Submitting a Paper to TRB and What Happens Afterwards

Basics

Papers submitted to TRB by August 1 of each year can be considered for presentation at the subsequent TRB Annual Meeting (held in January) and for publication in the upcoming year's series of the *Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board* (TRR). Each author must inform TRB whether the paper should be considered for presentation only, presentation and TRR publication, or TRR publication only.

TRB only reviews complete papers—abstracts are not accepted or considered. Complete papers must be submitted in accordance with TRB guidelines.

TRB runs a single-blind peer-review process: the paper reviewers know who wrote the paper, but the authors do not know who reviewed the paper. The initial review takes place during August and September. In mid-October, authors are notified as to whether their papers were accepted for presentation at the TRB Annual Meeting. Simultaneously, authors are notified as to whether their paper is under consideration for publication in the TRR. Papers considered for TRR publication will be accepted, rejected or sent into a re-review process. The re-review process takes place from mid-November to late January.

TRB's paper review process is fast and efficient. Papers are submitted, reviewed, and published in approximately 1 year. Strict adherence to deadlines and rules is necessary to handle the large number of papers TRB receives in a short time.

The initial presentation review and TRR publication review take place simultaneously; however, the decisions on presentation and TRR publication are separate. A paper may be accepted for presentation and rejected for TRR publication or vice versa.

Presentations at the Annual Meeting can take place in workshops, lectern sessions, poster sessions, or committee meetings. Papers accepted for presentation are assigned to the committee event that most closely fits the paper subject area, topic, and content.

Submittal Details

Before submitting a paper to TRB, authors should take the following steps:

- Read the author guidelines before beginning—papers are expected in a certain format, and they are subject to size limits. The guidelines can be found at http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/AM/PeerReview.pdf.
- Ensure that the paper is within the 7,500-word limit (remember that each figure and table counts as 250 words). This limit applies to all papers, *including those submitted for presentation only.*
- Ensure that the appropriate references and citations to earlier work have been provided. Completed research in transportation can be searched through TRB's

Transportation Research Information Database at http://trid.trb.org/. In addition, authors submitting papers to TRB are granted temporary access to electronic versions of TRRs dating back to 1996. *To gain temporary access to past TRR papers, log-in to the TRB Annual Meeting paper submission site, upload your paper abstract, and then click on the TRR tab toward the top of the page.*

- Check spelling and grammar—they matter to the reviewers. The large volume of papers that must be reviewed (more than 5000) puts papers with unclear language at a disadvantage.
- Ensure that the paper is complete—abstract, literature review, findings, conclusions, and references must be included.

The TRB paper review process is highly competitive. Nearly 60 percent of the papers submitted to TRB are accepted for presentation, and only a little more than 20 percent are accepted for publication. Adhering to the rules and submitting a clear, well-written paper are essential for success.

TRB uses electronic submission software that can be found on its website (www.TRB.org) under the Annual Meeting tab. The paper submission webpage opens on June 1 of each year. For a paper to be considered for presentation at the next year's Annual Meeting, or for publication in the next year's TRR, it must be submitted by August 1. All papers must be submitted as a PDF file and in the format outlined in Preparing Papers for Peer Review and Presentation: (http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/AM/PeerReview.pdf)

Editing Paper Submission Information

You can edit the basic paper information after the initial paper is submitted. After logging in and clicking on your paper title, the first two links on the paper page will take you to pages where you can edit the basic information about your paper. This includes paper author information, subject areas, and much more.

The only information you cannot edit on these pages is the copyright release. This release, among other things, gives TRB permission to include your paper in the online Annual Meeting Compendium. In order to change this release, you must resubmit your paper. You can re-submit the original paper and then click on the check box to give (or not give) TRB copyright.

Paper Submittal Process Summary		
Milestone	Deadline	Process Requirements
Electronic Submittal Website Opens	June 1	• Website for submitting papers opens for new papers.
Initial Submittal	August 1	• Paper in PDF format • Author indicates whether paper is submitted for presentation only, publication only, or for both presentation and publication
Initial Review Period	August 1 – September 30	• Papers assigned to committees • Committees assign to a minimum of three reviewers • Committees decide whether to accept or reject papers for presentation or publication without modifications • Committees submit requests for re-reviews for final publication decisions .
Notification for Paper Presentation	~ October 15th	• Chairs submit letters notifying authors of acceptance to present at the next TRB Annual meeting
Second Draft Paper for Publication	November 15	• PDF format • Send list of revisions with modified draft
Re-Review Process	November 15 – Late January	• TRB committees make final publication decisions for the TRR

In submitting a paper, authors must provide the following information or make the following decisions:

- Paper word count, number of tables and figures, and final word count.
- All co-authors and their contact information. The **corresponding** author must also be specified—this will be the author receiving all official correspondence. The corresponding author is the only author that receives email correspondence from TRB – this makes it critical that the corresponding author email is up-to-date during the entire paper review and/or publication process.
- Are the authors submitting the paper for presentation and TRR publication, TRR publication only, or presentation only?
- Are all the authors 35 years of age or younger, in which case the paper would be eligible for a Burggraf Award? If so, the birth dates of all the authors must be provided.
- Has the paper been submitted elsewhere? The content must not have been published elsewhere. In some cases, however, TRB may accept papers that have been submitted to or published by other organizations, provided that the publication has had limited distribution and that the author has secured the necessary clearances and permissions. Such cases are handled individually; the author should contact the TRB Technical Activities Division Director.
- Have the authors obtained the necessary permissions for any use of copyrighted material included in the paper?
- If the paper is accepted for presentation or TRR publication, do the authors want the paper to be included in the online Annual Meeting Compendium?
- Do the authors have suggestions concerning the review of the paper? The suggestion can cite a subject area, a TRB standing committee, or a specific call for papers. This information is not required, but may be helpful to TRB staff in making the paper review assignment. **Staff will consider your suggestion, but the final decision is based on staff experience and judgment.**

Paper Review Processes

A TRB staff member assigns each paper to a TRB standing committee for review. TRB staff uses their experience and judgment to assign the paper to the most appropriate committee, in some instances, based on the subject matter or other circumstances, TRB staff will assign a paper to a committee different from the one suggested by the author. Please note:

- Each paper assigned to a committee is reviewed to ensure that it fits with the committee, that it is within the word limit, and that its content is appropriate for TRB.
- Committee Chairs assign each paper to at least three reviewers from the committee's reviewer pool. The reviewer pools include committee members, friends and outside experts having expertise in the committee topic area. The individuals are members of academia, industry practitioners, consultants, and public agency staff; with the mix depending on the topic area of the committee.

- Finally, reviewers quickly check the papers they are assigned for length, topic, and content. They also check to ensure that they personally have the expertise to review the paper.

The practice of obtaining at least three reviews for each paper ensures that each paper receives a balanced review. Presentation and TRR publication recommendations are developed on the basis of the paper reviews and the quantity acceptance limits on presentation and publication. The recommendations are reviewed by TRB staff before they are finalized.

After the initial review is complete, the processes for presentation and publication diverge.

Presentation at the TRB Annual Meeting
Authors presenting at the Annual Meeting should consult the guidelines for preparing presentation materials. For those presenting in a lectern session, the guidelines for speakers will be helpful (http://www.trb.org/AnnualMeeting2014/PresenterTips.aspx). For those presenting in a poster session, the poster guidelines will be helpful (see http://www.trb.org/AnnualMeeting2014/PosterGuidelines.aspx). ***Please note: these files are in the processing of being updated for the 2015 TRB Annual Meeting at the new venue.***

Authors have the opportunity to update their paper, regardless of the publication decision, for inclusion in the online Annual Meeting Compendium. TRB recommends addressing the reviewer comments to provide the best possible paper on the Annual Meeting Compendium. The due date for revised papers is November 15.

Publication in a TRR
If the paper was not accepted for publication, authors are now free to submit it to another journal. Only papers with substantial revisions may be resubmitted to TRB for subsequent years' reviews. Submitting the same paper, especially with the same flaws a second time, is extremely poor practice and will likely cause the committee to request TRB reject it for another review.

If the paper was accepted for TRR publication, authors have an opportunity to update it for inclusion in the online Annual Meeting Compendium. TRB recommends that authors address all of the paper review comments. If the committee requested a revised version of the paper for a re-review, the paper must be revised to respond to the reviewer comments and submitted as a new version for the online Annual Meeting Compendium by November 15. Authors *must* also prepare a summary of how they responded to the reviewer comments with changes in the paper. Two files must be submitted for the re-review process – the revised paper and the summary of changes made to respond to the reviewer comments. If these two files are not submitted, the paper will be rejected for publication.

The committee and TRB will inform authors of the final publication decision in early to mid-February. If the paper is accepted, a final e-mail will further guide you on submitting your manuscript through the TRR publication process. The final paper manuscripts are due by March 15. This provides another opportunity to improve your paper.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I convert my paper to PDF?
TRB requires a paper to be submitted in PDF. Conversion to PDF is a standard function in most word processing software, and many converters are available online.

The deadline for submitting a paper is August 1, but when is the earliest I can submit a paper?
The paper submittal website opens each year on June 1. Although authors have until August 1 to submit their papers, avoiding the last-minute rush experienced in the last few days of July and on August 1 is recommended. Typically, half of the papers TRB receives each year are submitted in the last 3 days. The high traffic on the paper website during those days may result in the online submittal process taking substantially longer.

Is it difficult to work through the submittal software?
The process is fairly simple, and step-by-step instructions may be found at: http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/AM/PeerReview.pdf

If I think the paper would be of interest to more than one committee, should I submit it several times and recommend different committees for each submittal?
No, do not submit a paper more than once—TRB will only assign one version of a paper to one committee. It may also cause confusion among committee review coordinators and staff and result in all versions of the paper being rejected for review.

How do I know that the submission process worked?
An e-mail confirmation is sent back once the submittal process is complete and the paper is logged in. If you do not receive an e-mail, please contact TRB staff at bschwartz@nas.edu. Please save all correspondence relating to your paper until the entire process of review, presentation and publication is complete.

Do I know which committee is reviewing my paper?
Authors are not informed of which committee is reviewing their paper until the review is complete. The information is withheld to ensure that the committee volunteers are not inappropriately contacted during the review process.

When and how will I hear the results of the review process?
You will not hear from the committee until after the paper is reviewed and a recommendation to TRB is made. Authors are notified of recommendations in mid-October. The official decision, with information on presentation and publication details,

is sent by TRB toward the end of October. All notifications are by e-mail to the corresponding author.

What information will the notification e-mail contain?
The recommendation e-mail from the Chair contains a presentation recommendation (the options are Accept or Reject) and a TRR publication recommendation (the options are Publish, Do Not Publish, or Requires Revision and/or Re-review for Publication). The Chair is making the recommendation to TRB. This e-mail also contains the results of the peer review, including comments and suggestions from the reviewers.

The subsequent e-mail from a TRB staff member will contain some or all of the following, depending on whether the paper was submitted for presentation, TRR publication, or both:

- Information on the session the paper will be presented in (this could be a workshop, lectern session, poster session, or committee meeting). Information on the session moderator and other presentations will be included.
- Information on registering for the Annual Meeting.
- Information on updating the paper and resubmitting it for inclusion on the online Annual Meeting Compendium, and possibly for re-review.
- Information on the TRB publication process.

What if I don't think the paper was assigned to the correct committee for review?
Although you may disagree with the assignment, TRB staff and volunteers take every precaution to ensure that papers go to an appropriate committee. Each paper is carefully scrutinized by a TRB staff member before it is assigned to a committee. The committee's review chair and individual reviewers also have an opportunity to ensure the availability of ample expertise to review the paper. Many factors are considered in the assignment of a paper to a committee. To ensure equity and balance in the review process, it is critical that the authors do not have a final say in the assignment.

Is there any recourse if I think the review process or recommendations are flawed?
Typically, we only hear complaints if the paper was rejected for presentation or TRR publication. If your paper is rejected, remember that the process is highly competitive and that the committees look for papers that will advance the profession and have long-term value. You can learn much from the reviewers and the process regardless of the outcome.

If you really believe that there is a flaw in the review of your paper, you can contact the paper review coordinator to ask for clarification or explanation. Asking *politely* will be much more useful. You can also contact the senior program officer responsible for the committee that reviewed your paper. However, alteration of a decision is extremely rare.

If my paper is recommended for presentation but not for TRR publication, will it still be included in the online Annual Meeting Compendium?

Yes, all papers presented at the Annual Meeting are included in the online Annual Meeting Compendium, unless the author specifically indicates via the paper review software that the paper not be included.

My paper was rejected for publication, so I no longer want it included in the online Annual Meeting Compendium. How do I withdraw permission to include it in the Compendium?

The inclusion of your paper in the Compendium is governed by the copyright release. If you have clicked the box giving TRB copyrights to your paper, and the paper has been accepted for presentation and/or publication, it will be included in the Compendium. To change this release, you must resubmit your paper. The original paper version is fine – just do not click the box giving TRB copyrights.

Will page proofs be provided for a paper that is published?

Page proofs are not automatically provided; however, an author may request them for a fee.

What is the time frame for a TRB paper from submission through publication?

June 1	Paper submission website opens
August 1	Deadline for submission of the full paper in PDF
September 15	Deadline for reviewers to complete paper reviews
October 15	Deadline for chairs to send review recommendations to authors
November 15	Deadline for paper resubmission for inclusion in the online Annual Meeting Compendium or re-review
Early/ mid-February	Final author notification on TRR publication
March 15	Authors resubmit in final (manuscript) format