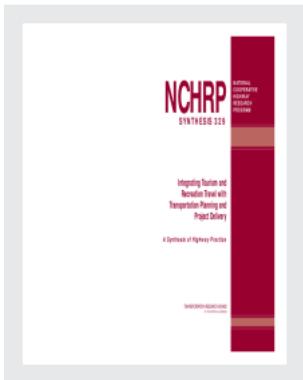


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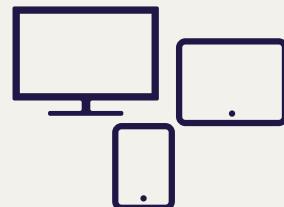
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INTEGRATING TOURISM AND RECREATION TRAVEL WITH TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROJECT DELIVERY

SUMMARY

Tourism and recreational activities pose many similar travel considerations, which typically differ from commuter travel and commercial transport issues. The relationship between tourism and transportation is derived primarily from the concept of tourism as a generator of travel demand and transportation as the key to accessing major tourist attractions. Transportation can be a critical element of the operation of visitor attractions and of supporting activities, such as gateway communities to national parks. Effective transportation planning can also produce appropriate solutions for balancing the traffic needs of different traveler groups during peak tourism seasons or special events. These relationships provide a common base of interest for transportation and tourism agencies and are thus the motivation for interagency coordination. The key to addressing these common interests (and their ultimate implementation) is the development of effective processes for coordination between various transportation agencies, tourism agencies, other planning organizations, and private-sector interests. For simplicity, this report will refer to a wide range of tourism and recreation activities as “tourism.”

This synthesis study was originally conceived by the TRB Task Force on Transportation Needs for National Parks and Public Lands. It is based on the recognition that there is a need to gauge how well and how often tourism and recreation travel needs and objectives are included in transportation planning and decision making. To accomplish this, the synthesis study included a review of the literature of research reports and agency studies, as well as a survey of current practice that was distributed to state departments of transportation (DOTs) and other agencies with an interest in the topic, including selected state tourism offices, parks and recreation offices, metropolitan planning organizations, and federal land agencies.

This report adds to the literature on the evolving integration of tourism travel issues into transportation decision making and planning. It describes current practice and presents select case studies pertaining to a wide set of agency activities spanning multi-agency coordination, planning processes, agency resources, project development, and the types of transportation solutions implemented. Projects implemented reflect various modes of travel and various transportation facilities that serve tourism sites (including roads, parking, scenic rest areas, and rail services) and various types of user information support (including welcome centers, information displays or kiosks, signage, heritage markers, specialized road maps, advertising, publications, and brochures).

The case studies and survey results presented in this report show that many state DOTs are now actively involved in tourism-related travel planning issues, either proactively or in building solutions to infrastructure, access, or environmental issues that impinge upon the success of tourism in the region. These planning activities fall into the following three main categories:

1. Working relationships for interagency cooperation and public–private, nonprofit-sector partnerships;
2. Tourism-related travel demand analysis and evaluation; and
3. Project solutions to address special needs of tourism-related travel.

Multi-agency working relationships, spanning tourism and transportation agencies, are now common. Many state DOTs have been proactive and innovative in establishing joint working relationships with state tourism agencies, as well as coordinating with federal, regional, and local public agencies and private organizations. These coordination processes vary widely and can span policy, planning, design, funding, implementation, and operations of facilities. The facilities themselves can also span both transportation facilities (roads, bus services, and rail services) and visitor information facilities (welcome centers, variable message signs, maps, and information kiosks).

All responding state and regional agencies reported that they have some working relationship with other agencies regarding tourism and transportation issues. Fully two-thirds of them reported that there is some aspect of a formal structure to their collaboration.

Beyond the interagency cooperation process, a growing number of state DOTs also have their own staff involved in internal transportation planning for the tourism and recreation markets. These various activities occur within DOT planning offices or within special offices for scenic byways or rail development.

There is a continuing evolution of data and travel demand analysis germane to planning decisions that will help achieve precise tourism objectives. Nearly one-half of the state DOTs and slightly more than one-half of the other agencies reported that they now make use of tourism travel forecasts. Although many of these forecasts are derived by applying growth rates implicit in the employment projections for the hotel and lodgings industry to a recent estimate of tourism visits, some transportation organizations are putting resources into developing their own tourism forecast models.

Visitor surveying activities undertaken by, or with key input from, the DOT are redefining the types of information necessary to support the next generation of travel demand models and the types of questions the analysis must be capable of examining and answering. The most widely requested forms of data are tourism origin–destination patterns, followed by tourism visitor traffic counts and tourism industry employment data. Data reflecting seasonal adjustments and finer geographic breakdowns are expected to improve the validity and use of the resulting tourism projections. Understanding the travel patterns and trip characteristics of tourists can serve both the marketing emphasis of tourism organizations and the research needs of transportation agencies.

Projects related to tourism travel reflect a variety of needs and motivations. As revealed in this study, projects were defined to address the following:

- Alleviating traffic congestion and air quality concerns near visitor attractions,
- Creating better access and mobility to meet the special needs of different traveler segments,
- Investing in tourism as a means of economic development,
- Improving traveler information resources,
- Preserving valued historic, cultural, and environmental assets,
- Linking existing but currently separate tourism attractions, and
- Competing travel demand needs of area residents and visitors.

The various projects emerging as a result of integrating tourism travel needs into the activities of state-level and regional transportation agencies spanned the following categories:

- Attractions—Scenic byways (automobile), eco-tourism trails—heritage trails (including bicycle and pedestrian facilities), and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities into visitor attractions.
- Access—Land and water shuttle services, non-auto-based multi-modal tour package development, and transportation management plans.
- Traveler information—Signage, variable-messaging systems, 511 traveler information services, visitor information and welcome centers, intelligent transportation systems, visitor publications, and information kiosks.
- Facility operation and related improvements—Streetscape, transportation facilities, and research data and analysis model improvements.

Finally, some transportation agencies have now started to conduct objective evaluations to assess the extent to which tourism-related transportation projects, programs, or interagency coordination processes have been effective in achieving their desired goals. Each of these various types of studies and solutions, and the coordination activities that make them possible, may be viewed as models for other state DOTs and tourism and recreation agencies.

