

ECONWORKS EXPERT TASK GROUP MEETING 2016 Quarter 1 Update: Summary & Next Steps

GoToMeeting
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Thursday, 03/17/16 (2 P.M. to 3:30 P.M. EST)

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"> • Ryan Endorf, Federal Highway Administration • Steve Fitzroy, Economic Development Research Group, Inc. • Brian Gardner, Federal Highway Administration • Matthew Hardy, AASHTO • Bryan Hong, AASHTO • Kristin Hull, CH2M • Stefan Natzke, Federal Highway Administration • Amanda Rutherford, Federal Highway Administration • Valentin Vulov, Federal Highway Administration • Karen White, Bureau of Transportation Statistics

ACTION ITEMS

- ETG members will notify AASHTO and FHWA if they are interested in serving on the selection committee for the EconWorks Case Studies Development Request for Proposal (RFP) by close-of-business on Thursday, April 8.
- ETG members will forward to AASHTO and FHWA any transportation projects that may be good candidates for developing case studies.
- Bryan Hong will send the minutes and updated Marketing Plan to the ETG.

SUMMARY

1. Welcome and Roll Call

On March 17, 2016 at 2:00 P.M. (EST), Bryan Hong welcomed the EconWorks Expert Task Group (ETG), and began the meeting by taking attendance and describing the GoToMeeting platform. The attendees were asked to mute their phones if they were not speaking to the group. Then he outlined the agenda for the afternoon.

2. Review Vision and Goals

The ETG began by reviewing the Vision and Goals that were determined during its first meeting in December, 2015. There were no objections or comments to these items. Bryan added that the minutes and PowerPoint slides from this meeting would be sent afterwards.

3. Discussion based on Read-Ahead Feedback & Additional Thoughts

Bryan then opened the floor for the ETG to discuss the Read-Ahead/Status Update document that was distributed to them a week prior. Steve Polzin commented on the Request for Information (RFI) for the University Transportation Centers (UTCs), as the federal application is open. As a result, UTCs will be busy with the application process and are likely going to be unwilling to commit resources to an RFI, which is why it should not be rushed.

Jeff Sudmeier then asked if AASHTO and FHWA had done something to identify gaps with regard to the case studies. Bryan responded that the envisioned plan is to have a gap analysis conducted by the eventual proposal's successful applicant. Valentin Vulov then elaborated on the current RFP process, and that a RFI will not be pursued. The same information will be gathered informally through the AASHTO consultant by being in direct contact with the academic institutions.

Steve mentioned that US DOT recently released a solicitation on automated and connected vehicles. Eventually they will look at their economic applications and ways to evaluate them. This could have a connection to EconWorks, but it is too early to know for sure. More and more evaluations will yield initiatives like this one.

Jeff Sudmeier brought up the TIGER program and that the new program offered through the FAST Act will provide opportunities to develop new case studies. Bryan mentioned that AASHTO and FHWA have had some conversations on how to potentially utilize these TIGER projects, both among the coordinating partners and with Karen White. She shared that as of the quarterly meeting she had not heard anything on what we can use from previous TIGER application rounds.

4. Marketing and Outreach Updates

The meeting continued with a description of the external updates. EconWorks was mentioned during TRB's Annual Meeting in January by Valentin Vulov and Stefan Natzke, both ETG members. Valentin shared about the EconWorks economic analysis tools and how they can help transportation planners at the Transportation Economics Committee and Performance Management Committee meetings. Stefan Natzke also presented the EconWorks program at the Economic Development Committee and Land Development Committee meetings.

In addition, two research teams shared their experience testing and implementing the EconWorks tools at poster session #777, "Transportation Economics Topics: Cost-Benefit Analysis, Pricing, Mileage-Based User Fees, Elasticities and More." The presentations were titled, "Assessing the Wider Economic Benefits of Intelligent Transportation System Deployments: A Virginia Case Study," and "Wider Economic Impact Assessment of Transportation Projects at Middle-Stage Planning Level: Application of SHRP2 C11 Tools and Regional Economic Model."

Second, there have been having ongoing discussions with the FHWA staff who manage the SHRP2 C20 Freight Modeling and Data Improvement product about synergies and potential ways forward between freight programs and EconWorks. The goal is to eventually identify freight projects for development into new case studies. AASHTO and FHWA expressed their willingness to provide further information to anyone in the ETG interested in this initiative.

On an internal level, Bryan mentioned that the Marketing Plan continues to receive updates as more of a path forward for some of these strategies comes into focus. He will send an updated version soon. Bryan then elaborated on several of the developments listed in the Read-Ahead document. AASHTO is planning interview topics for higher-level state DOT officials, and are scheduling a meeting with AASHTO's Transportation TV studio. Also, the Economic Analysis Training module on the EconWorks website will be updated for more user interaction and made eligible for professional development hours and AICP.

Jeff Sudmeier shared with the group about an upcoming conference titled "Use of Scenario Planning for Transportation Planning" in Portland. The nexus will be how some of the EconWorks info can have applications to transportation planning. Proposals are due by the 28th of March. The format can be a poster presentation, podium presentation or demonstration. Jeff will send the conference information to Bryan.

Ben Gruswitz asked if the updated online course is the one focusing on overall economic analysis, to which Bryan answered yes. Valentin then went over the updates of the Economic Analysis in Transportation Planning training course: e-learning content; interactive elements such as checkpoints, quizzes, animation, games, illustration, and custom graphics; new voice narration; the courses will conform to AICP guidelines for recorded educational products and will be 508-compliant.

5. Case Studies Development Discussion

The ETG then moved into a conversation about developing case studies. Based on the feedback the group provided in December, AASHTO and FHWA decided to adjust how they plan to engage the academic community. Right now they are developing an RFP to provide one recipient with an award that enables and challenges it to both do the work in developing these case studies and help brainstorm other ways to outreach about EconWorks.

In addition to the productive meeting AASHTO and FHWA had with Karen about how TIGER could be mined for case study candidates, the database itself is now able to house transit-related case studies. Valentin shared there are five of these transit projects already developed under the NCRP-50 project. The EconWorks database is modified so that it can accept these projects. The plan is to add them to the database as part of the future RFP for developing new case studies or as a separate effort.

Bryan explained there is a need for ETG members to participate in the Case Studies Development RFP selection committee—volunteers are requested. Currently no case studies are in the creation process. Valentin also asked the ETG members to forward to AASHTO and FHWA any transportation projects that may be good candidates for case studies.

6. Final Questions/Topics As-Needed

There were no questions or miscellaneous topics from the ETG.

7. Wrap-Up and Adjourn

Bryan thanked participants for their time and effort. The ETG was advised that the next several meetings would take place in June 2016 either by phone or webinar. With no further business the meeting adjourned at 2:50 P.M.

ETG VISION & GOALS

Vision

Through the work of the ETG, EconWorks supports broader understanding of and economic analysis in transportation planning and decision making. EconWorks tools are widely used, up to date, and a robust tools that are applicable to a wide range of locations, modes and project types.

Goals, Objectives, and Measures

- Goal 1: Practitioners have an improved understanding of economic analysis and how to use it in planning processes.

Objectives:

- EconWorks website includes useful and frequently accessed training resources
- Transportation planning students learn about EconWorks through curricula
- Users understand how to communicate results and how to explain how the tools work
- EconWorks is integrated with traditional benefit-cost analysis for transportation projects
- EconWorks serves as a gateway to understanding economic analysis for practitioners

- Goal 2: EconWorks is widely used by practitioners.

Objectives:

- EconWorks has become a “go to” suite of tools to evaluate project ideas based on reliable economic predictions
- Every DOT has at least one staff conversant on EconWorks
- EconWorks tools/methods become part of state DOT operating procedures
- Use of EconWorks increases each year
- EconWorks is used for diverse purposes
- Incentives are provided to foster use

Measures:

- Google hits on EconWorks site increase
 - Citations (academic usage) of EconWorks
 - Systematic documentation of applications and evaluation of experience and reactions of users
 - The number and quality of case studies is increased to allow a broader and more refined application of EconWorks to a wide variety of project types, modes and locations
- Goal 3: The number and quality of case studies is increased to allow a broader and more refined application of EconWorks to a wide variety of project types, modes and locations.

Objectives:

- Case Study model is valid across modes and locations with variable inputs/factors
- Benefit ranges become tighter and assessment becomes more granular
- Case studies are available across a range of locations including urban and rural areas
- Case studies are available for transit, freight and highway projects

- Case studies include less typical project types such as PPPs, managed lanes, etc.
- Users can upload case studies in an easy and low cost way
- Procedures for case study submissions are clearly documented and standardized
- Case studies demonstrate successful practices among transportation agencies and are developed with sufficient detail to allow transportation agencies to learn from one another

Measures:

- Budget for case study development has been expended
- Sample size of case studies remains high when broken into types/geographies/etc.
- The number of case studies has increased by one-hundred percent
- Steady flow of new case studies being developed and added to the database
- Goal 4: EconWorks is integrated in transportation planning processes and is applied to project development in new, creative applications.

Objectives:

- EconWorks results/findings supporting project and program prioritization
- EconWorks is used in TIGER project evaluations
- A proven method for using EconWorks to compare projects before they are programmed in a STIP is developed
- EconWorks plugged into PlanWorks as a critical/primary tools for project trade-off analysis and prioritization
- EconWorks is used to refine project design and analyses to maximize economic benefits
- Goal 5: EconWorks is maintained and improved so that it remains valid and up-to-date.

Objectives:

- Ensure that software stays relevant with regular upgrades/updates
- Routine, sample-based validation of predications
- Recalibrate matching algorithm based on new cases
- Goal 6: Transportation agencies find EconWorks useful to practice and support its continued development through a pooled fund study at the conclusion of the implementation period.

Objectives:

- A community of transportation agency users coalesces to share information
- Transportation agencies see sufficient value in EconWorks to participate in funding it
- Results from EconWorks are accepted and trusted by decision makers, partners, advocates and stakeholders and these results support decision making.