

EconWorks Expert Task Group 2017 Q1 Meeting Agenda

Monday, March 27, 2017 • 1:00 – 2:30 PM Eastern

Webinar Link: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7076133961484136961>

Webinar Number: 1 (866) 952-8437

Audio PIN: 822548464

ATTENDEES (in Bold):

<u>Members</u>	<u>Liaisons & Others</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alan Dybing, North Dakota State University • Darnell Grisby, American Public Transportation Association • Ben Gruswitz, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission • Kelly Gwin, Georgia DOT • Jeff Harris, Utah DOT • Bill Keyrouze, Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations • Michael Kies, Arizona DOT • Subrat Mahapatra, Maryland State Highway Administration • Sebastian Montagne, North Carolina DOT • Ben Orsbon, South Dakota DOT • Steve Polzin, University of South Florida • Eric Randall, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments • Joseph Schofer, Northwestern University • David Schwartz, Kansas DOT • Jeff Sudmeier, Colorado DOT • Kevin Verre, Nevada DOT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mara Campbell, CH2M • Ryan Endorf, Federal Highway Administration • Brian Gardner, Federal Highway Administration • Steve Fitzroy, Economic Development Research Group, Inc. • Matthew Hardy, AASHTO • Stefan Natzke, Federal Highway Administration • Jen Smoker, CH2M • Amanda Rutherford, Federal Highway Administration • Valentin Vulov, Federal Highway Administration

Summary of Topics

1. Welcome and Rollcall
2. Review Agenda
3. University of Maryland Update
4. Marketing and Outreach Updates and Discussion
5. Long Term Approach for EconWorks
6. Final Questions/Topics
7. Wrap-up and Adjourn

SUMMARY

1. Welcome and Rollcall – Matt Hardy

Matt Hardy welcomed everyone to the call, and thanked them in advance for their participation on the call. The goal for call was to bring the group up to speed since the face to face meeting in December 2016. Matt also mentioned Bryan is working in another capacity at AASHTO, therefore he is now the point person till the end of this contract.

2. Review Agenda - Jeff Sudmeier

Jeff Sudmeier welcomed and thanked attendees for their participation, reminding them there will be two more calls and an annual meeting in December. He outlined the agenda for the call and asked for additional agenda items or anything the ETG members wanted to discuss during the call. There were no additional agenda items, so Jeff introduced UMD and turned the meeting over to them for their presentation.

3. University of Maryland Update – Eirini Kastrouni and Lei Zhang

Lei Zhang thanked Matt and Jeff for the opportunity to present during the call and also stated UMD is very pleased to work with the ETG to support EconWorks. He said the UMD presentation would include a program update followed by request for comments, suggestions, and their desire for help in reaching targeted case studies.

The program update was presented by Eirini Kastrouni.

- Objectives of UMD work is focused on developing 20 case studies that are of high quality and meet the gaps in criteria. They are looking for new case studies that will make the EconWorks tool highly usable to the target audience.
- UMD intends to provide educational materials, course modules, and a specific training format to make training more robust and effective.
- The most important task is 20+ new Case Studies – (She expressed thanks to the ETG for their help)
 - UMD identified and started working on 13 new case studies – significant progress on 10 of these. Many of the ETG members and liaisons have been great help. These 10 were selected from 90 submissions based on the gap analysis. Many of ETG have sent candidate projects.
 - UMD identified gaps and working to fill these with case studies – they are asking for help and hope to have all 20 identified by end of April.
 - They have started working on 2 separate course modules
 - 1 undergraduate course on the case study tool
 - 1 graduate module on the benefit analysis tool
 - The target audience is students who will graduate and take this knowledge to their future DOT employers or the transportation industry.
- They are on a very tight schedule for Task 2.
- Work Element #2 (of 5) Expansion of Case Study Database seeks to use existing databases and develop a larger audience.
- Database overview showed coverage of the existing database and gaps in current database. Shows size of projects in database and helps UMD choose new projects to fill gaps.
- Four sources to identify more case studies include IAP Program Reports (IL, UT, IN, RI); FHWA Project Profiles (41 projects); TIGER grant projects; Outreach (TRB, etc.)

- Selection criteria includes the following: a. most likely to be used by DOTs, MPOs; b. small projects under \$92M; c. underrepresented project types including transit/intermodal; d. geographic coverage that would fill empty criteria cells; e. combinations of project types; and f. P3s as a priority to the administration.
- They presented the 13 identified case studies according to the criteria they meet.
- They presented the status of the case study development of the top 10 projects.
- Remaining gaps to consider moving forward include:
 - connectors in Great Lakes, New England and South West;
 - access roads in Rocky Mts/Far West; and
 - line extensions and new lines.
- The Southwest region shows it is clearly underrepresented. UMD would like to know if ETG members are aware of any conferences or meetings particularly in the Southwest that could lead to contact people who may have a good project. They have experienced problems identifying the right contacts for some projects and the best contacts for obtaining data.
- Undergraduate/Graduate Modules and Training for Researchers and Public Agency Staff Modules are 3-5 minutes.

Questions and Discussion:

- A question was raised regarding the large range of candidate projects and if they can be used at the conclusion of the project or to come back to at a later date for depth. A candidate project database is being produced. Some projects were not completed by 2011 for analysis so could be used at a later date. Many will be eligible in the next few years.
- A discussion was broached concerning the ability to prioritize what is needed for criteria gaps. As an example for a bridge in distressed area/ access road in distressed area – which would be more priority for Case Studies? UMD requested both as they haven't prioritized among remaining gaps but will consider everything available. If there is capacity to do more than 7 additional case studies more will be added. Currently the Southwest region stands out above others.
- The question was asked if there is there any differentiation by FHWA functional class in terms of the UMD matrix? Yes, access roads and connectors are separate. Maintained project type currently in database – using this to categorize our new projects. Different classification of roadways represented. Maintaining what has been developed 6-7 years ago. No differentiation by functional class.
- In many cases projects are rebuilding existing with expansion and technology – how is UMD dealing with this? Good question. Have had discussions with FHWA and AASHTO about this. One example is a bridge overpass to allow double decker train to pass urban areas – sometimes we get an interesting project but they may not directly fit into existing project types so far. Pros and cons of adding new project types – would help us incorporate popular projects to make EconWorks tool more useful to agencies but concerns include that adding project types we may create more gaps over regions and not sure if that should worry us. Happy to pursue new projects; will summarize what we have learned and bring it back for discussion on how best to incorporate. If project has primary component “bridge” maybe we can find a way to mesh it in an existing group.
- One ETG member did not think it is good investment that every cell be populated if there could instead be multiple data points in a single cell. There was a discussion regarding which of the criteria is most important.
 - Is the region less important than characteristics of project itself? Some of the road totals are building some decent population – would rather see a strong population in a

few than spread out among them all. Need data density per cell. Huge variations are found in big projects.

- UMD explained they had down selected from 100 to 13 and hoped to fill the selection criteria in the chart now. For large mega projects – agencies want to invest in standalone more comprehensive economic development with other tools or a dedicated project so Case Studies will probably be more useful to smaller projects. Project planning for small projects do not have resources for Wide Economic Impact so EconWorks may work well. Smaller projects were focused on for this reason. Agency representative interviews gave insight into how they plan to use the tool.
- It may not be necessary to fill the gaps (in yellow on the chart) with the next 7 Case studies but realistically 7 more studies cannot increase density. UMD asked the ETG if they want to fill some of these gaps. The challenge is to identify which cells really deserves additional density.
- If an agency in SW need transit line – it's a gap now but how do we determine how many would be useful? We don't know but 1 is better than none. Maybe 1 isn't as good as 3-4 in one area. Defer to AASHTO/FHWA.
- **Action Item:** FHWA/AASHTO talk about this in more detail. Consider this with project selection for next quarterly call. What is best way to identify new case studies and need for density? Thru AASHTO we will distribute details of 100+ including why we selected the 13.
- Potential Users may be very interested in distribution of case studies and their criteria and pie charts are available for all projects in all categories. Many are available already and can be distributed to ETG.
- **Action Item:** UMD provide pie charts of case study distribution to ETG.
- UMD requested to continue to provide recommendations regardless.

4. Marketing and Outreach Updates - Jeff Sudmeier

- Jeff began with the FHWA brochure. Brian explained the finalized brochure took into account the comments from the ETG and is now more relevant with deeper content. He is still open for feedback. He welcomed members to distribute to their networks. Hardcopies will be printed by AASHTO and available by request. The PDF file will be available on line and will be emailed.
- The Webinar/Book Club effort begins in April and is focused on EconWorks in two complimentary tracks of Training and Applications. A flyer is being developed and will be posted and shared.
- The marketing team is looking for direction regarding Use Cases and how best to use them.
- The EconWorks web site now has a dedicated email provided for direct access to an expert. econworks@aaashto.org
- Regarding the Marketing Timeline Status:
 - Volpe and CH2M are working on webinars.
 - Open to relevant conferences coming up – want to get EconWorks in front of people.
 - AMPO meeting with booth will promote EconWorks.
 - Will add TRB Transportation and Economic Development Committee's 6th Transportation Economics Conference, June 6-8, 2018 to the timeline.

5. Long Term Approach for EconWorks – Jeff Sudmeier

- Jeff turned the attention to have a discussion about the long term approach for EconWorks. One of the topics that was elevated in December was the idea of upgrading the excel-based tools on EconWorks website to W.E.B based tools.
- The ETG was asked to consider transferring excel tool to web based tool. Not just to update web tool with new case studies – also the functionality of the tool. Web based tool has an even platform. Need to think thru pros and cons. Would budget with contingency about 100K. There is enough funding to convert and update web site – not looking for a decision today but at some point, AASHTO/FHWA will present what funds are left and what is the best way to spend it. Will also be contingent on what case studies have been received – but won't know till late 2017.
- There may be additional resources available from SHRP2 money that hasn't been spent on EconWorks. Current SHRP2 contract goes thru 2018 or so.
- NCHRP, Research, AASHTO Committees may have some future funds or a Pooled Fund (as is being done in TravelWorks)
- UMD is looking to extend EconWorks thru P3s – (Build America Bureau, TIFIA loans, and others). EconWorks can provides social and economic benefits to enhance P3 value to FHWA. Continue to look for support from other offices.
- It would be helpful to develop an outline for long term strategy – web tool transition and case study additions will go a long way toward making EconWorks more useable. Case for funding needs to look toward the future benefits. Annual amount to fund EconWorks needs to be established plus value added functions.
- Case studies will go stale over time – need to consider how to keep them relevant as well as the costs associated to “keeping the lights on” approach.

6. Final Questions/Topics

Jeff thanked everyone for their participation and asked the ETG members if there were any additional questions or topics they would like to discuss. None were elevated.

7. Wrap-up and Adjourn

Jeff asked the ETG members to “save the date” for the next 3 ETG meetings. Jeff asked if Matt or Brain have anything else to add or closing remarks. They thanked everyone for great discussion on the call and the meeting adjourned at 2:30 EST.

NEXT STEPS/ACTION ITEMS

- FHWA/AASHTO will discuss filling criteria gaps vs. obtaining density of data for specific criteria or regions. They will evaluate the best ways to identify new case studies in light of the need for density. AASHTO will work with UMD to distribute details of 100+ submitted projects and why the specific 13 were selected. (Brian G/Matt H)
- Potential EconWorks users may be very interested in distribution of case studies and their criteria. Pie charts are available for many projects in all categories and can be distributed to ETG. UMD will provide pie charts of the 13 case studies for distribution to ETG. (UMD/Matt H)
- Minutes from this quarterly update will be sent out to the ETG. (Matt H)
- Team will consider promoting EconWorks at the [TRB Transportation and Economic Development Committee's 6th Transportation Economics Conference, June 6-8, 2018](#) (All ETG)
- Next ETG meetings will be:
 - Monday, June 12, 2017 1:00-2:30 PM EST

- Monday, September 11, 2017 1:00-2:30 PM EST
- Tuesday, December 12, 2017 (*Tentative Date for annual meeting in DC*)

Meeting Materials

- ETG Meeting Agenda
- EconWorks Brochure_FINAL
- EconWorks AASHTO Webinar Book Club Brochure DRAFT
- EconWorks Marketing Timeline v5 (Xlsx)
- Meeting Minutes 2016