

Development of the
AASHTO
Strategic Plan
2009-2013



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AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
STATE HIGHWAY AND
TRANSPORTATION OFFICIALS

AASHTO
THE VOICE OF TRANSPORTATION

Update of the AASHTO Strategic Plan

Since January 2008, an AASHTO Strategic Planning Task Force of 16 CEOs worked to update the association's Strategic Plan. The existing plan was adopted in 2004 and since then guided annual staff Work Plan activities to support the states' strategic needs. However, the passage of time created significant new challenges which were not addressed in the existing Strategic Plan. The Task Force of CEOs identified these emerging issues and incorporated them into a new Draft Strategic Plan which is now presented for adoption by the Board of Directors.

The first major effort in the plan update was the interviewing of CEOs and the surveying of committee members. Eventually 42 CEOs were interviewed and 314 committee members responded to surveys. Although there was some variance between CEOs and committee members, both groups generally agreed the critical strategic issues facing AASHTO were:

- Funding and communicating the importance of transportation to the public
- Safety
- Program streamlining
- Demonstrating accountability
- Congestion
- Security
- Freight
- Climate change

The interviews and surveys demonstrated that all four of the Strategic Goals and most of the objectives remain valid. However, some plan amendments were needed.

The second major effort in updating the Strategic Plan, was a two-day retreat in Scottsdale, Ariz., in June 2008. The Task Force reviewed the survey and CEO interview results in detail. They also reviewed a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threat Analysis before considering updates to the Plan.

The Task Force discussion focused upon four topics that the interviews and surveys revealed to be timely.

- 1) How to strengthen the Board's role in policy formation during a volatile era;
- 2) How to increase revenue and public support for transportation;
- 3) How to address increasing calls for accountability;
- 4) How to address climate change.

Starting with the new Strategic Plan and a comparison with the existing one, the following summarizes the Task Force discussions and recommendations.

The New Draft Plan

Goal 1. Re-establish transportation as a national priority

- 1A. Secure national support for sufficient, sustainable 'net new' revenue through a diversified portfolio of funding sources
- 1B. Improve the national freight network to keep America competitive in the global economy
- 1C. Accelerate project delivery
- 1D. Cut fatalities in half by 2030
- 1E. Support national defense and improve disaster response
- 1F. Create a congestion-free America through improvements to the multimodal transportation system and improve system performance through advanced technology and operations
- 1G. Advocate energy and climate change policies that are in agreement with AASHTO's policies on transportation and enhance the national and state economies, improve national security and reduce greenhouse gases.
- 1H. Promote accountability through performance-based management to enhance the national transportation system, and work with strategic partners to develop a framework of goals, standards and metrics tailored to meet individual state needs.

Goal 2. Advocate and communicate to achieve AASHTO's goals

- 2A. Create strategic partnerships
- 2B. Develop and communicate the AASHTO Action Agenda to policy makers, partners, stakeholders, and the public
- 2C. Brand AASHTO as the states' national voice for transportation
- 2D. Communicate the value of transportation to citizens, community, quality of life, and the economy

Goal 3. Provide world class technical services

- 3A. Identify, communicate, and facilitate use of emerging research, technologies, materials, processes, and programs
- 3B. Increase use of AASHTO technical services and products
- 3C. Maximize participation in technical activities
- 3D. Expand training opportunities and the array of offerings by using "webinars", video conferencing and other technologies
- 3E. Enhance the centers of excellence in environment and finance and develop centers of excellence in safety, operations, and freight
- 3F. Develop technical services for climate change mitigation and adaptation

Goal 4. Assist State DOTs with leadership and performance

- 4A. Provide training and assistance to advance leadership skills and performance management techniques
- 4B. Provide a comprehensive framework for accelerated project delivery of all transportation projects
- 4C. Assist states in addressing issues of workforce recruitment, retention, succession planning, core competencies and professional development in emerging areas
- 4D. Develop an environment for strengthening community relationships to better integrate transportation, land use, and economic development

Comparison of Existing to Draft AASHTO Strategic Plan

Existing Plan	New Plan
Goal 1. Re-establish transportation as a national priority	Goal 1. Re-establish transportation as a national priority
1A. Secure national support for sufficient, sustainable 'net new' revenue	1A. Secure national support for sufficient, sustainable 'net new' revenue through a diversified portfolio of funding sources
1B. Develop a national freight agenda	1B. Improve the national freight network to keep America competitive in the global economy
1C Accelerate project delivery	1C. Accelerate project delivery
1D Establish safety as a national priority	1D. Cut fatalities in half by 2030
1E. Establish transportation as a vital element of national security	1E. Support national defense and improve disaster response
1F. Increase mobility by encouraging multimodal and intermodal solutions, policies, and technologies	1F. Create a congestion-free America through improvements to the multimodal transportation system and improve system performance through advanced technology and operations
	1G. Advocate energy and climate change policies that are in agreement with AASHTO's policies on transportation and enhance the national and state economies, improve national security and reduce greenhouse gases.
	1H. Promote accountability through performance-based management to enhance the national transportation system, and work with strategic partners to develop a framework of goals, standards and metrics tailored to meet individual state needs.
Goal 2. Advocate and communicate to achieve AASHTO's goals	Goal 2. Advocate and communicate to achieve AASHTO's goals
2A. Create strategic partnerships	2A. Create strategic partnerships
2B. Develop and communicate the AASHTO Action Agenda to policy makers, partners, stakeholders, and the public	2B. Develop and communicate the AASHTO Action Agenda to policy makers, partners, stakeholders, and the public
2C. Develop a strategy to brand AASHTO as the definitive national voice for transportation	2C. Brand AASHTO as the states' national voice for transportation
2D. Communicate the value of transportation to citizens, community	2D. Communicate the value of transportation to citizens, community,

quality of life, and the economy	quality of life, and the economy
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Comparison of Existing to Draft AASHTO Strategic Plan	
Existing Plan	New Plan
Goal 3. Provide world class technical services	Goal 3. Provide world class technical services
3A. Identify, communicate, and facilitate use of emerging research, technologies, materials, processes, and programs	3A. Identify, communicate, and facilitate use of emerging research, technologies, materials, processes, and programs
3B. Increase use of AASHTO technical services and products	3B. Increase use of AASHTO technical services and products
3C. Maximize participation in technical activities	3C. Maximize participation in technical activities
3D. Expand training opportunities and the array of offerings	3D. Expand training opportunities and the array of offerings by using “webinars”, video conferencing and other technologies
3E. Develop centers of excellence in safety, operations, finance, and freight	3E. Enhance the centers of excellence in environment and finance and develop centers of excellence in safety, operations, and freight
	3F. Develop technical services for climate change mitigation and adaptation
Goal 4. Assist State DOTs with leadership and performance	Goal 4. Assist State DOTs with leadership and performance
4A. Identify and advance 21st century leadership and management techniques	4A. Provide training and assistance to advance leadership skills and performance management techniques
4B. Provide a comprehensive framework for improved project delivery of all transportation projects	4B. Provide a comprehensive framework for accelerated project delivery of all transportation projects
4C. Develop tools to assist states in confronting issues of core competencies, downsizing, and outsourcing	4C. Assist states in addressing issues of workforce recruitment, retention, succession planning, core competencies and professional development in emerging areas
4D. Develop tools to assist states in addressing issues of workforce recruitment, retention, succession planning, and in-service training	4D. Develop an environment for strengthening community relationships to better integrate transportation, land use, and economic development
4E. Improve policy leadership development and training opportunities	
4F. Develop an environment for strengthening community relationships to better integrate transportation, land use, and economic development	

Issue: Strengthening the Board's Role in Critical Policy Formation

The Task Force Discussion: A survey of CEOs indicated that many believe that the “bottom up” practice of having AASHTO committees debate policies before they reach the board results in diluted positions that lack emphatic direction that CEOs are willing to provide. CEOs acknowledge that for technical or routine policies, the committee review process works well. However, the CEOs expressed a desire to exert policy direction early in the policy-development process so that the committee debate is guided by CEO direction, and that the committee debate is not dominated by the more constrained positions of lower-level DOT staffs.

Task Force Conclusion: The Board of Directors should ensure that it directs policy formation and that policies are not diluted by mid-level state staff members on AASHTO committees.

Work Plan action items which result from this discussion.

Research a modified approach to policy formation for critical policies to solicit CEO guidance early in the process to increase the “top-down” direction to policy development.

Research ways in which the Board meetings can be more deliberative and less focused on routine approvals.

Improve new CEO training to encourage more involvement in decision making.

Investigate additional techniques to increase CEO engagement on policy formation through additional avenues other than board meetings. Research whether the Internet, conference calls or other means can be used to solicit CEO input.

Improve communication to CEOs about the importance of upcoming Board of Director votes.

Issue: AASHTO's Position on Accountability

The Task Force Discussion: The National Surface Transportation and Revenue Study Commission, Congress and the public are demanding increased accountability from the federal transportation program. Attention on the Bridge to Nowhere has shaded public perception. AASHTO and the member states will have to demonstrate accountability, efficiency and results if they are to attract additional public investment.

Task Force conclusion: A strong move is afoot nationally to adopt some type of transportation performance measures. The Task Force members agreed that it is better for AASHTO to lead rather than to follow this effort.

Adopted Strategic Objective

AASHTO will promote accountability through performance-based management to enhance the national transportation system, and work with strategic partners to develop a framework of goals, standards and metrics tailored to meet individual state needs.

Work Plan action items which result from this discussion.

AASHTO will conduct a synthesis of completed research and data which distills the work states have done to develop performance metrics.

AASHTO will assess the existing data which could be used to document performance. The Highway Performance Management System data is one obvious starting point.

National performance metrics need to derive from goals. AASHTO will summarize from its existing policies the national transportation goals which have been articulated or adopted by the states. These goals can serve to develop national performance metrics.

AASHTO will identify the strategic partners with which it will work to define a national set of transportation metrics for the entire transportation system.

Encourage states to develop their performance metrics to complement a national measurement system.

AASHTO staff and leadership will communicate the importance of leading the national effort to develop a performance management process and it will develop mechanisms to educate state staffs about the importance of data, metrics and performance goals.

AASHTO staff will focus upon encouraging the development of performance management systems which take a multi-modal systems approach and consider regional and interstate jurisdictional issues.

AASHTO will continue to communicate the successes of the states in performance management.

Issue: The Need for Sustainable Net, New Revenue

The Task Force Discussion: The need for additional revenue dominates all other policy issues. However, the discussion over revenue reveals many components. There is a need to rebuild major networks, such as the Interstate Highway System. There is a need to expand rail, transit and pedestrian modes. There is a need to link transportation to energy policy, environmental issues and land use decisions. There is a critical need to find additional, sustainable sources of revenue and to reduce the degree of reliance on traditional motor fuel taxes. It also is critically important to communicate the importance and relevance of transportation to the nation's economy and quality of life.

The Conclusion: AASHTO needs to lead on the issue of finding new sources of revenue and communicating the importance of transportation to the American public.

Adopted Strategic Objective: Secure national support for sufficient, sustainable 'net new' revenue through a diversified portfolio of funding sources

Work Plan action items which result from this discussion.

The AASHTO staff and leadership will reach out to partners to seek common approaches to secure net, new funding.

The AASHTO staff will identify best practices on how states are securing sustainable transportation revenue.

The AASHTO staff shall pursue additional opportunities to complete the Oregon research on ways in which vehicle miles traveled can be captured as a resource source.

The AASHTO staff shall identify surrogate measures which could simulate system use taxes such as container taxes and vehicle registrations.

The AASHTO staff will continue its exploration of alternative financing mechanisms such as revenue bonds and railroad tax credits.

The AASHTO staff will explore expanded sources of federal transportation investment from programs such as homeland security, climate change and energy.

The AASHTO staff will summarize research on the future of transportation funding revenue and succinctly explain the projected trends.

The AASHTO staff will develop a short-term tactical strategy to address the crisis in the appropriations process as well as develop the long-term portfolio of funding sources to sustain the transportation system.

The AASHTO staff will communicate the members' transportation positions to the new Administration.

AASHTO will provide outside experts to states to help explain transportation's role to public and political groups.

AASHTO will continue efforts to help the public understand what is at stake by not supporting additional investment in transportation

AASHTO will establish a clearinghouse of best practices and efficiencies that states have developed.

Issue: Climate Change

The Task Force Discussion: CEOs are ahead of the state DOT staffs in recognizing an overwhelming public demand for climate change action. This demand for action is melding with public outrage over high energy prices and merging to create insistence on new forms of energy and new modes of transportation. AASHTO must be an active leader in this national debate or it will be driven by this debate.

Task Force Conclusion: AASHTO must lead on developing realistic and sustainable transportation polices to address climate change and energy independence. It must develop national policies to mitigate climate change and it must identify engineering practices to help DOT's adapt to changing temperatures, sea levels and weather patterns.

Adopted Strategic Objective: Advocate energy and climate change policies that are in agreement with AASHTO's policies on transportation and enhance the national and state economies, improve national security and reduce greenhouse gases.

Work Plan action items which result from this discussion.

AASHTO staff will create institutional expertise in how states can both mitigate and adapt to climate change.

AASHTO staff will assemble the strategies already used by states to address climate change and reduce greenhouse emissions.

AASHTO will begin the process of identifying adaptive engineering strategies to deal with climatic and hydrological changes wrought by climate change.

AASHTO will communicate the ramifications of climate change to state DOT staffs and how they will have to adapt in terms of engineering, planning and policies.

AASHTO staff will be at the table in the national discussion of climate change policies.

AASHTO will produce easily understood information about transportation's role in the national response to climate change.

AASHTO will create an AASHTO climate change website populated with research on climate change's effect upon the transportation system and upon transportation policies.

Incorporate into AASHTO's Action Agenda the Climate Change policies from the New Vision for the 21st Century.

Review of Plan

Following the Scottsdale workshop, the Draft Strategic Plan was presented at the 2008 regional AASHTO meetings. Following that, it is now presented to the Board of Directors for adoption.

Once approved, it will become the basis for a detailed work plan to guide activities of the AASHTO staff.