

National Accessibility Evaluation Technical Advisory Panel Meeting

April 12, 2016
Minutes

Present:

- Deb Fick, Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Brian Gardner, Federal Highway Administration
- Michael Henry, Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department
- Peggi Knight, Iowa Department of Transportation
- David Levinson, Accessibility Observatory, University of Minnesota
- Subrat Mahapatra, Maryland Department of Transportation
- Laurie McGinnis, Accessibility Observatory, University of Minnesota
- Doug McLeod, Florida Department of Transportation
- Brendan Murphy, Accessibility Observatory, University of Minnesota
- Colleen O'Connor Toberman, Accessibility Observatory, University of Minnesota
- Peter Ohlms, Virginia Department of Transportation
- Andrew Owen, Accessibility Observatory, University of Minnesota
- Toni Rice, Wisconsin Department of Transportation
- Rahul Srivastava, California Department of Transportation
- Brenda Thomas, Accessibility Observatory, University of Minnesota
- Jean Wallace, Minnesota Department of Transportation

Welcome

Jean Wallace welcomed attendees. Maryland has recently joined the pooled fund, bringing the total participation to nine states plus the FHWA.

Project Update and Discussion

Andrew Owen provided an update on the project status. The research team is finalizing Task 3, the calculation of the accessibility datasets. They are also working on Task 4, which is development of the state accessibility reports.

Owen shared a prototype report for member feedback. Member reports should be complete by mid-May. The report will include job accessibility by transit and auto throughout the state, along with detailed data for each MPO within the state. If these MPOs cross state lines, the entire MPO is included, not just the portion within the member state's boundaries. Doug McLeod agreed that MPO boundaries are a useful definition. He encouraged the research team to use boundaries that align with MAP-21 requirements, perhaps in future years.

Subrat Mahapatra inquired whether reports could include data for the entire MPO as well as just the MPO area within the member state, as that would be helpful for state planners who want to know the conditions within their boundaries. Brian Gardner noted that MPO boundaries change

over time, so county-level reports could be one way to meet this objective. Owen said that he will provide MPO-level maps and summaries, along with more detailed tables for each county.

Rahul Srivastava suggested that the first report be considered a pilot report, with flexibility to change for future years. Owen agreed that having flexibility in reports and communication products is important as new users and applications are discovered. Consistency in the data itself, however, is a high priority to allow year-over-year comparisons.

Owen inquired whether graphs are helpful products along with maps and tables. Members expressed support for this. Owen invited member feedback about graph design and labels. McLeod suggested using rounded numbers and standard (rather than metric) units. David Levinson noted that precise numbers are important for comparison. The research team will look into how to best share this information.

Mahapatra asked about how LEHD data is used. Owen responded that they are using the LEHD data without modification, as nationwide consistency is important. While integrating states' adjusted LEHD data is not feasible at this point for the first year's reports (as this data is integrated early in the calculation process), this could be considered as an improvement for future years.

Owen showed some demonstration maps. McLeod expressed support for the maps as a useful visualization tool. He inquired whether workers' average actual commute time could be included. This could be as simple as showing the average commute time on the graphics. Owen added this to the list of potential improvements for future reports.

Srivastava inquired about producing maps for other travel time thresholds, such as ten minutes. These low travel time thresholds might not be useful statewide but could be useful at an MPO level. Owen will consider adding this information to the reports. Maps for these different thresholds might overwhelm the casual user, but tables would be easier to include.

Members suggested consistent labeling about time thresholds between the transit and auto maps to emphasize consistency. "Morning peak" or "around 8 a.m." could be appropriate map titles.

Owen said that the report will include brief discussion about methodologies, with a reference to a separate document for readers interested in more detailed information.

Owen displayed a map showing the impacts of traffic congestion on job accessibility by auto. Members shared support for including these maps and associated charts (at an MPO level) in the state reports. This would be hard to replicate via transit, particularly because it is difficult to parse out changes in travel speed versus route frequency. Owen will consider whether it's possible to do some kind of transit accessibility change analysis in the future.

Owen briefly discussed potential project enhancements for Year 2. Members will be surveyed to help determine what their highest priorities are. The research team is also evaluating the cost of each enhancement to understand which and how many enhancements are feasible in Year 2.

Year 2 Funding and Contract

Members should receive their Year 1 reports and datasets in mid-May. The workplan for Year 2 will also be developed over the next month or two. She thanked those that have already committed to Year 2 funding and offered support to any states that may need additional information prior to committing to Year 2. She also encouraged members to let other prospective partners know that this is an ideal time to join the project.

McLeod inquired whether pedestrian and bike accessibility data will be made available. Brendan Murphy shared that calculations for these modes are largely complete for the 50 largest metropolitan areas in the country, but reporting was postponed as delivering members' reports is the top priority. Pedestrian and bike reports will be shared with members when available.

Wallace thanked members for their participation and adjourned the meeting.