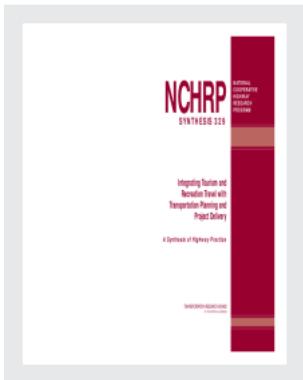


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# Integrating Tourism and Recreation Travel with Transportation Planning and Project Delivery (2004)

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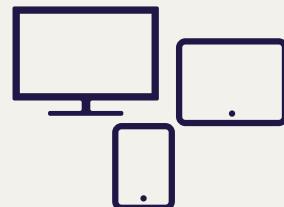
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## CHAPTER FOUR

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings from this synthesis indicate that a successful and growing track record exists for integrating aspects of tourism–recreation travel into statewide and regional transportation planning and project delivery. Major inroads have been established by nontransportation entities in articulating tourism-related travel needs and projects that would benefit their regions and in their successful application for transportation funding. Many of these tourism-related projects have been supported through the matching of state, local, and private-sector funds with monies provided through the federal Transportation Enhancement program.

Adding to this growing record is the finding that many state departments of transportation (DOTs) are thinking more broadly and proactively about how their planning activities should be cognizant of and responsive to key cultural, historical, and recreational assets, as well as environments that are threatened (physically and economically) by unmitigated congestion related to visits by automobile. This larger view is helping to contribute to smart transportation designs and solutions that improve the visitor's experience, bolster the economy, benefit resident travel in the region, and preserve the environment that visitors find attractive.

Examples of successful collaboration among stakeholders, drawn from area businesses, citizen's groups, and the public sector, ranging from local on up to federal agencies, add to this track record. Some of the issues that have brought these different groups together are congestion mitigation, state transportation improvement plan implementation, and specific project undertakings.

Tourism agencies, with emphasis on various visitor segments in their marketing efforts, are identifying that some key differences and needs exist depending on whether you are an elderly visitor, recreation visitor or nature visitor, museum seeker, or heritage tourist, to name a few. This visitor segmentation is influencing how some DOTs are now trying to analyze and project future travel demand, which can better address where and how planned transportation resources get committed.

A number of transportation agencies expressed the need for specific improvements in the availability and detail of tourism travel data. The most widely requested forms of data are tourism origin–destination patterns, followed by tourism visitor traffic counts and tourism industry em-

ployment data. Data that reflect the seasonal characteristics of tourism travel and meaningful geographic regions will help to further the accuracy of modeling results for state DOT planning efforts.

Finally, a few agencies have now started to conduct objective evaluations to assess the extent to which tourism-related projects, programs, or interagency coordination processes have been effective in achieving their desired tourism goals. These studies may be viewed as models for other state DOTs and tourism and recreation agencies to follow.

It appears that for states and regions either endowed with long-established tourism–recreation assets or aware of the role that tourism plays in their economic vitality, the tourism–transportation dialogue and track record are farther along—the multi-agency process works well, a continued dedication of DOT funding to improve data collection and transportation modeling activities occurs, and the state DOT goes well beyond the expected roles of highway signage and publishing visitor friendly road maps. They are responsible for a host of visitor information resources including websites, 511 traveler information programs, visitor publications such as *Arizona Highways Magazine* and *Texas Highways* (both award-winning DOT efforts), and involvement with visitor information centers.

Future studies on the integration of tourism–recreation travel into transportation planning and project delivery activities need to explore several additional topics that would be useful for any stakeholder involved with tourism planning and the role of transportation.

- An inventory of projects undertaken, reflecting how different funding sources were assembled and any innovative leveraging of funds.
- The types of unique partnerships that have been instrumental to project funding and implementation or defining solutions (this synthesis only briefly touches on this topic).
- The means to invigorate processes in states and regions that have yet to capitalize on dormant tourism–recreation assets as a means to increase economic development, starting at the local level.
- Prioritizing transportation funding to include advancing the level of data collection (e.g., performance monitoring and visitor-related accident incidence) and modeling capabilities in those states and regions that have a clear need but have yet to advance in these areas.

- How state DOTs exert a role in the development of tourism–recreation signage that goes beyond traditional DOT activities.
- An understanding of how tourism travel demand affects the performance of a region’s transportation system and economy.
- How transit service influences the development pattern within local economies.
- Establishing performance measures for park transportation systems and park visitor experiences.
- The role of advanced transportation systems in national parks and the impact on visitor experiences.

The topic of tourism–travel integration into transportation planning and project delivery is broad and there are many small accomplishments behind a single successful project—institutional success, process success, and success in the project’s definition, design, planning, funding, and ultimate delivery. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and its subsequent legislation continues to create new challenges and opportunities for state DOTs and metropolitan planning organizations to advance and implement transportation systems.

Over time, a region’s tourism export is a multi-faceted and mutable product. It is affected by factors within its

broad industry, as well as by factors and resources in the public domain, issues regarding access flow from the dispersion of attractions, the extent of trip-chaining, the markets from which visitors are drawn, the specific needs of different categories of visitors, and the adequacy of available modes for connecting visitors to destinations. Issues regarding congestion to or around attractions affect the success of the tourism economy as well as resident commuter or personal trips. The opportunity to develop and promote a specific resource within a region that has cultural, historic, scenic, or recreational significance has the potential to add to the region’s economic development, although it may compete with other prospective land-use pressures or other regional economic development priorities.

Tourism-related transportation planning and project delivery may appear different over time within a region as trends shape the economic emphasis of the area, the growth in traffic and change in its distribution and composition, and the types of projects championed—from design and funding to implementation and operation. Across regions lessons can be learned from and adapted to meet the local context and process of partners investing in their tourism economy by addressing needed transportation-related improvements.