
- Savings in time and lives.

To Join the Pooled Fund Project

A solicitation for this project will be posted on the Transportation Pooled Fund Web site at <http://www.pooledfund.org/>, where interested partners may commit funds. Project partners may include state departments of transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, other federal agencies, regional and local transportation agencies and libraries, academic institutions, foundations, private libraries, Canadian and European transportation agencies, and others. A request will be made to FHWA to approve the pooled fund project for use of 100% SPR funds.

Background and Objectives

To promote the effective use of available resources, state DOTs are encouraged to cooperate with each other, the FHWA and other appropriate agencies to achieve Research, Development and Technology (RD&T) Transfer objectives established at the national level. Effective program management, including optimal use of available funds, timely sharing of research results, and support of the Transportation Research Information Services (TRIS) Online is key toward meeting technology transfer objectives. However, states currently lack the support and tools needed to define and establish a cooperative, national information and knowledge management/technology transfer program.

The June 2003 “Scoping Study for a National Strategic Plan for Transportation Information Management” (NCHRP Project 20-7/Task 142) identified major information access issues for transportation practitioners. The study examined the transportation community’s current needs and practices, identified pressing problems and detailed a framework for a strategic plan for transportation information and knowledge management. To follow-up, TRB Division B Policy Study: Strategic Plan for Transportation Information Management (Project 20-66) is underway and will provide recommendations to improve the future of transportation information and knowledge management. As an interim measure, this proposed pooled fund project aims at helping states achieve Level 1 connectivity as defined in the Scoping Study (p. 44) through a highly organized technology transfer program.

Pooled fund activities will include:

- Encouraging all DOT and academic transportation libraries to become members of a service network such as OCLC, which would serve as a primary vehicle for interlibrary loans.
- Pooling unique and specialized transportation documents produced by the states to be accessible by every state DOT.
- Indexing and abstracting research and published materials as well as soliciting and adding members to the Transportation Libraries Catalog (TLCat), a shared catalog containing all members’ individual catalog listings.
- Exploring coordination of Transportation Research Information Services (TRIS) Online and TLCat for quick and easy access to all transportation items whether through full-text online, inter-library loan, or purchase.
- Pursuing more advanced information-sharing technology and practices for existing MTKNmembers.

To achieve Level 1 connectivity, this pooled fund project will consist of two major components:

- 1) **Technical Assistance**—Provide technical guidance to participating state agencies for cataloguing documents for use in OCLC and converting them to online format.
- 2) **Network Development**—Encourage and support the development and growth of DOT library information networks.

To make this two-part information and knowledge management/technology transfer initiative a success, a contracted full-time staff person will lead the process, and an organized marketing effort will be initiated to encourage participation and aid in network development.

Full-Time Staff Person

Under the guidance of a full-time technical staff person, the pooled fund participants will work to develop and support a national transportation information and knowledge network. The pooled fund will cover both salary and travel costs for the staff person, who will report to the Technical Advisory Committee.

Staff activities will be modeled after MTKN initiatives such as:

- Developing needs assessments based on site visits with participating states.
- Providing technical assistance to catalogue transportation documents on the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) system and converting them to online format.
- Prorated funding assistance for cataloguing and conversion.
- Assisting library Web site development to enhance document availability through technology transfer .
- Assisting with processes for sharing inter-library loan resources.

- Collaborating with the National Transportation Library (NTL) on broad-based activities.
- Negotiating reduced fees for OCLC services and information coordination at a national level.
- Promoting awareness among target audiences of the value of libraries and information services.

Marketing Plan

Print, online and other marketing products will be developed by a contracted marketing service to build awareness among transportation partners – such as the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the Transportation Research Board (TRB) and the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) of the great value in sharing transportation information. A successful marketing effort will also result in increased participation in the pooled fund project.

Partner Commitments

Once WisDOT, as the lead agency, has proposed this pooled fund project, others will be invited to become project partners and make financial commitments. Partners make funding commitments on the Transportation Pooled Fund Web site at <http://www.pooledfund.org/>, usually consisting of two-year contributions for the life of the project. Commitments are made through a password-protected screen, typically available to the Research Advisory Committee member for each state. Partners other than state DOTs may make commitments by sending e-mail directly to WisDOT (nina.mclawhorn@dot.state.wi.us). Submission of a commitment is an acknowledgment by the partner organization that it will formally obligate funding to the pooled fund project once it begins.

Each organization will be asked to commit \$20,000 per year in two-year installments. A minimum of two states is needed to begin work on this pooled fund project. Pooled funding will cover:

- Travel for TAC members to pooled fund meetings twice per year.
- Marketing of the research and technology transfer efforts.
- Membership in OCLC.
- Salary for a full-time technical staff person.
- Administration of the pooled fund project.
- Cataloguing of materials onto the OCLC system.
- For current MTKN members, pursuit of more advanced information sharing technology and practices.

When the study has sufficient partner support to move forward, the next phase is the Project Initiation step. WisDOT will request FHWA to formally establish the project and:

- Issue a TPF project number.
- Assign a technical liaison to the project.

Once this phase is complete, WisDOT will:

- Confirm that partners have the funding to honor initial commitments.
- Become the broker of the pooled funds and issue reimbursement through the lead agency's standard invoicing process.
- Communicate ongoing project financial information to the project partners.

The FHWA Wisconsin Division Office will work with WisDOT to ensure funding and eligibility requirements.