

National Accessibility Evaluation Technical Advisory Panel Meeting

January 12, 2016
5:30-7:00 EST

Present:

Farideh Amiri, Minnesota Department of Transportation
Deanna Belden, Minnesota Department of Transportation
Matt Haubrich, Iowa Department of Transportation
Tim Henkel, Minnesota Department of Transportation
Michael Henry, Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department
Jessie Jones, Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department
Doug McLeod, Florida Department of Transportation
David Levinson, Accessibility Observatory, University of Minnesota
Brendan Murphy, Accessibility Observatory, University of Minnesota
Colleen O'Connor Toberman, Center for Transportation Studies, University of Minnesota
Peter Ohlms, Virginia Department of Transportation
Andrew Owen, Accessibility Observatory, University of Minnesota
Virginia Porta, Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department
Chris Porter, Cambridge Systematics
Toni Rice, Wisconsin Department of Transportation
Brenda Thomas, Center for Transportation Studies, University of Minnesota
Jean Wallace, Minnesota Department of Transportation
David Wasserman, North Carolina Department of Transportation

Welcome and Introductions

Jean Wallace welcomed the group; introductions followed.

Project Update and Discussion

Andrew Owen shared an update about the project status. Task 2 (collecting input datasets) is complete. Calculating accessibility from those datasets (Task 3) is ongoing. Transit and pedestrian modes have been the most challenging to calculate.

Task 4 is also in progress; the reports are scheduled to be delivered to each member in February 2016. The TAP will then review the first report and methodology. Matt Haubrich asked whether the data could be provided in a way that can be integrated with partners' existing mapping tools. Owen plans to provide this in a future year of the project.

Jessie Jones asked how the metropolitan areas are defined; Owen responded that these are based on Census designations. Doug McLeod asked about whether the data could be zoned by MPO; Andrew will look into the feasibility of this.

Owen shared some sample maps that will be produced during the project. David Levinson asked how the maps will display highways; Brendan Murphy responded that the software can have some shortcomings in this area that will be corrected before reports are issued.

David Wasserman asked about what kinds of maps will be included in the February report. Owen plans to share a set of prototype maps with members; they will provide feedback about which maps should be included in the reports. Members encouraged him to include maps showing the effect of peak-hour congestion on job accessibility. Owen noted that members will each receive their own dataset to analyze should they wish to produce additional custom maps.

Haubrich asked whether accessibility will be able to incorporate metropolitan areas that cross state lines. MPOs would want the data from both sides of the state line. Owen will look into this; he needs to confirm that this is within the bounds of TomTom's licensing agreement.

Jones inquired about being able to compare the data quality compared to other sources. Owen responded that direct side-by-side comparisons violate the project's contract with TomTom. Levinson noted that some other researchers have done this work and might be a helpful resource for interested DOTs.

Future Plans

Owen shared that the 2015 datasets provided to members will also include block-level data about bicycle and pedestrian access to jobs, which wasn't originally promised. He is excited to provide this additional data.

In the future, Owen hopes to create a web portal for exploring and analyzing data (in addition to the Shape and tabular data formats that will be provided each year). Several members agreed that a REST endpoint would be helpful. Owen asked whether this portal should be public-facing; members agreed that it would be a desirable feature.

Another future direction could include examining the variability/reliability of accessibility over time. This would require some new data from TomTom, so the research team has to look into the feasibility and cost of this data before moving forward.

Owen is also considering reporting on the equity of accessibility for various demographic groups. This would require input from members to identify which demographic groups should be examined; another option would be to assist members in performing their own analysis with their datasets. Jones agreed that this would be useful information. Owen suggested that he could produce some sample reports for which to collect member feedback.

An additional data refinement could be to include transit capacity data, since in reality there isn't always room on every bus or train for all riders. The dataset for this measure has not yet been

identified. Peter Ohlms noted that this would be a relevant measure in northern Virginia. McLeod noted that capacity is also a challenge in Miami and Tampa but is not a critically important issue for this study.

Andrew and Tim Henkel will be discussing the National Accessibility Evaluation at the 2016 AASHTO Washington Briefing next month; the agenda for this event will be shared when available.

New Opportunities

Outreach to potential pooled-fund member states and MPOs is ongoing. A cost structure for MPOs within member states has been developed in acknowledgement that the MPO's dataset is already available through its state's membership. Owen is happy to speak with anyone who would like to discuss joining the pooled fund. He encouraged fund members to discuss the fund with their MPOs and neighboring states. There is a one-page program overview for potential TAP members; this will be e-mailed with the meeting notes.

Florida DOT Evaluation of Accessibility Performance Measures

McLeod shared that the Florida DOT has been developing and reporting on several performance measures (quality, quantity, accessibility, and utilization) for all modes. Accessibility (including to jobs and airports) has been a focus, but acquiring data has been more challenging than for other measures. Cambridge Systematics has helped develop some auto accessibility data while Florida waits for its first Accessibility Observatory reports.

Owen noted that the TAP provides a great opportunity to share about uses and deployment of accessibility data. Chris Porter and Owen noted the difficulty of defining what summary metrics are chosen and communicated. These will continue to evolve throughout the project.

Other Business

Brenda Thomas shared that the TAP will meet next around March; a scheduling poll will be sent out shortly. Thomas invited members to visit the research team should they be traveling to the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.

McLeod shared that he and Jones are members of TRB committee AHB40, Highway Capacity and Quality of Service. Their upcoming highway capacity manual will include a mention of accessibility measures, which underscores that accessibility is of increasing importance in performance measurement.

Wallace thanked members for their participation.