

EconWorks Expert Task Group 2017 Q2 Meeting Minutes

Monday, June 12, 2017 • 1:00 – 2:30 PM Eastern

Webinar Link: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/4151656233611376386>

Webinar Number: 1 (914) 614-3221

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 (retired) • 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. • Lei Zhang, University of Maryland • Eirini Kastrourni, University of Maryland • Cui Qingbin, University of Maryland • Paul Schonfeld, University of Maryland • Emma Weaver, University of Maryland • Rahil Saeedi, • Matthew Hardy, AASHTO • Pam Hutton, AASHTO • Stefan Natzke, Federal Highway Administration • Jen Smoker, CH2M • 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.

2. Review Agenda - Jeff Sudmeier

Jeff Sudmeier welcomed and thanked attendees for their participation, reminding them there will be one more call and an annual meeting in December. He outlined the agenda for the call and introduced UMD to turn 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 introduced everyone on the line from the University of Maryland team. He also stated UMD is very pleased to work with the ETG to support EconWorks. He announced the 20 Case Studies are identified with 8 having been drafted and reviewed. UMD is in the process of editing and revising these 8 cases. Another 12 cases are in the process of being developed. Projects identified by ETG members, AASHTO and CH2M that were not included in the current 20 cases under development will be held in reserve should something go amiss with the cases currently under development.

The case study update was presented by Eirini Kastrouni.

- 20 case studies have been identified and underway. These 20 case studies will do an excellent job of providing density as well as closing gaps in case type and geographic location criteria .
- Project objectives include:
 - Developing a more complete EconWorks database by selecting and conducting appropriate case studies.
 - Updating the meta-analysis tool as and after the new case studies are added.
 - Creating an EconWorks Program for institutional knowledge, information exchange, training in case study development, and ex-post analysis.
- The schedule is moving forward on time and it is anticipated the case studies will be completed and uploaded into EconWorks late in 2017.
- Following the last ETG meeting, there was a request for more visualization so the report UMD sent in April includes more details on all information provided. They presented a quick overview of some of the key elements from the results.
- Eirini showed 4 pie charts, noting there were more graphic representations in the report sent to the ETG members in April. She specifically noted the geographic representation among the chosen case studies as well as the percentage of distressed (24%) vs. non-distressed (76%). She explained the distribution of case studies based on mode and project size.
- Strategic outreach with targeted outreach efforts was imperative to identifying good projects. Sources for additional case studies include IAP Program Reports (IL, UT, IN, RI); FHWA Project Profiles (41 projects); TIGER grant projects; suggestions from ETG members; and strategic and targeted outreach efforts.
- Selection criteria include project types that EconWorks tools are most likely to be used for by DOTs, MPOs, etc.; smaller-sized projects; underrepresented project types (transit/intermodal); geographic coverage; empty cells in the project type/location matrix; public-private partnerships(P3s); and increasing density in application-rich project categories. There should be consideration for both “filling gaps” and “reinforcing the density of cases in the existing

database”. There is a need to reinforce the existing data base but it needs to be balanced with more robust case studies with trustworthy results that are easy to use with different agencies.

- Eirini went through the 20 Case Studies noting there are 12 for which drafts were complete and 8 additional studies that are in development or need some formatting and improvement to be considered ready for submission and review. She noted that the review session with EDR Group staff was very valuable in identifying areas needing improvement.
- At the last ETG meeting, UMD provided a list of 12 projects while the new projects, numbered 13-20 are the additional 8 case studies identified since last ETG meeting. Of these studies, 3 were chosen to increase density and the other 5 to fill gaps in the database. It is important to balance the needs of filling gaps versus building density.
- There are currently an additional 20 candidate projects tabled as a backup plan should issues arise in any of the other projects.
- UMD is producing educational materials, course modules, and a specific training format to make training more robust and effective.
 - They have started working on 2 separate course modules:
 - An undergraduate course on the case study tool and meta-analysis tool.
 - A graduate module on the wider economic benefit tool.
 - They are creating interactive training modules for interactive and effective on-line learning. The first two modules are complete and submitted for review.
 - The training provides standard answers to questions and helps educators by including homework, answers, course projects and materials to plug into existing course work. The package should be very valuable to professors. The undergraduate module should be delivered to AASHTO within a couple of weeks.
 - Training for the graduate level is currently being worked on, and the development team is receiving feedback and comments.
 - UMD will work with AASHTO to upload these materials so the ETG members can review and provide comments.
- They are working on promoting EconWorks.
 - UMD will be hosting an economic develop conference and will be featuring EconWorks.
- UMD acknowledged Mara Campbell for providing strategic outreach efforts in identifying contacts at the state DOT level and for her work as project manager. They recognized Steve Fitzroy’s efforts reviewing the initial case study submissions, facilitating review sessions (along with Adam Winston and Susan Moses) to enhance the case study submissions and weekly conference calls.

Questions and Discussion:

- A member elevated a project within their state for possible consideration and then asked how long it takes to become a project for consideration and UMD believed the description of the project example given was exactly the information and maturity needed. The member suggested Phase I of the project might be ready and therefore, UMD will be identifying the contact persons for data and information so they can begin the information gathering process.
- A member asked what the timeline is to incorporate the new case studies into the database? UMD will work with EDR Group to upload the case studies to the EconWorks database but first needs to ensure the quality of the case studies to be added. UMD will work with AASHTO, CH2M and EDR Group to see what the best approach would be – a phased approach or upload them all at once to cause less disruption. There’s a trade off in that part of upload is also the process of updating the meta-analysis. The process needs to be efficient.

4. Marketing and Outreach Updates - Jeff Sudmeier, Matt Hardy and Brian Gardner

- Mara Campbell (on behalf of Matt Hardy) announced the webinar series has been going well. The webinar/book club is focused on EconWorks in two complimentary tracks of Training and Applications. The AASHTO-sponsored webinar in April saw 65 registrations and May had 25 attendees when Volpe presented Utah DOT. The next AASHTO webinar is Thursday, June 15, featuring training on the use of the Case Study database and “Assess My Project” tools.
- Brian Gardner gave an update on the Use Cases. He reported the marketing team is looking for direction regarding Use Cases and how best to use them. Based on analysis, the following information has been culled:
 - The best possible use cases for C03 tools is corridors, state freight plans, as well as a mix of projects for quick hitting assessments.
 - The best possible use cases for C11 tools is in reliability tools - ITS, planning/programming, freight analysis -- market access, labor access, trade offs
 - To do more formal analysis of the use cases, more information is needed from the marketing team. The ETG was asked for thoughts whether people think they are useful tools.
 - The project reports are available on the website but a summary would be better packaged with more input from the ETG.
 - Members of the ETG would like to see them available more widely as they are intended to provide help and potential applications according to how the DOT/MPO used the application.
 - One consideration would be to quickly scan applications and tie them back into the reports to quickly sort through and look for resources.
 - It would be good to have the ability to capture information in how to share information on the use cases moving forward such as how info is being used, examples from DOT/MPO, and making use of EconWorks.
- 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 especially through emails, newsletters and other marketing efforts.
 - AMPO meeting went well – as they had a booth that promoted EconWorks.
 - TRB Transportation and Economic Development Committee’s 6th Transportation Economics Conference, June 6-8, 2018 was added to the timeline.

5. Long Term Approach for EconWorks – Jeff Sudmeier

- Jeff turned the ETG’s attention to a discussion about how to enhance EconWorks as well as the long-term sustainability for EconWorks. To move forward with the web tools, the process must begin moving by late summer. The ETG was asked to comment and share thoughts on moving forward with Wider Economic Benefit (WEB) based tools.
- A member felt they would certainly use it, but were not clear it would have all the capabilities the DOTs need.
- It was explained that the WEB tools are created to help users determine benefits attributable to market access, connectivity and reliability effects of transportation project investments. The 4th tool helps integrate these into a formal benefit cost analysis. The WEB tools are used in benefit cost analysis – but they are not used for “economic impact analysis”. Economic impacts are provided in the case studies and “Assess My Project” tools. There is interest in getting the WEB tools into a web based approach (instead of using downloadable spreadsheets) – adapting them

to the types of data the states have. Many agencies want to customize to their management systems to provide inputs. Web based tools would make it easier – more of a help to some of the DOT/MPOs, particularly those who don't have people to devote to this.

- One important benefit to using the tools is that agencies are looking at ways to do value capture/value return to show the need for funding. If they can use the economic analysis to show how these investments benefit the economy, then the cost of transitioning the tool is not a lot of money compared to the value of the data it provides.
- Another member offered support to move forward in the tool transition, and is looking forward to the opportunity to start talking about this transition
- The question was raised if there was risk related to making the tools to easy to use and therefore not effective to provide robust data analysis. There is risk but not from misusing the tools, but from misinterpreting the results. The WEB tools are specifically tricky but the approach and concepts are important. While acknowledging risk, there is still confidence the transition can be rolled out in a way to be successful. There is real opportunity to try to address problems and misuse or misapplication that can be overcome by the training currently being offered, and by providing clear introductory materials more prominently on the web site.
- At the next meeting, the discussion of long term sustainability of EconWorks will be the focal agenda item.

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 reminded the ETG members of the next 2 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

- UMD will work with AASHTO/CH2M to get the course material uploaded for ETG input/comment. (Lei/Eirini)
- Consideration regarding moving toward WEB tools (All ETG members)
- Consideration regarding sustainability of EconWorks after December 2018 (All ETG members)
- Minutes from this quarterly update will be sent out to the ETG. (Matt/Mara)
- Next ETG meetings will be:
 - 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 Marketing Timeline (Xlsx)
- Meeting Minutes Quarter 1, 2017