SPOTLIGHT ON TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

UTCM Symposium Paving the Way for Road User Fees as a Gas Tax Alternative

Project Title: “Mileage-Based User Fees: Defining a Path Toward Implementation”

Principal Investigator: Ginger Goodin (Research Engineer, System Planning, Policy and Environment Research Group, TTI Austin Office)

With funding from the UTCM, TTI researchers Ginger Goodin and Trey Baker hosted a symposium in April on mileage-based user fees in Austin, TX. Co-hosted by the UTCM, TTI, the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, the Center for Transportation Studies, IBM, Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority and PBS&J, this symposium brought together professionals in the field of road user fees to share information and advance the discussion of user-based fees as a potential replacement for the fuel tax.

Representatives from past, current and upcoming pilot studies and implementations presented lessons learned and key study topics from their projects. Panel discussions addressed specific topics such as legislative and policy issues, public acceptance challenges, potential technology applications, and institutional issues. The symposium incorporated interactive discussion sessions on logical next steps as well as the associated challenges and opportunities.

Participants’ reaction to the symposium was positive; feedback noted that session speakers were well-informed and represented a broad array of backgrounds and perspectives. The conversation circle, moderated by Bob Johns of the University of Minnesota and Katie Turnbull of TTI, received especially high praise from attendees who enjoyed having to take the “hot seat” and present their views.

The symposium opened extensive debate about road user fees and there was strong (cont. on page 4)
Mr. Sperry Goes to Washington by Ben Sperry

Like many of my fellow students, I look forward the TRB Annual Meeting each year. But this year’s TRB Meeting was particularly special for me as I was honored to attend as the 2008 UTCM Student of the Year.

I was invited to attend an awards celebration hosted by the Council of University Transportation Centers (CUTC) held just before TRB. The program included a reception and banquet, a keynote video speech by California Senator Barbara Boxer, and presentation of the SOY awards. At the event, I was able to network with fellow SOYs from UTCs across the country as well as professionals from all areas of the industry and academia. The biggest thrill of the evening for me was shaking the hand of former US Secretary of Transportation Norm Mineta. I was also fortunate to have my parents accompany me to the awards celebration. My mom snapped the photo on page 1 of me with Mr. Mineta.

I spent the next five days immersed in the 88th Annual TRB Meeting. I attended presentations on the topics of land use and greenhouse gas emissions, passenger train performance, paradigm shifts in commuter rail, and intercity bus transportation. In the numerous poster sessions, I networked with the authors and began developing my own ideas for research. A new experience for me this year was attending committee meetings on intercity passenger rail and transportation in national parks; I learned a great deal about their research agendas and also how the TRB committees are structured.

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picture of the supply chain, reviewed the rapid progress in theories and practices of logistics and supply chain management, and discussed new technologies that have impact on logistics practices. “There is a great need for improved public freight planning by better understanding and applying logistics practices,” Dr. Wang emphasized. The presentation was based on a short course developed by Wang and his colleagues at the University of Wisconsin.

• Monday April 6, 2009
“A New Vehicle Design for Rural and Urban Patient Transport”
Mark E. Benden, PhD, CPE, Assistant Professor, Department of Environmental and Occupational Health, School of Rural Public Health, Texas A&M Health Science Center
Some 59 million Americans live in rural areas, many of them isolated from health care access. Dr. Mark Benden and his co-inventor Dr. Eric Wilke are developing an economical three-wheeled, medical transport scooter known as the AmbiCycle™ that could reach patients in places traditional ambulances can’t. Benden explains, “I see this as an option for rural patients who need emergency transportation but can’t get it from traditional EMS.” Benden and Wilke also envision the AmbiCycle™ in a variety of other settings, including congested urban areas (where gridlock stalls traditional ambulances), military deployments, commercial locations such as refineries, and as a low-cost alternative in underdeveloped nations.

Benden and Wilke have applied for a patent and are seeking investors to manufacture the novel design that is under 36”, wide, operated by just one person and costs less than $2,000. More information, slides and photos for these and other Mobility Colloquia can be found on the UTCM web site under “Mobility Colloquium.”

Completed UTCM Projects

“Expansion of the Border Crossing Information System”
J. Villa and R. Aldrete • 2/1/08 - 1/31/09

“Improved Demand-Response Productivity and Service Quality Through Dispatch Strategies”
S. Edrington and J. Arndt • 6/1/08 - 1/31/09

“Mileage-Based User Fees: Defining a Path Towards Implementation (Phase 1)”
G. Goodin • 10/1/08 - 2/28/09

Mileage-Based User Fee Symposium (cont. from p. 1)

optimism that the event will lead to positive action on the part of federal and state officials. Following the symposium, Goodin and Baker have continued the outreach effort, keeping attendees informed on developments via the MBUF web site, http://utcm.tamu.edu/mbuf/. The site includes event materials such as audio and video of the presentations and links to MBUF studies and discussion on the topic. The site also offers registration in an ongoing listserv to link those discussing MBUF topics and to disseminate MBUF news articles and other data. These resources will allow the UTCM and TTI to continue advancing the MBUF discussion, and they position UTCM as the “go-to” organization on this hot topic.

For more information, visit http://utcm.tamu.edu/mbuf/.

This symposium was made possible with financial support from: